

Nigeria's Relations with Her Neighbours

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ABSTRACT This study examines Nigeria's relationship with immediate neighbouring countries like Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Benin, Equatorial Guinea and the Niger Republic. These countries like Nigeria are vestiges of colonial creation. Nigeria is an English-speaking country (British), while her other neighbours, with the exception of Equatorial Guinea (which is a former Portuguese territory), are historically French colonial territories hence, their political, cultural, military and economic affinities with France. These varying background accounts, for the series of crises experienced in the sub region within the past three decades. Strategically, the study posits that neighbouring countries had over the years been engaged in series of exploitation of Nigeria's natural and economic resources and the encroachment on her territorial frontiers. This is why various Nigerian governments have perceived these infringements as threats to the country's national security. In examining the importance of government's response to the various threats posed by the activities of her neighbours, the study observed that in spite of its policy of restraint and caution, which has resulted in the lack of firmness and of definitive tactics in stemming the tide of violations of her sovereignty, the Nigerian government had in over the past couple of years, continued to make attempts at fostering better relationships with her next door neighbours.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's relationship with her mainly Franco-phone neighbours is predicated on the historically ill defined and improperly delimitation of boundaries in the West-African sub region by the erstwhile European colonial masters. The highly porous and easily permeable nature of these boundaries, coupled with the lack of a coordinated and coherent boundary policy by Nigeria and the governments of contiguous states' accounts for the lukewarm and sometimes, frosty relations between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours.

In ensuring a peaceful and warmly relationship as well as, in protecting her territorial integrity and sovereignty, the Nigerian government has continuously reiterated the need to pursue vigorously the strategic policy of sovereign and defensive impenetrability of her boundaries. Toward achieving this objective, the federal government of Nigeria in collaboration with neighbouring countries has followed the United Nations recommendation which stipulated in its charter (The UN, 1945: Article 33. Sub-section 1) that:

"Parties to any dispute, the continuation of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of negotiation, inquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, should resort to regional agencies or arrangements or other peaceful means of their own choice"

In order to avoid disputes which may result

in the breach of peace and political instability, Nigeria and her neighbours (particularly Cameroon), have been concerned with clear delimitation of boundaries and other mutually benefiting economic, cultural and diplomatic initiatives aimed at ensuring, peaceful coexistence amongst them.

Conceptual Clarification

Nigeria's relationship with her neighbours is predicated mainly on the issue of avoiding border disputes which might escalate into full-fledged armed hostilities. The series of economic, socio-cultural and other joint initiatives between these countries and Nigeria are thus considered as preventive mechanisms directed at ensuring peaceful coexistence of all the states in the sub region.

Obviously, the point of departure of this study is the analysis of international boundaries which were created in Africa by the colonial powers without due consideration of the social, cultural, historical and political implications of the demarcation exercise. In fact, the power rivalry between the British and German colonizing power in the period 1874-5 that is, during the Berlin conference, resulted in the creation of artificial boundaries between erstwhile culturally related people. The premise behind the European balkanization of African states was based on the quest for power as well as ensuring an equilibrium

that is balance of power between the competing imperialist European nations. Accordingly, justification for the colonial demarcation of African states can be found in the following statement (Muir, 1983):

“In establishing political territories each colonial power attempted firstly, to maximize its sphere of control and to connect its possession into large compact units, which might also act as barriers to the continuous expansion of rival colonial territories. Secondly, to control river basins which provided highways for trade, to established coastal footholds and for further inland penetration and thirdly, to avoid conflict over colonial territories which might be escalated into a European confrontation”.

Most writers on boundary disputes in Africa agree that much arbitrariness accompanied the boundary delimitation exercise agreed upon by the colonial powers at the Berlin Conference. The consequence today is that ethnic-political features of African landscape are distorted and disrupted as members of erstwhile same ethnic groups found themselves under different political sovereignties (Nwokedi, 1984). Other writers on political geography have also argued for instance that, “the distinguishing characteristic of most political boundaries in Africa is that their present location does not represent territorial culminations of locally generated political processes” (Kapil, 1966). This is why externally imposed boundaries are among the more frequent causes of war in Africa (Zartman, 1965). Consequently, one can posit (Whittlesey, 1934) that, “the political map of Africa today, is the product of diplomatic chess game amongst the colonial powers, a game played on European council tables since the 1880’s by men who never saw Africa”.

In the foregoing analysis, it must be restated that the resultant effects of the ambiguous and uncoordinated European border demarcation in Africa, are the perennial border disputes on the continent, but which has the following as its main characteristics (Andemichael, 1976):

- i. Occurrence of disputes between sovereign states.
- ii. Escalation of disputes into armed conflict - becoming a particular concern to both the UN and the O.A.U.
- iii. Involvement of claims by one party or the other on historical, cultural, ethnic or religious grounds to a segment of the territory presently under the jurisdiction of the other, a claim

which the latter party regards as a threat to its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

In addition to the characteristics described above, the disputes can be further be categorized into four (4) major types that is (Prescott, 1965):

- i. Territorial disputes: This involves controversy over which state has the right of ownership to a particular piece of territory.
- ii. Positional Disputes: This involves disagreement over the interpretation of documents describing the position of a boundary.
- iii. Functional Disputes: This concerns the ways in which state function much as Customs and immigration control should be applied at interstate boundaries.
- iv. Dispute over resource development.

Nigeria’s relationship with her neighbours, exhibit all the rudiments of the categories stated in the preceding paragraphs. The first and second categorization it should be noted, are major sources of crisis between most African countries. They occur mostly in areas where “boundaries are antecedent or superimposed and where the negotiation of a boundary between neighbouring states has predated the compilation of accurate maps and records (Muir, 1983).” One can therefore conclude that the fear and mutual distrust created by colonial boundary demarcations often increase significantly with time particularly, in the absence of a permanent and viable conflict resolution mechanisms.

NIGERIA’S POLICY TOWARD HER NEIGHBOURS

Nigeria is surrounded on all sides by Franco-phone states. Typically, her foreign policy goals and leadership aspirations in West-Africa receive perhaps the greatest challenges from these states (Ede, 1986). Nigeria’s policy toward her neighbours had since independence been based largely on the following four principles (Ogpu, 1967):

- a. The sovereign equality of all African states.
- b. Respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of every African state.
- c. Non-interference in the internal affairs of other African countries.
- d. Commitment to functional cooperation as a means of promoting African unity.

Based on these principles, Nigeria has been totally indifferent to the internal political power

struggle in other states around her. The lukewarm attitude of Nigeria towards her neighbours can also be attributed to feelings of phobia, real or imagined, of French response in case of an overtly aggressive policy against any of those states that have close colonial ties and cultural affinities with France. In addition to the French connection, the following three major reasons impact greatly on the non-interference attitude of Nigeria in her neighbours' affairs (Alack, 1977):

- a. Nigeria's respect for the principle of sovereign equality of all states and respect for African states.
- b. Nigeria's apprehension of threatening the security of her weaker neighbours who might be frightened into the arms of some powerful extra-African forces that could pose a direct threat to the survival and national security of Nigeria. Moreover, active interference in her neighbours' affairs could also lead to arms race which Nigeria could not seriously contemplate. An arms race would entail the diversion of the nation's financial and human resources from economic and social welfare needs to defence matters.

The policy of non-interference as well as the nonchalant attitude of Nigeria's decision makers was later reviewed due to series of events that unfolded within the sub-region. The events, it is imperative to note, resulted among other factors from the role of neighbouring countries in rendering military and humanitarian assistance to the Biafran rebel group during the civil war (1966- 69) in Nigeria. Also, threats posed by the establishment of a Franco-phone economic organization - The Exclusive Communaute Economique D'Afrique Occidentale (CEAO), in May 1973 is noteworthy. The creation of the CEAO was perceived by Nigeria as an attempt by France not only to perpetuate colonial divisions and privileges in Africa, but also to use the CEAO as a counterpoise to the "big brother" status enjoyed by Nigeria within the sub-region.

Significantly however, it was at the inception of the Babangida administration in 1985 that serious efforts were made to rectify the frosty relations between Nigeria and her neighbours. The strained relationship between Nigeria and her neighbours prior to 1985, was described by officials of the administration thus (Shagaya, 1990):

"Virtually all our neighbours enjoyed what can best be described as frosty relations with us. There

was a tense situation between Chad, Cameroon, Benin and Nigeria. Occupation of lands belonging to Nigeria by armed brigades of neighbouring countries had become a norm. These tense situations were created out of the misconceived suspicion that Nigeria might succumb to the temptation to dominate her neighbours."

In ensuring a continued cordial relations and reaffirming the good intentions she contemplates toward her neighbours, Nigeria, in her "Presentation to the UN Goodwill Mission", emphasized that border conflict between the country and her neighbours have been largely avoided through (Federal Government of Nigeria, 1996):

"The principle of good neighbourliness, policy of cooperative security and preventive diplomacy which Nigeria cherishes and upholds even at the expense of its [sic] own national interest . . . Through established means of diplomacy, the process of boundary demarcation has been initiated with her neighbours (except Cameroon). This offers a valuable opportunity to all the parties to discover and resolve anomalies and ambiguities that if left unattended could cause conflict." In spite of Nigeria's affirmation to maintain cordial relations with her neighbours, the reality of the situation is that the neighbouring countries, in particular Cameroon, continue to embark on actions detrimental to Nigeria's national interest and security. In fact, the threats engendered by the contention between Nigeria and Cameroon over the ownership of the Bakassi Peninsular and the accompanying deployment of troops and military capabilities to the area under dispute, are worthy of note. Accordingly, an analysis of the threats posed to Nigeria and the implications inherent in the relationships will enhance our understanding of the volatile nature and the precarious condition of Nigeria's relationship with countries in the West African sub-region.

Nigeria - Republic of Benin

The relationship between Nigeria and Benin Republic has been marred over the years by the frequent occurrences of border clashes between the two countries. The periods between 1969 and the late 1970's in particular, led to a deterioration of political relationship between them. One of the major sources of threats to Nigeria from Benin is

derived from the activities of Beninese gendarmes who continuously and forcefully collect taxes from Nigerians along the Nigeria-Benin border villages. Another area of contention is the incessant removal of the Nigerian flag and its replacement by the Republic of Benin flag - a sign of their occupation. In view of the foregoing, one may then contend that (Ate and Akinterinwa, 1992):

“The security relations between Nigeria and Benin have always centered on two issue areas - boundary and military relations. The two overlaps. Boundary relations are important in the first place because of the imprecision which marked the delimitation exercise . . . This setting, is further compounded by the activities of smugglers and the actions of overzealous functionaries who attempt to enforce legislation beyond their areas of jurisdiction . . . Besides boundary relations, political instability especially in Benin Republic has been important for their security relations.”

Nigeria, in her boundary and military relations with Benin has been perceived by various Beninese governments as a threat because of her (Nigeria's) military superiority within the West African sub-region. Hence, arms acquisition policies or military deployments by Nigeria within the sub- region are always perceived as a threat by the Beninese. A classical example in this context was the case when Nigeria in the late 1970's acquired the T-55 Russian Tanks. The Beninese government responded by also acquiring such new antitank weapons. The aim of the reciprocal acquisition being to deter, contain and achieve military balance to the threat posed by Nigeria's constant acquisition of military armaments (Vogt, 1987a).

It is also instructive to note that during the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70, the Beninese government under Emile Zinsou was accused (early in 1969) by the Nigerian authorities of allowing the international Red Cross Committee and other relief organizations to use Cotonou ostensibly for sending relief supplies to the secessionists and for breaking the Federal Government of Nigeria's food blockade against the Biafran rebels. This particular incident resulted in the rapid deterioration of relationship between the two countries to such an extent that there occurred a series of border clashes between Nigeria and the Republic of Benin in 1969 (Aluko, 1977). However, with the signing in April 1979 of

a Military Cooperative Agreement between Nigeria and Benin, the mutual perception of threats and distrust hitherto existed between the two countries seems to have been drastically reduced.

Perhaps, one should also mention that certain activities of some Beninese citizens involving the smuggling of petroleum products and other essential commodities like sugar, beverages, textiles and detergents constitute economic threats to the Nigerian economy. These groups of people are also engaged in piratical activities along the creeks and swamps between Nigeria and Republic of Benin. What is more important, during the periods of political crisis in Nigeria, the Benin border becomes an easy escape route for erring Nigerian politicians. Another important area of friction between Nigeria and Benin Republic is the issue of illegal aliens.

There are thousands of Nigerians living in Benin and same number of Beninese living in Nigeria. However, Benin has over the years engaged in the deportation of some Nigerian “illegal aliens” back to the country. A classical example according to intelligence reports available to this researcher was the December 1996 deportation of about one thousand (1,000) Nigerians. Nigeria, on the other hand, had on the grounds of protecting her national security engaged in the closure of her border with Benin Republic.

In spite of their differences, concerted efforts have been made to improve the relationship between the two countries. Accordingly, the tremendous reduction of tension between Nigeria and Benin could thus be described as follows (Shagaya, 1990):

“Friction along the two countries' borders had considerably reduced as a result of bilateral meetings held at various governmental levels . . . Increased cooperation between Benin and Nigeria has led to fruitful joint efforts in policing the borders. Consequently, criminals operating around the borders e. g. armed robbers and car snatchers find it difficult to dispose of stolen goods.”

In spite of attempts to improve relations between Nigeria and Benin, the fact remains that the Republic of Benin is a French sphere of influence in West- Africa. Benin has bilateral economic, social, cultural and security relations with France. This factor remains a major source of security concern in Nigeria-Benin relations.

Here, the point must be made that most of the military hardware and equipment in the possession of the Republic of Benin (acquired since independence), were supplied by France at subsidized prices or as part of the commitments of both countries' bilateral military agreement and technical assistance programs. This warm military relationship between France and Benin Republic is perceived as serious security concern by the Nigerian government and its military alike.

NIGERIA-EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Equatorial Guinea (formerly Fernando Po) is located about 100 kilometers South-East of Nigerian coasts. It is also nearer to the Coast of Cameroon. The country is strategically located close to Nigeria with a greater proximity to the Bights of Benin and Biafra (Oshuntokun, 1978a). Equatorial Guinea's strategic location is of paramount importance to Nigeria. Hence, Nigeria has always been interested in what becomes of Fernando Po if she is to play a role commensurate with her economic and human potentials. Previous happenings on the Island, most especially the supportive role of the Island to Biafra during the Nigerian civil-war of 1967-70, the inhuman treatments meted out to Nigerians in that country and the presence of foreigners during the 80's, particularly the Chinese and South-Africans (under the guise of experts) constituted threats to Nigeria's territorial integrity.

During the Nigerian civil war of 1967-70, the island of Equatorial Guinea was used by the Red Cross to ferry food, (and as claimed by Nigerians) arms and war materials to Biafra (Oshuntokun, 1978a). Equally significant was the use of the Island by the French government to provide covert military aid, weapons, ammunition and supplies to Biafra in spite of incessant protests by the then Nigerian government. (Oshuntokun, 1992b). At the attainment of sovereign status however, Equatorial Guinea was immediately subjected to constant international pressure most especially from Caritas International (a non governmental /humanitarian group) and France, to continue to provide landing rights for planes going to Uli-Ihiala - the airstrip improvised by the Biafrans. Despite this pressure, the government of Equatorial Guinea in 1969 asked the Red Cross to cease operations and leave its territory (Oshuntokun, 1978a).

Significantly, the incessant killings and

harassment of Nigerians in Equatorial Guinea generated a lot of concern to the Nigerian government. The Nigerian community (between 1970 and 1974) was subjected to all kinds of abuses but particularly characterized by brutality and human terror. This situation, coupled with the deteriorating economy in the Island, resulted in the planned withdrawal of Nigerians from Equatorial Guinea. The point must however be made that the punishments imposed on Nigerians by the Island's authorities during the evacuation process were viewed by the Nigerian government as an affront to the survival and security of its people. Consequently, the decision by the Nigerian government to use "not only her merchant navy but also gunboats and air force planes apparently to demonstrate that any covert act of brutality against departing Nigerians would not be tolerated (Oshuntokun, 1992b).

Despite the evacuation of Nigerians from Equatorial Guinea, people from different sections of the Nigerian society at the time of the crisis called on the nation's leaders to undertake military action against Equatorial Guinea in order to stop the inhuman treatment of Nigerians in that country. In her reaction to the situation, the Nigerian government then made it clear that the military occupation of the island would amount to undue interference, illegal occupation and annexation of a weaker but independent country.

The reasons adduced in the preceding paragraph according to the Nigerian government, was consistent with Nigeria's foreign policy stance in Africa. The policy, it is further argued, is premised on the respect for the territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of a sister African states. In addition, the government reiterated that any military action against Equatorial Guinea might make other neighbouring countries fearful, threatened and insecure.

Further exploration of the security dilemma and military threats posed by Equatorial Guinea to Nigeria's national security, is accentuated by the interests and activities of certain foreign nations in the island. Undoubtedly, the strategic position of the country has long been recognized by various powers in the international system. For instance (Oshuntokun, 1978a):

"In the 19th century, interest in the island was shown by Great Britain, France, USA, Spain and Portugal . . . When war broke out (1st and 2nd world war), the German government had

installed a powerful transmitter on the island that could send messages to German ships and submarines."

The implication of the above could be comprehended in the global context of military and civil use of electronic surveillance systems. It is in the light of the above submission that attempts to control the Island by foreigners are perceived as threats to Nigeria's security. Consequently, one cannot but agree with the view that (Oshuntokun, 1978a):

"There is the fear of not doing anything about Fernando Po (Equatorial Guinea) that may lead to retaliation by hostile forces, and yet there does not seem to be the realization of the fact that the very domestic and foreign policies which Nigeria is at present pursuing will attract hostile forces and that the island is just God-made to serve as a base for subverting Nigeria."

Apparently, the fear expressed above could be justified given the context in which the analysis was made. Instances of such expressed phobias abound: The transfer of the Voice of America transmitters from Kaduna in Nigeria where they were expelled by the Muritala/Obasanjo government to Fernando Po; the increasing Chinese presence and the alleged construction of South-Africa air/naval base in the country. These issues not only heightened the potential danger the island poses to Nigeria but underscores the strategic importance of Fernando Po to Nigeria (Oshuntokun, 1992b).

Similarly, the presence of the South-Africans in Equatorial Guinea, was closely monitored by the Nigerian Government and its accompanying security implications can best be surmised thus (Oshuntokun, 1992b):

"The first inkling of the South-Africans' presence in Equatorial Guinea came in the wake of the abortive coup d'etat (1985) and the collapse of the economy. The South-Africans were initially restrained and covert in their operations but by the second half of 1986 they were glaringly operating in the open . . . With this new situation, the Nigerian government quickly realized the present danger posed to Nigeria's security in view of our past neglect of Equatorial Guinea particularly in the 80's . . . On receiving his message about South-Africa the Ambassador was asked to enquire about the possibility and the desirability of any other maneuvers that might be deemed necessary by Equatorial Guinea under a military understanding and cooperation with

Nigeria . . . The way Nigeria has allowed the relations with Equatorial Guinea to drag on without any purpose is an indictment of our foreign policy which is critically short on forward planning and seriousness."

Apparently, the foregoing analysis is indicative of the threats posed by Equatorial Guinea to Nigeria's national security. Evidently, the geo-strategic location of the island as well as the possibility of its potential use by foreign countries has necessitated the need for Nigeria to adequately protect her flanks as well as to better prioritize her defence policies so that Equatorial Guinea as an offshore island would not gravitate into the orbit of any foreign power which might be hostile to Nigeria (Oshuntokun, 1978a).

In conclusion, various military officers interviewed during this research all agreed that foreign presence in Malabo, among other things, heightened the awareness among the military on the need to be more prepared and to build up Nigeria's military capabilities to such a level where she can deter or contain real or potential threats to her territorial integrity.

Nigeria - Chad

Chad Republic is strategically located between Libya in the North, Sudan in the East, and the Central African Republic and Cameroon in the South. The Western part of Chad however lies between Nigeria, Niger Republic, and some parts of Cameroon (James, 1987). The most persistent threat to Nigeria's national security is the frequent border clashes with Chad and the continual internal religious and consequent ethnic military conflicts among various warring factions in Chad. Most important, the threats posed by the internationalization of the Chadian conflict created sleepless nights for the Nigerian military.

In the first instance, the border dispute with Chad had in 1983 assumed a military dimension. In fact, the border with Chad was the first one over which Nigeria had to embark on a major military operation to contain and deter Chadian armed attacks and incursion into Nigeria (Vogt, 1992b). According to interviews conducted with retired military personnel for this study, the clash between Nigeria and Chad in 1983 was as a result of the attacks between April 18 and May 25 1983, by Chadian troops on the Nigerian Army Rifle Company outpost at Kainasara and other islands

in Lake Chad, which led to the death of nine Nigerian soldiers and the capturing of nineteen others as prisoners of war in the process.

Basically, the armed conflict between Nigeria and Chad could also be attributed to the threat posed by the interest of Chad in the lake Chad basin and other mineral rich villages and Islands bordering Nigeria and Chad (James, 1987). For the purpose of clarity, the threats to Nigeria's national interests and security posed by the boundary disputes between Nigeria and Chad include (James, 1987):

- a. The problem of fishing rights on the lake Chad basin and the incessant harassment of Nigerian fishermen by Chadian soldiers and fishermen.
- b. The perennial problem of boundary demarcation on the lake Chad basin area.
- c. Nigeria's diminishing interest in the lake Chad basin in favour of the Chad basin development authority and which was demonstrated by the huge financial commitment by Nigeria of an estimated four hundred and ninety-eight million naira (N 498,000,000.00).
- d. The expulsion of about 700,000 Chadians affected by the Nigerian deportation order of January 17, 1983.

One important point to note though, is that the genesis of the military hostilities between Nigeria and Chad could be located within the context of improperly defined boundaries between the two nations by the European colonial masters. Consequently, the Nigerian boundary with Chad (which consists of a straight line which runs for about 76km joining the Niger tri point at latitude 13.05 degree North and longitude 14.05 degree East) lacks any evidence in the form of beacons or buoys to delineate the boundary between the two countries (Vogt, 1987a).

Again, the Chadian civil war (1978 - 83) had serious implications for Nigeria's security and economic stability. Problems posed by displaced Chadians (refugees) in Nigeria, the presence of foreign military troops and the militarization of the warring factions in Chad generated grave concern for the Nigerian authorities, hence the call by subsequent Nigerian leaders for a quick resolution of the Chadian crisis. For instance, this concern was expressed in an address by a former Nigerian Head of State, General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1979. According to the text, the General reiterated thus (Obasanjo, 1979):

"The inordinate personal ambitions of some of the Chadians were exploited by some foreign agencies to ensure that a purely African initiative by Chad's neighbours without the paternalistic participation of an extra-African power does not succeed. As a consequence, the most monstrous of atrocities continued to be committed in N'Djamena (the capital of Chad) and elsewhere in Chad with the material and logistical support of these foreign agencies. In the face of massive repressions, murders, abductions and seizure of properties thousands of Chadian refugees . . . have fled into neighbouring countries, especially Nigeria."

Without the fear of contradiction, one would not be wrong to state that the threats posed to Nigeria's security by the military presence of foreign powers in Chad is direful. Chad, one is aware was embroiled in civil war for many years. The civil war however led to the amassing of weapons of war and offense by Chad. Furthermore, the presence of such countries as France, Libya, U.S.A. in Chad posed a military threat to Nigeria. In our view, had the Chadian civil war not ended at the time it did, the conflict could have spilled over into Nigeria. In fact, had the crisis not been contained on time, the nation's northern states particularly those contiguous with Chad could have been turned into a battleground by the various combatants. This singular factor, among other things, is an important reason why Nigeria cannot remain indifferent to conflicts occurring in neighbouring countries (Ukpabi, 1986).

Significantly, in order to have an insight into the nature of threats posed to Nigeria by the Chadian civil war, an analysis of the types of military weapons introduced into Chad is hereby necessary. It is hoped that an understanding of the various military configurations of the conflict would reveal not only the level of distortion of strategic balance in the sub-region (and how it weighed heavily against Nigeria) but will also unveil the security implications it presented to Nigeria.

In the first instance, the Chadian crisis witnessed a significant presence of French troops in the country (Chad). Secondly, to keep Hussein Habre government in power against Guokoni Waddeye, the French Government under President Francoise Mitterand sent weapons and ammunition and increased material assistance to Chad. Thirdly, in response to rebel forces attack

(aided by Libya) on Fa rya Large au (an Oasis town in Chad), France initially deployed about three hundred and forty (340) military advisers, one hundred and fifty (150) paratroopers, anti aircraft weapons and helicopters to Chad. These were later backed up with the deployment of fighter planes and tanks. Thirdly, the role of the United States of America (U.S.A.) in supplying weapons to Chad is also very well known. In 1987, U.S.A. supplied Chad with seven (7) stinger launchers and twentyfour (24) missiles, thus making Chad the first African country to be supplied with stinger antiaircraft missiles (Cox, 1988).

The implication of the Chadian civil war was even more amazing when cognisance is taken of the amount of money expended by Chad in prosecuting the war. The military expenditure by Chad during the civil war period far outweighed that of Nigeria, which was known to allocate substantial part of her resources to defence. Though Nigeria's military expenditure normally exceeds the proportions expended by all her adjacent neighbours, yet, when compared to Chad (during the Chadian civil war period) Nigeria's military expenditure seriously lagged behind (Kolodzej and Harkavy, 1982).

Another serious implication of the Chadian civil war was that the French and American involvements in the crisis not only compounded the already fragile peace process in Chad at that time, but also, according to former Nigerian President, Ibrahim Babangida, "contributed to the high level of tension in that country and frustrate all efforts toward a lasting solution" (Babangida, 1985). In addition it was also evident that Nigeria's leadership status (militarily and politically) in the sub-region, was not only put under a "Litmus but was also seriously challenged. Most important, the arming of the various warring factions in the crisis by foreign countries with sophisticated weapons, created not only the fear of the possible infiltration of arms into Nigeria, but also the likelihood of such weapons being utilized by Muslim fundamentalists to destabilize the country.

Evidently, one would conclude from the foregoing, that Chad remains a troublesome issue in Nigeria's security considerations, not only because of the perception of the possibility of a resumption of hostilities (Nigeria-Chad border clashes), but also because of the likelihood of eruption and the internationalization of internal

conflict in Chad (Baker, 1984). The threats posed to Nigeria by Chad are numerous but are manifested in the form of cross-border disputes particularly around the Lake Chad area and armed incursions into Nigeria by Chadian bandits. In fact, past border clashes involved Chadian attacks on certain Nigerian villages along the Nigerian-Chadian border. Prominent among these various attacks was the incident of 1983. During this period, some dissidents from Chad who fled from the nation's civil war attacked Nigerian fishermen around the Lake Chad region. Most worrisome was the fact that "the situation in Lake Chad got so bad that regular forces of Chad intervened and battle ensued between the dissidents and troops deployed to protect Nigerian fishermen" (The Nigerian Army, 1995).

Recently, the incidence of Chadian armed incursions into the North Eastern parts of Nigeria became so rife that lots of lives and property were lost to the criminal activities of the bandits. The security concern generated a high level of military alert to the extent that the government had to give orders to the military and police to patrol the Northern highways in 2000 with the recently acquired helicopter gun ships (the MI-35) in order to adequately check the banditry incursions from Chad (The Nigerian Army Restricted Papers, 2000). Perhaps one could again state here that the nature of the porosity of the Nigerian borders with her neighbours coupled with the lack of decisive defence policies are major factor which enhances external encroachments on Nigeria's territorial integrity. Consequently, one could assert that (James, 1987):

"The Nigerian border appears to be the most vulnerable spot and the nation's "archills heel" to Nigeria's security because of the traditional Nigeria's self complacent attitude toward her security, based on the false premise that Nigeria is bordered by smaller and relatively weaker but friendly states which do not constitute any real threat to Nigeria's national security."

The study is of the view (on the issue of securing Nigerian borders with Chad and other contiguous states), that "if prompt measures are not taken to delimit and demarcate the (Nigerian) boundary line, (then) sporadic military exchanges may continue to erupt over assumed violations of territorial integrity" (Vogt, 1987a).

The Republic of Niger

Niger borders Nigeria in the north- western

part of the country. Even though there are no geographical obstacles between Niger Republic and Nigeria yet, the two countries had not in the past resorted to the use of arms in settling border disputes. One might however acknowledge that there, existed in the past (and up till the present) pocket of incursions into Nigeria by some Nigerien destitutes. The magnitude of threats engendered by such forays is minimal when compared with those of other neighbouring countries.

In particular, the point could be made that Nigerien refugees have flooded Nigeria and coupled with their Chadian counterparts, have turned the Northern highways into killing zones. Sophisticated weapons such as the submachine guns and Barretta rifles, bows and arrows are being used to perpetuate these violent acts. This is why military authorities and the federal government have directed that security agencies should embark on joint and intensive patrol of the affected areas. Aside from this menace, Nigeria and Niger continue to enjoy a relatively warm relationship.

NIGERIA - CAMEROON

The Nigerian-Cameroon relationship is characterized by mutual distrust and friction emanating from the claims by both countries to the disputed Bakassi Peninsular. The boundary is the longest of all Nigeria's international boundaries and is the most complicated topographically (Vogt, 187a). Consequently, the boundary disputes between Nigeria and Cameroon Republic arising from their long, but ill-defined borders (1680 kilometers or 1050 miles) are of colonial origin. However, it has remained a source of conflict in direct bilateral relations of the two countries since independence (Ate and Akinterinwa, 1992).

Significantly, the major area of dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon is the Bakassi Peninsular. In order to undertake an objective analysis of the claims by both sides in the conflict, the features of the peninsula need to be understood. Going by this premise therefore, our understanding of the status of the Peninsula based on available records shows that (The Federal Government of Nigeria, 1996):

“The Peninsular is located at the South-Eastern tip of Nigeria, where the Peninsula pushes south ward into the Gulf of Guinea. It is a

low-lying region bordered on the West by the estuary of the Cross River, on the North by the Akpa Yafe (also known as the Akpa Ikang), on the East by the Rio del estuary, and on the South by the Gulf of Guinea. The Peninsula itself consists of series of Islands covering approximately 50 square kilometers and occupied for the most part by long established communities of Nigerians, in several dozen villages.”

Both Nigeria and Cameroon are claiming ownership of the Bakassi Peninsular and by so doing, both countries have engaged in series of verbal vituperation and military maneuvers which have serious political and security implications on the sub-region.

The claim over the Bakassi Peninsular by Cameroon is based on two major factors, namely: The 1913 Anglo-German Treaty and the 1975 Maroua Declaration. The Cameroonians' arguments are based on the treaty of March 11, 1913, signed between Britain and Germany, the purpose of which was to (The Federal Govt. of Nigeria, 1996):

- a. Rearrange the boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon from Yola to the sea.
- b. Regulate the navigation of the Cross River.

The military face-off between Nigeria and Cameroon in 1993 over the Bakassi Peninsular and the threats generated by the incessant harassment of civilians and soldiers by the Cameroonian gendarmes reached its climax in 1993 when a security report got to the Nigerian military that Cameroon had plans to attack Abana (A Nigerian town in the Peninsular) on December 24, 1993. This reports, prompted the Federal Government to order troops to occupy the peninsular to defend her territorial integrity and protect her nationals. In complying with the directive, the military on December 25, 1993 embarked on “Operation- Harmony.” It was not until three days later that the military was fully able to mobilize men, munitions and materials for the exercise. Several other operational and logistic problems encountered by the military are noted thus (Omede, 2000):

- a. It was apparent that the military could not muster adequate troops to defend the country from its various divisions at the shortest possible notice. Reasons abound for these shortcomings viz., most of the units were deployed to “Operation Liberty” in Liberia hence, the inability to rotate the unit initially deployed to the area; lack of logistic support

from both the Navy and Air force; inadequate preparations in form of intelligence and reconnaissance of the theatre of operations, etc.

- b. There was the problem of appropriate use of equipment in the theatre of operations. The military lacked serviceable patrol, light and logistic crafts to patrol the Bakassi peninsular, which is a riverine area. There was also poor perception of the terrain by patrol leaders and this resulted in the grounding of boats, which exposed the troops to enemy surveillance.
- c. The troops also lacked clear directives on the objectives of the mission, the design for battle, etc., and this resulted in hesitation in cases where decisive action was needed.
- d. In the terms of combat equipment, the military lacked adequate gun fire and naval gun support; anti-aircraft guns had to be moved from the Infantry Centre and School (ICS) in Kaduna to Bakassi while the Nigerian Army Engineers lacked the resources to operate in the amphibious terrain. There were no serviceable patrol crafts. In all, there was a dearth of an all-arms type configuration.

In terms of military capabilities, it is only Cameroon of all Nigeria's immediate neighbours that have a larger, better equipped and well-trained armed forces. Cameroon also constitutes the greatest threat to Nigeria because of the dispute over (and the arms build-up in and around) the Bakassi Peninsula.

CONCLUSION

The analysis on the relations between Nigeria and her neighbours revealed that Nigeria is seriously threatened by the various activities of her immediate neighbours who are mostly Francophone countries. The bilateral military, political and economic agreements between France and her erstwhile colonial states are largely attributed to the frequency with which these countries infringe on the sovereignty of Nigeria.

One fundamental question that has often been raised on the issue of threats and Nigeria's national security has been on the role of France in the West African sub-region. In fact, it has been argued that in terms of manpower (size of the military) and weapons= availability, none of the contiguous countries can effectively match her military capabilities. Nevertheless, one can posit that the activities of Cameroon, Chad and

other neighbouring countries (in terms of dispute over border territories and incursions into Nigeria's land), constitute serious threats to Nigeria's national security.

In addition to the French factor, other security problems arising from Nigeria's relationship with her neighbours are, the experiences of the Nigerian civil-war, various incidents of religious disturbances instigated from outside (Niger and Chad), refugee problems, the fear expressed over the potential spillover effect of the civil-war in Chad and, the threats posed by the presence of countries such as Libya, France, South Africa and other extra territorial states in neighbouring countries. In spite of these threats, historical analysis and strategic examination of Nigeria's relationship with contiguous states revealed, a high level of warmth, cordiality and mutuality of interest and purpose between Nigeria and majority of her immediate neighbours.

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