

African colonial boundaries and nation-building

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to examine the consequences of the Berlin Colonial Conference of 1884-1885 as an artificial creation and indicate that this artificiality has created a number of problems that bedevil nation-building in Africa today. The paper has adopted qualitative content analysis of archival material, national dailies and some secondary sources. The first concern is the fact that some of these boundaries cut across pre-existing ethnic groups, states and kingdoms. This has caused widespread social disruption and displacement. Today, some of the Ewe live in Ghana, some in Togo and some in Benin Republic. The Somalia are shared among Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia. The Senufo are found in Mali, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso. The examples can be multiplied. The paper highlights the consequences of this situation to include border disputes that have plagued the relationship between some independent African states such as those between Sudan and Uganda, between Somalia and Ethiopia, between Kenya and Somalia, between Ghana and Togo, between Nigeria and Cameroon, in particular over the Bakassi Peninsula. There is also the factor of France's political and economic stranglehold, on her former colonies in particular. The 1961 bilateral agreement between France and her former colonies was to retain close military, economic and cultural ties. The aim of France is to inhibit the growth and stability of the ECOWAS as a sub-regional economic integration. The paper argues that this Francophone dichotomy is a divisive tendency that contributes to territorial disputes, border skirmishes, unguarded border posts and patrols, smugglings, the menace of refugees and illegal aliens on Nigeria. The case of Cameroon is more illustrative than that of other Francophone states. It is our findings that because of the artificiality and arbitrary nature of these boundaries, each of the African nation states is made up of people of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions of origin and languages that pose the problem of nation-building in modern African states.

Keywords: Berlin Colonial conference, artificial creation, widespread social disruption and displacement, border disputes and problem of nation-building

Introduction

In the late 1800s, the industrial nations of Europe competed with one another for world empires. Within a few decades, European powers extended their control over much of the world, in the new age of overseas expansion popularly known as new imperialism. Africa, which had been largely unknown to Europeans, suddenly became the focus of attention.

By 1884, Britain, France, Germany and Belgium were engaged in the struggle for colonies in Africa. The conference started on 15th November, 1884 and ended on 30th January 1885. The European major powers at the conference were Britain, France, Germany, Portugal and Belgium. The aim was to stop the issue from degenerating into open war (Afigbo 1990:129).

One major aspect of Africa's colonial heritage is colonial boundaries. Many colonial boundaries in Africa date back to the Berlin conference of 1884-1885, which climaxed the scramble and partition of the continent. Since that exercise, Africa has known no peace. At independence the confusion was whether to retain or do away with the colonial boundaries. This essay focuses attention on how these colonial boundaries emerged and the consequences on Africa. Our preliminary suggestion has been that the African people through the instrumentality of the African Union (AU) should redo the boundaries wherever there is conflict and allow the sleeping dog to lie where no conflict exists. But no people should be forced to maintain colonial boundaries, if the happiness of being independent must be actualised (Ajala 1969:63).

One of the problems shared by all new nations is that of creating a feeling of national unity among diverse elements, as the parochialism of the constituent segments of the society has been commonly observed in all the nation states of Africa. The paper also focuses attention on the evolution of colonial boundaries in Africa. This exercise has become necessary because of the sporadic boundary disputes that have arisen since the colonial period in Africa. These disputes threaten the unity among African states. The overall effects of this development have been unwarranted and undeserved marginalisation of most ethnic groups. We shall, therefore, examine the meaning of boundary, the pre-colonial position of African boundaries and the emergence of the colonial boundaries. The paper highlights the consequences of this situation

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to include border disputes that have plagued the relationship between some independent African states, such as those between Sudan and Uganda, between Somalia and Ethiopia, between Kenya and Somalia, between Ghana and Togo, between Nigeria and Cameroon in particular and those between other African states in general over the Bakassi Peninsula. There is also the factor of France's political and economic stranglehold on her former colonies in particular. There was the 1961 bilateral agreement between France and her former colonies to retain close military, economic and cultural ties. The aim of France was to inhibit the growth and stability of the ECOWAS as a sub-regional economic integration. It is further argued that this Francophone dichotomy is a divisive tendency that contributes to territorial disputes, border skirmishes, border post problems and patrols, smuggling, the menace of refugees and illegal aliens on Nigeria; the giant of Africa has borne the giant shoes of the African predicament as a result of the partition (Ajala 1969:64).

A boundary has been described as "the imaginary line which divides two pieces of land from one another such that when these boundaries run between any two or more national states, they are usually defined from point to point in a treaty".¹ The word boundary, therefore, refers to a line. More often than not, it is used with terms like allocation, delimitation and demarcation. In studying the boundary in its territorial context, geographers have identified and applied with precision terms like the border, which represent the adjacent areas which connect the boundary. Similarly, lawyers were able to conceptualise maritime boundaries and maritime jurisdiction. It therefore followed that the territorial rights the sovereign possessed on land extended over the coastal waters. It is therefore literally correct to speak of territorial waters in international law and this extends to the concept of maritime jurisdiction as a doctrine of international law. Beyond the establishment of a legal concept empowering states to exercise jurisdiction over parts of the sea, the questions of how much of the seas and seabeds would be legally appropriated by states and the accuracy in defining the claimed zones as aspects of the maritime boundaries have also drawn our attention over the years. It is sufficient to note that African boundaries of the colonial period as inherited by African states come within our definition of "boundary" above (Ajala 1969:63).

Why boundary disputes occur in Africa

Boundary disagreements occur both locally and internationally between and among communities of the same geopolitical entity as well as at the international level. A boundary dispute arises when one country claims a piece of land in an adjacent country because of some quality that land possesses. That quality could include an important historic or cultural shrine, strategic position or economic resources, such as an oil field or a deep water port. A good example is the current Bakassi Peninsula tension between Nigeria and Cameroon. A dispute may not arise until an actual diplomatic or military conflict occurs.

Disputes exist when two countries hold opposite opinions concerning the status of a boundary or the ownership of an area. For instance, a country can make any claim concerning the ownership of territories outside their boundary but such claims need to be proved before the International Criminal Court (ICC). This is a difficult task because such proof requires detailed historical research to prove the authenticity of such claims. This has happened between Nigeria and Cameroon over the Bakassi Island.

Territorial disputes occur when a country claims an area existing in some other country's territory or when the border is under dispute. This type of dispute exists for historical or cultural reasons. For instance, cultural groups may have occupied an area for a long time and base their claims on this occupation, regardless of which country currently claims the region. For instance the Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon, which claimed five Nigerian soldiers in 1982, are good examples of territorial disputes.

Rich petroleum reserves or territories that may serve as vital strategic defensive positions may become a matter of national survival for a nation. In this regard, disputes may occur between the countries. Cultural differences although difficult to delineate by boundaries, are often the most compelling sources of dispute for the people involved. Sometimes culturally distinct groups from their own territory may use force if possible to create the separation. What makes the groups culturally distinct can be attributed to a number of factors, but generally they are of ethnic background, religious affiliation, political beliefs and differences. Territorial disputes occur when a country claims an area existing in some other country's territory or when the border is under dispute. This type of dispute exists for historical or cultural reasons.

African pre-colonial boundaries

Until the colonial period, the idea of boundaries as defined above did not exist in Africa. Though there must have existed lines, whether in actual or imaginary sense, separating states, the lines were at that time in the form of zones of varying width. Up to the 19th century, three types of frontier were identifiable in Africa. One of these has been viewed more in terms of enclaves rather than frontiers since they were regions with considerable overlapping of diverse groups. It is

argued that the idea of any type of frontier was inconceivable among some Africans of pre-colonial period and their neighbours. Examples of such groups include the Masai, the Tuareg, the Somali and similar nomadic groups. More clearly, however, there existed what have been described as the “frontier of contact” and the “frontier of separation.” The frontier of contact existed in situations where distinct cultural and political groups lived and operated side by side. Some African groups that were well organised and politically active usually had this type of frontier. The Yoruba states and Dahomey (the present day Republic of Benin) in West Africa as well as Buganda and her neighbours in East Africa best illustrate this model of frontier. On the other hand, the frontier of separation is a type of traditional frontier in which communities were separated by a buffer zone over which neither side claimed or exercised any authority. Such frontiers were provided by very thick forests like the Sambisa forest and deserts in Nigeria. The states of Central Sudan including Bornu, Air, Maradi and the Fulani Empire had such frontiers (Ajala 1969:63).

We must take notice that the different types of frontier as described above were not static. Before the imposition of the covalent boundaries arising from the colonial experience, indigenous African frontiers underwent some fluctuations. In the assessment of the discrepancies we must take into account these fluctuations. There were several revolutionary movements and wars of expansion among African peoples during the 19th century, and they all tended to alter traditional frontiers and the indigenous political landscape in Africa. For example, it would be very difficult to pinpoint the indigenous frontier between aggressive Dahomey and Buganda on the one hand and their neighbours on the other at a time when the two kingdoms were perpetually invading their neighbours with the aim to extend their political boundaries. Similarly, revolutionary movements such as the “Mfecane” which spread across most of southern Africa, from Natal to the Central African lakes, and the religious Jihads embarked upon by Fulani clerics in many parts of West Africa, hindered the existence of definite frontiers in some parts of the African continent (Adu 1966:98).

When wars are involved, successful powers usually have clear ideas of territorial arrangements they would demand before victory was achieved, and the defeated states were rarely able to resist most of these territorial adjustments. There was often an overwhelming desire on the part of all parties involved to secure an agreement which would allow the end. It is possible that European colonisation disrupted African boundaries from making relevant impacts on the evolution of boundaries in the continent.

The emergence of colonial boundaries in Africa

Colonial boundaries in Africa date back to the Berlin West African conference of 1884-1885, which invariably climaxed the scramble and partition of the continent. The word ‘scramble’ is used to qualify the hasty and hectic struggle with which the European powers – Britain, France, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Belgium and Italy – carried out the partition or allocation of various parts of the African continent among themselves. The conference was held in Berlin from November 15 1884 to January 30 1885 under the chairmanship of Otto von Bismarck, the then chancellor of Germany. On February 26, 1885, the Berlin treaty was signed (Reynord 1973:193).

The Act (Treaty) stipulated among other things that any power which wanted to claim any territory should notify the other signatory powers. During and after the conference, the European powers sent out more envoys and soldiers who, by persuasion, force, or bribery, got African rulers to sign agreements, in which they ceded, in some cases innocently, their territories. If the chief would agree to sign the treaty, he would be given such gifts as beads, cloths, or perhaps liquor. Some chiefs were so pleased with the gifts that they readily signed the treaty. Attempts by some of the rulers to resist the ensuing European political encroachment on their territories had come too late and they were practically incapable of matching the European military preparedness to suppress them (Adu 1966:98).

The effects of the Berlin episode

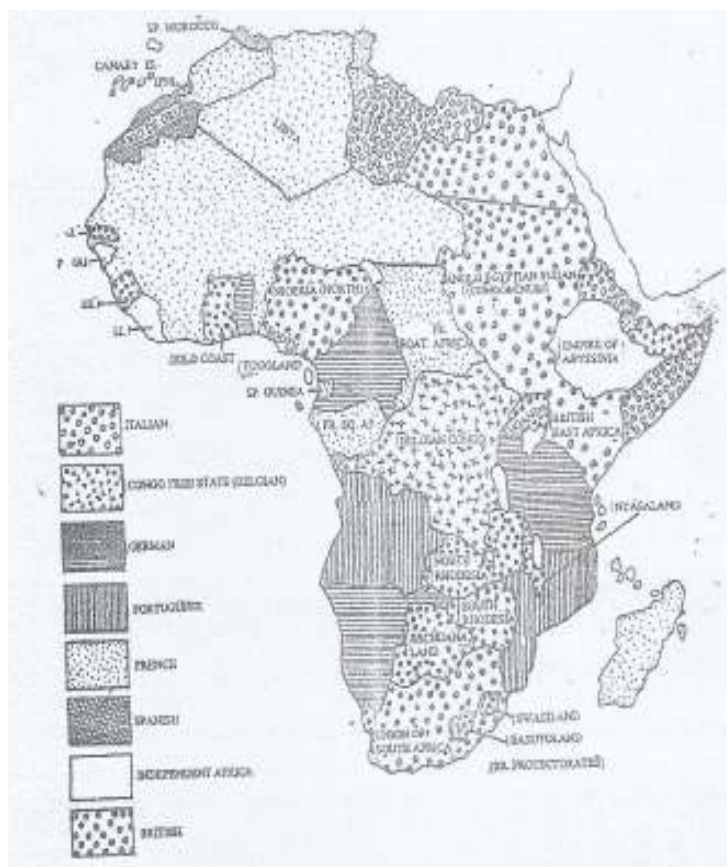
More importantly, the Berlin episode indeed disorganised Africa and terminated the natural evolution of states in the continent. The Berlin conference and subsequent statutes were unilaterally regarded as legal instruments, which empowered the European adventurous powers to divide Africa and make new political boundaries, with artificial lines drawn over territories and common cultures. Each new area was placed under the control and administration of one European power or another, to the extent that it could be rightly claimed that the nature of African boundaries today is a legacy of that conference. It was at that conference that consensus was reached on issues such as “spheres of influence”, “hinterland theory”, and “effective occupation” of territories by European powers on the African soil. It was the “spheres of influence” that established their potential claims over territories and “effective occupation” gave rise to the making of treaties with African chiefs (Hartmann 1967:72).

Essentially, the various European powers engaged in the boundary negotiation, even as they operated from their state capitals, relied on the so-called treaties, accounts of European travelers, as well as personal reports of local European agents, to carve Africa up among themselves. They resorted to ingenuity whenever and wherever they could not achieve

their aim through that process. In such cases, they would usually take “a blue pencil and a ruler” and began to draw “lines from one point on the map to another” without any consideration for tribal affinity or linguistic or some other such considerations. Reporting on the manner in which the European powers embarked on the delimitation of Africa, Lord Salisbury noted that the Europeans “engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no white man’s foot even trod, we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were”. This perhaps explains why a significant number of the boundaries are straight lines cutting across ethnic groups and overriding the dictates of geography and economy. That was indeed how colonial boundaries emerged in Africa. The boundaries agreed upon by the colonial powers were maintained during the colonial era. Africa was left with no alternative but to accept these inherited boundaries on the attainment of political independence. Today, all this has created problem for nation-building (Coplin 1971:23).

However, since independence, there have been sporadic boundary disputes all over Africa, some with the nostalgia of going back to the pre-colonial boundaries to streamline cultural communities and bridge the arbitrary lines created by the scramble and partition. As a matter of fact, the Berlin conference, despite its significance for the subsequent history of Africa, was essentially a European affair. There was no African representation at the conference. It was directed only to the basic economic, strategic and political interests of the negotiating European powers.

Ethnic groups that were split across borders tended to align in the spirit of irredentism, ignore the boundary lines and to carry on social relations across them more or less as in the days before the partition. Some studies of cross border trade and migrations have been done to demonstrate that such tendencies to ignore the boundaries has often created inter-state problems as confusion is created by the groups across borderlines. Obviously, there is no gainsaying the fact that the intensity of such problems is higher where border groups are traditional war enemies. Sometimes, the border problems are intensified by neocolonial interests of former colonising powers in Africa. This has inhibited nation-building in Africa (Coplin 1971:24). See map below:



Map of Africa showing colonial possession in 1914

Besides these formal boundaries as enumerated above, there are also many informal types that tend to reflect cultural differences, ethnic group distribution or religious influences. In view of the dynamic nature of such boundaries cartographers are unable to collect the precise data required to draw a map for such boundaries. They not only divide a geographic space, but also delineate the behaviour and practices of the people in that space. The Ogaden region is the

traditional home of nomadic peoples ethnically related to Somali tribes, yet it is currently divided between the countries of Ethiopia and Somalia, since colonial international boundaries were drawn without consulting the local people living in such border areas. This gave rise to the splitting of homogeneous ethnic groups, such as the Egun ethnic groups that were split by the international boundary with one part in Nigeria, (English-speaking) and the other in Benin Republic (French-speaking). Other examples include the Hausa-Fulani groups found in Cameroon, Niger, and Nigeria, the Shuwa/Kanuri found in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, and the Gude, found in Cameroon and Nigeria. There is cultural interdependence between and among these groups which transcends international boundaries. These culturally linked groups across the international boundaries attend markets, funerals and marriage ceremonies. An interesting aspect is the arrangement of market days within the Egun ethnic society. The market holds for a period of four days at Badagry in Nigeria, at the end of which it rotates to Topa market in Benin Republic, for a subsequent four days in which traders from both countries move with the market. It is even observed that, on these days, market women usually cross the international borders without regard to immigration regulations. However, this goes to explain the careless manner in which the demarcations were hastily carried out without due regard to ethnicity, prevailing social, political and economic situations at that period. Asiwaju has highlighted the traumatic experience of people separated from their kith and kin by international boundaries as he puts it:

The boundaries have been drawn across well established lines of communication including a document or active sense of community, based on tradition concerning common ancestry, usually very strong kinship ties shared socio-political institutions and economic resources, common custom and practice, and sometimes acceptance of common political control (Asiwaju 1984:25).

The basic objective of diplomacy is to enable people to live with their neighbours, a feat which requires a measure of accommodation to the interests of others. Nigeria had cordial relations with its neighbours – Benin Republic, Niger, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Cameroon. The guiding principles of Nigeria regional foreign policy since independence had been that of good neighbourliness, friendship, African unity and independence, peaceful settlement of disputes, non-alignment and non-intentional interference in the internal affairs of other nations and regional economic co-operation and development (Panco 1993:82).

Nevertheless, conflict situations, as the antithesis of diplomatic harmony, often arose in time and space. Nigerian neighbouring states had often been hostile and popular passion had become continually more inflamed especially where the object of dispute is boundary problem between Cameroon and Chad for instance. More to the point is the evidence of the divisive factor of the Anglophone-Francophone dichotomy. Thus, Nigeria is surrounded by Francophone neighbours. European colonialism has a devastating impact on Nigerian neighbours in particular and Africa in general. The artificial boundaries created by the colonial rulers as they ruled Africa and finally left had the effect of bringing together many different ethnic groups within a nation that did not reflect, nor had (in such a short period of time) the ability to accommodate or provide for the cultural and ethnic diversity.

Nigeria/Cameroon boundary dispute

In the southern sector the areas around the Bakassi and Eniong Peninsula situated on both west and east of the mouth of Rio-del-Rey and Calabar channel at one time or other were being seriously contested by both countries. Attention was first drawn here when between 1966 and 1967 the Late Isaac AdakaBoro used parts of the creeks as his operational base. The recent discovery of oil in the area, and its strategic importance to the countries, has made it an area of high conflict potential. One important observation is that the area was inhabited almost ninety percent by Nigerian fishermen of Efik origin. Prominent among such villages being contested are Abana, Atabong, IneEkoi, IneEdemNtong, IneOdiong, Amamong, ObufaOkobo, Okobodi, Ibekwe, Afaha, Usaha, IneEdet, IneAkwa, IneAttayo, InelnuaAbasi and Inelkang. Today the Bakassi Island has been ceded to Cameroon by the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Panco 1993:83).

Nigeria/Benin

The frontier between the People's Republic of Benin and Nigeria was defined in a series of agreements between France and Britain in the nineteenth century during the partition of Africa. The first major effort at fixing and defining the Nigeria-Benin boundary was undertaken in 1889 when the two colonial powers reached an agreement on the frontier between Lagos and Porto Novo. The final agreement was reached in June 1898. Recently, the government of Benin Republic has invaded about 16 villages in Kwara State of Nigeria and hoisted its flag there (Dede 1981:18).

Nigeria/Niger

The frontier between Nigeria and Niger split the Hausa, the Fulani and other ethnic groups; these people are found in both countries. The major agreement that defined the boundary between Niger and Nigeria was signed in June 1898, the same year as Benin Republic. Niger was tied very closely to France by bilateral agreements which were signed in 1961 to

retain close economic and cultural ties with France. This constitutes a barrier to the development of close economic, political and military ties between Niger and Nigeria. Niger covers a vast area with a landlock stretching from its southern border with Nigeria through the Sahara Desert, and the Chadian border cuts through Lake Chad with no contiguous land mass (Dede 1981:18).

Nigeria/Equatorial Guinea

In the case of Nigeria/Equatorial Guinea relations, the campaign for annexation of Fernando Po began in 1961 and reached its crescendo in 1965 when a series of humiliations were meted to Nigerians. Many people in Nigeria were dissatisfied with the failure of the military government to deal with Fernando Po during the regime of Francisco Macias Nguema (Otite 2007:75).

Problems of border posts and patrols

Nigeria, with a total land and water border of 3 650 kms, faces a major problem of border posts and patrols. Before the colonial powers drew up the existing boundaries, the indigenous populations moved freely, except in areas where such movements were restricted by either environmental barriers or internecine strife. As a matter of fact, all along the present borders, the same 'tribes' or ethnic groups tend to settle on either side of the borders. In most cases, the people tend to share the same customs, use the same language or dialect and exhibit identical socio-economic characteristics. Such a situation creates serious problems for the border patrols. The relations between Nigeria and her Francophone neighbours are products of Africa's encounter with European imperialism and colonialism. Firearms played a part in creating large political entities which inhibit the process of nation-building and state formation (Otite 2007:75).

Smuggling

One of the weaknesses of the Nigerian border posts and patrol situation is the encouragement of smuggling. It must, however, be stated here that smuggling among Nigerians is as old as external trade itself. Both Jones and McFarlan in their studies have demonstrated that smuggling was already rearing its head among the traders of the Oil Rivers (Ben and Craig 1986:78).

As a matter of fact, when Major Claude McDonald was appointed commissioner and Consul-General of the Oil Rivers Protectorate in 1891, the first thing he did at Calabar was to set up a customs house to exact toll on European goods entering the country. That was 120 years ago when the concept of customs and excise started. In which case, commercial relations played a part in the development of *ad hoc* diplomacy as well as the expansion of foreign relations. Although smuggling had been going on in the country long before independence, probably it never attained the level at which it is operating, and never involved the range of personalities and organizational management it has reached today. In the early days, smuggling appeared to have centred mainly in the Eastern states with the Cross River as the fulcrum. Then the main impetus came from the large Nigerian population which worked in the cocoa plantations of Fernando Po and Rio Muni (Equatorial Guinea). Udo notes that since the slave trade was stopped and the legitimate trade in palm produce fell into government hands, the Cross River and its main tributary, the Enyong Creek, became notorious highways for smuggling of goods, including alcohol, tobacco, drugs and cloth from the Equatorial Guinea Island of Fernando Po. During this early period of smuggling, effective use of the creeks and inlets was made by the culprits in an attempt to beat the anti-smuggling government patrols and custom men (Uke 1999:33).

The problems of nation-building in Africa

Nations are an important part of modern society. If we go back into history, we see that the world used to be divided into empires and kingdoms. In the modern period, however, nations or nation states have replaced empires as the basic units of human political organisation. Nations just don't happen by historical accident; rather they are built by men and women with vision and resolve; nation-building is therefore the product of conscious statecraft. Nation-building is always a work-in-progress; a dynamic process in constant need of nurturing and re-invention (Gambari 1990:75).

Nation-building has many important aspects. Firstly, it is about building a political entity which corresponds to a given territory, based on some generally accepted rules, norms and principles and a common citizenship. Nation-building is about building the tangible and intangible threads that hold a political entity together and give it a sense of purpose. Even in these days of globalisation and rapid international flows of people and ideas, having a viable nation remains synonymous with achieving modernity. It is about building the institutions and values which sustain the collective community in these modern times.

In today's world, skills, industriousness, productivity, and competitiveness are the determinant factors of national greatness. Not even the possession of a nuclear bomb is enough to make a nation great without reference to the industriousness and creativity of its citizens. Since the time of Adam Smith, every serious nationalist and politician has

come to know that the wealth of a nation is not based on the wealth and opulence of its rulers, but on the productivity and industriousness of its citizenry.

Natural resources

Territorial disputes can also be explained by the presence of natural resources. Morocco's claim on Algerian territory in 1963 appears to have had an economic motive – the presence of oil deposits in the desert area. Likewise, its war with the POLISARIO involves more than territorial interest. If Morocco controlled the Western Sahara, it would have been able to monopolise the production and marketing of phosphate and to exploit the area's iron ore deposits. Libya's claim to the Northern Aouzou strip of Chad stems from the presence of uranium in the region. The Nile water is a potential source of inter-state conflict among the Nile Valley states. Since the coming of a socialist government in Ethiopia, Egypt has on several occasions declared it would go to war with Ethiopia highlands. The Blue Nile is important for the annual flooding of the River Nile on which both Egypt and Sudan depend heavily for agricultural activities. Given the foregoing, the conflicts around the Nile valley states hinder nation-building.

Decolonisation

If territorial disputes lead to military engagement in Africa, decolonisation was another cause of violent conflict. The support of independent African states for liberation movements exposed these states to colonialist military aggression. During the 1960s Tanzania supported FRELIMO's war against Portuguese colonialists. In the 1970s Guinea's support for the liberation struggle in neighbouring Guinea-Bissau brought it into conflict with the Portuguese authorities. The white minority regime in the former Rhodesia made repeated raids into Mozambique to operate from their territory. Angola, which gave support and shelter to SWAPO's fight for the liberation of Namibia, suffered considerable hardship from South African aggression and interference. In its attempt to prevent the liberation of Namibia, South Africa resorted to full-scale military invasions of Angola and it was clear that the 1984 agreement between the two countries did lead to peaceful co-existence as long as Namibia remained under South African occupation (Ojo and Orwa *et al.* 1987:45).

The challenge of leadership

Within the last two decades, the international community has witnessed dramatic transformation with serious repercussions for Third World Countries. One of such fundamental changes is the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the subsequent rise of democratic movements that overthrew totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. The resurgence of democratic movements as part of what Huntington describes as the "Third Wave" of democratisation also swept across the African continent. One-party and military dictatorships that hitherto monopolised power were confronted by civil society and pro-democracy movements which insisted on opening the democratic space. In African countries such as Benin, Zambia, Ghana, Malawi, Ethiopia, Kenya and Nigeria, pluralism in political competition was installed by regimes which hitherto had monopolised political power. In Zambia, for example, the United Independence Party of Kenneth Kaunda which had monopolised the political space had to submit to political pluralism and democratic competition following agitation from civil society formations, especially the Zambian council of trade unions. In Benin Republic, trade unions, students, traders, etc. mobilised into a formidable political opposition that ultimately compelled the Kerekou regime to succumb to a sovereign national conference which eventually led to the removal of autocracy and the installation of a democratic regime. Nevertheless, democracy in the real sense of the word has yet to take its place in Africa. This challenge of leadership is a problem for nation-building (Mazrui 1977:72).

Foreign intervention

Foreign intervention in the internal affairs of African countries has by no means come to an end, especially in ex-French colonies in central Africa. As a result of the military pact with the French, French troops have been stationed in a number of these countries for several years at the request of local governments of the ex-French colonies. Opposition groups now contend that the French forces are being used to uphold dictatorial tendencies and should be withdrawn. This has caused some political instability in the region, making nation-building impossible (Reynold 1973:193).

The inauguration of ECOWAS in Lagos on 28 May 1975 was a breakthrough in the long series of efforts to institute some form of economic co-operation and integration embracing the entire West African region. The aim of France was to inhibit the growth of the ECOWAS (Nwaka 1990:56).

Conclusion

The value of the study is to compare the pre-colonial boundaries with the colonial boundaries as well as highlighting the implications of the Berlin-Colonial Conference of 1884-85 on Africa. It is our finding that because of the artificiality and arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries each of the African nation states is made up of diverse cultural backgrounds, traditions of origin and languages that pose the problems of nation-building in modern African states. A major implication

of the Berlin Colonial Conference is artificial creation, widespread social disruption and displacement of people in terms of refugee problems. Ethnic groups that were split across borders tend to align in the spirit of irredentism, ignore the boundary lines and carry on social relations across them more or less as in the days before the partition. This tendency to ignore the boundaries has often created inter-state problems, as confusion is created by the group that crosses a border line. The problem is more pronounced where border groups are traditional warring enemies.

We have examined the factors of France's political and economic stranglehold on her former colonies; in particular the 1961 bilateral agreement to retain close military, economic and cultural ties with the former Francophone States. This dichotomy and divisive tendency inhibit the growth and stability of the ECOWAS as a sub-regional economic integration. We have demonstrated the manner in which the Francophone dichotomy has become a divisive tendency that contributes to territorial disputes, border skirmishes, border posts and patrolling in Africa. The Francophone state could always depend on France in the event of any military confrontation with their neighbours, Nigeria in particular. All this hinders nation-building in Africa and regional integration.

Our preliminary suggestion has been that African peoples through the instrumentality of the African Union (AU) should redo the boundaries wherever there is conflict and allow the sleeping "dog" to lie. Where no conflict exists, nobody should be forced to maintain colonial boundaries.

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