



GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis

Volume 7, Issue 1, January -June, 2024

ISSN (Online): 2714-2485

Examining Border Relations and Nation-Building: Nigeria and its Neighbors from 1960 to 2002

Felix Tabi Okorn

History and International Studies,
University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Email: felix.okorn@unical.edu.ng

(Received: January-2024; **Accepted:** March-2024; Available **Online:** March-2024)



This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License
CC-BY-NC-4.0 ©2024 by author (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the challenge of nation-building in various African nations, especially those characterized by diverse ethnic compositions and religious differences. It highlights how colonial-era borders, established during the partitioning of Africa in 1884 and 1885, have hindered efforts to build unified national identities and foster socio-economic cooperation among ethnic groups. Focusing on Nigeria and its neighboring countries, the research assesses strategies employed to promote nation-building through trans-border relations programs. The colonial legacy left Nigeria and other African nations grappling with complex border issues, exacerbated by post-independence policies that strained cross-border relations and led to diplomatic disputes. Despite these challenges, Nigeria pursued a policy of enhancing relations with neighboring countries, recognizing the interconnectedness of border communities. The establishment of joint commissions, such as the Nigerian Boundary Commission (NBC), aimed to tackle border disputes and promote cooperation. Through trans-border cooperation workshops, the NBC convened stakeholders from diverse backgrounds to discuss and resolve border-related challenges. Despite obstacles such as funding constraints and delays, these workshops remain essential platforms for dialogue, crucial for resolving border issues and promoting nation-building. The study concludes by highlighting the significance of the NBC's initiatives in setting a precedent for other African countries seeking to improve relations with their neighbors through informed dialogue and cooperation.

Keywords: Africa, Berlin, Border, Limitrophe; Nation-building.

INTRODUCTION

Nation-building represents a critical phase in the socio-economic and political evolution of both emerging and established nations. It is an ongoing endeavor aimed at crafting a cohesive national identity from diverse ethnic, religious, and political groups, often brought together through historical circumstances such as war, colonialism, plebiscites, or under the auspices of international entities like the United Nations (UN) (Dennis, 2018). The task of nation-building necessitates the transformation of a disparate populace into a unified national entity (Dennis, 2022). This challenge is particularly pronounced in Africa and, by extension, Nigeria, where the legacy of colonialism has left

behind a patchwork of ethnic nationalities amalgamated by European powers—Britain, France, Spain, Portugal, Germany, and Belgium—during the 1884/85 Berlin Conference on Africa (Mkapa, 2010).

Issues related to boundaries, such as irredentism, border disputes, and conflicts over mineral resources in border areas, have perpetuated tensions and impeded cooperation among neighboring African countries (Mbaya, 2018). This paper delves into the complexities of nation-building and border relations within this fraught context. It begins with an overview of the concepts of nation-building and boundaries in Africa, followed by an analysis of the border relations between Nigeria and its immediate neighbors since gaining independence. The discussion culminates in an exploration of the Nigerian government's efforts to foster nation-building across its international boundaries.

Employing a descriptive and analytical methodology, this study scrutinizes and interprets various data sources. It leverages a mix of primary and secondary materials, including published books, governmental records, academic journals, and online resources, to provide a comprehensive examination of the intricate process of nation-building in the face of enduring border-related challenges in Africa.

AN OVERVIEW OF NATION-BUILDING AND BOUNDARIES IN AFRICA

The task of melding various ethnic groups into a cohesive nation-state within the African continent, a challenge brought forth by colonial legacies, has persistently baffled African leaders since the late 20th century (Connell, et al., 2020). This predicament isn't exclusive to Africa; similar nation-building challenges are evident in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. However, for African leaders, nation-building remains a pivotal national endeavor as outlined by Srinivasan (1980). A significant barrier to nation-building post-independence is the modern boundaries imposed on the continent, a remnant of colonialism birthed from the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885 (Fawole, 2018). This event cast a long-lasting shadow over Africa, igniting numerous conflicts and crises across the continent (Kalu, 2021).

The concept of nation-building is diversely interpreted by scholars, reflecting its complexity. Deutsch and Foltz (1963) view it as the restructuring of territories delineated by colonial or imperial powers, ignoring ethnic, religious, or cultural demarcations (Ajayi, 2021). Koter (2021) highlights nation-building as fostering citizens' allegiance to their country over ethnic loyalties. Falola (2022) sees it fundamentally as a cultural endeavor beyond mere political activity. Munanye (2011) emphasizes two main aspects: national integration and the stimulation of rapid socio-economic progress. These perspectives converge on the idea that nation-building is about creating a new, unified nation from diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds.

Except for Ethiopia, colonialism amalgamated Africa's diverse ethnic nations for various colonial interests, often disregarding the long-term impact on post-independence Africa. In West Africa, for instance, colonial boundaries disrupted centuries-old ethnic communities while artificially merging others without shared histories (Khanna, 2016). Colonial powers did little to encourage nation-building, often employing divide-and-rule strategies to solidify their control and exacerbate divisions. This legacy of division complicated post-colonial efforts at nation-building, with governance often skewed by ethnic biases rather than merit, further straining the unity and development of African states.

Despite these challenges, nation-building in Africa was inevitable and essential for rectifying colonial-era injustices and fostering unity among diverse nationalities. This process aimed not only at national integration but also at healing the wounds of

colonialism's divisive tactics. However, the artificial separation and amalgamation of ethnic groups with shared histories have significantly impeded the post-independence efforts towards nation-building. Joseph & Herbst (1997) reaffirms the detrimental effects of colonialism on nation-building, underlining the importance of this endeavor in the post-colonial context:

One of the reasons for the difficulties of what many consider "failed states" is that some peoples who had been integrated were taken apart by European colonialism, while others who were separate peoples were integrated together in new states not based on common identities. Particularly in Africa and the Middle East, new political borders paid little attention to national identities in the creation of new states. Thus the notion of nation-state, a nation which developed the governmental apparatus of a state, was often nonsense. While in Europe nation-building historically preceded state-building, in post-colonial states, state-building preceded nation-building. The aftermath of colonialism led to the need for nation-building (p. 178).

There are multiple factors that have contributed to the African continent's delayed progress in the process of nationbuilding. The majority of scholars attribute the establishment of ethnicity and ethnic marginalisation, tribalism, minority fear, underdevelopment, and nepotism to the colonial heritage (Dennis & Udo, 2021; Otto, 2023; Otto, D & Udoh, 2024). Likewise, African leaders after gaining independence have also contributed to impeding the nation-building process by fostering ethnic competition within their countries. Similarly, a significant number of them exhibit a lack of respect for the rule of law, democratic procedures, and engage in corrupt activities. The political instability observed in various African states, including Nigeria, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), can be attributed to the colonial legacy and the subsequent actions of post-colonial African leaders. These actions have manifested in the form of coup d'états, intra-state conflicts, as well as ethnic, religious, and communal conflicts (Marc, et al., 2015).

Similarly, the presence of political instability has impeded endeavours aimed at achieving infrastructural and economic growth, which are crucial for the advancement of the continent. The aforementioned problems have impeded the endeavours of leaders on the continent to foster nation-building. The negative consequences of colonialism and the inability of continental leaders to effectively handle the situation have persistently impeded the process of establishing a nation within postindependence Africa. Nigeria, akin to several African nations, has encountered a multitude of problems in the process of nationbuilding. Multiple scholarly works authored by Nigerians and scholars from other countries (Alemazung, 2010; Papaioannou & Dalrymple-Smith, 2015; Yusuf, 2018) have extensively examined the factors and actions undertaken by both colonial and post-colonial Nigeria, as well as Africa as a whole. These works have not only hindered the process of national integration but have also undermined endeavours aimed at constructing a cohesive nation. Colonialism had a lasting impact on Nigeria after it gained freedom.

Colonialism is responsible for a number of societal, economic, and political issues faced by the region. The British colonial master's actions involved the erroneous amalgamation of many ethnic ethnicities without their explicit agreement. Similarly, they lacked a viable plan during the colonial era to bring them together due to their lack of awareness regarding their cultural, linguistic, religious, political, and worldview disparities. Therefore, upon achieving independence, the newly appointed leaders, who were influenced by the colonial era, implemented measures that exacerbated the existing divisions among the populace based on ethnic and religious affiliations. According to

Usoro & Udoette, M. (2020); Nwiyi and Udoette (2022), it is argued that the British colonial presence in Nigeria played a significant role in establishing the groundwork for division and political instability. Since gaining independence, the country has faced a multitude of ethnic-religious, communal, and political challenges, which have been adequately addressed by the progress. The pinnacle of this event was the protracted Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970), which nearly led to the autonomy of the eastern region of the nation (Usoro & Udoette, 2014). The roots of ethnicity and religious sentiment have been cultivated and continue to persist throughout the Nigerian population, exerting a significant influence on their interpersonal dynamics (Udoette & Nwiyi, 2015). The current generation faces a significant obstacle in their efforts to construct a Nigeria wherein individuals are not evaluated based on their ethnic or religious heritage, but rather on their Nigerian identity.

Throughout a similar vein, the process of nation-building throughout post-independence Africa, including Nigeria, has encountered significant obstacles due to the enduring limits imposed upon the continent by its colonial powers. The establishment of colonial boundaries on the continent was first arbitrary, but it gained relevance with the decline of colonialism. According to Okoko et al., (2023), every territorial entity assumed a distinct role in fostering national loyalty. The establishment of these limits created competition among the recently emancipated African nations. During the process, it slightly hindered efforts aimed at fostering authentic collaboration and, consequently, the development of the nation. Moreover, it fostered connections between ethnic groups that have a common past but were separated by the colonial borders established by the colonial powers. The partition of the African continent brought about the establishment of the state system and resulted in significant alterations to the pre-existing boundary arrangements across the continent (Benson, 2023). In the nineteenth century, Africa was arbitrarily divided into several groups based on their ethnicity and language, without the agreement of its peoples (Balandier, 2020). This division led to the establishment of international boundaries, a concept that was unfamiliar to Africans prior to the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.

Numerous scholarly publications by African and Africanist historians, as well as boundary researchers, have extensively studied the impact of the partitioning of the African continent. Anene and Asiwaju, two prominent Nigerian historians and scholars in the field of boundary studies, have effectively elucidated the impact of colonialism on the partition and demarcation of African territories. Additionally, Aghemelo & Ibhasebhor (2006) asserts that:

The contemporary African scene does not leave room for optimism and complacency. People who had assumed that, in view of the arbitrariness of the boundaries, the preservation of the frontiers would arouse no patriotism have been proved wrong. Morocco and Algeria resorted to war in order to maintain the integrity of the boundaries which national honour appeared to demand. In many other African areas, there is an uneasy stirring of irredentist claims kept alive by the clamour of groups whose traditional frontiers have apparently been outraged by the international boundaries. Somalia, for instance, makes territorial claims against Ethiopia and Kenya. Togo, the home of the Ewe groups, insists that Ghana should return to her the portion of Ewe country incorporated into Ghana. There are therefore many potential sources of trouble arising from dissatisfaction with the international boundaries (p. 180).

According to Udoh & Udo (2022), the majority of the issues faced by the continent following its independence were closely linked to the inequitable division of the continent. According to Asiwaju (1999):

Africa was badly partitioned; African boundaries were arbitrarily drawn with little or no regard for pre-existing socio-economic patterns and networks and are, therefore, artificial; the boundaries have led to the erratic separation of unified culture areas and a fragmentation of coherent natural planning regions and ecosystem; ... A great deal of Africa's current economic problems have stemmed from the division of territories into a large number of competitive, rather than complementary, national economies; and finally, much of the continent's current political problems have originated from the arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries (p. 11).

In contemporary times, the continent has witnessed the emergence of several boundary disputes and challenges, which are predominantly attributed to the division in 1884/85. These include instances of irredentism, genocide, and conflicts pertaining to mineral resources. An instance of a boundary dispute in Africa is the Bakassi Peninsula dispute between Nigeria and Cameroon (Udo & Inua 2020, Udo, 2022). The ethnic genocide that occurred in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, among the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), serves as an additional instance of border-related challenges within the African continent (Aluede, 2019). Conversely, African leaders in the post-independence era have had a role in exacerbating boundary disputes within the continent through the promotion of irredentism. In 1964, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which is now known as the African Union (AU), reached a unanimous decision in Cairo, Egypt to maintain the colonial borders established by the colonial powers. However, certain African leaders, including Kwame Nkrumah (1909 – 1972) of Ghana, expressed opposition to this resolution. Morrison (2020) posits that Nkrumah advocated for the restoration of the continent's boundaries to their pre-1884/85 configuration. The colonial structure of African boundaries has hindered developmental endeavours and hindered strategies for fostering border relations among neighbouring nations.

NIGERIA'S BORDER RELATIONS WITH ITS NEAR NEIGHBOURS SINCE GAINING INDEPENDENCE

Nigeria occupies a strategically advantageous position inside the central region of West Africa, with its borders being encompassed by former French colonies in the surrounding area. According to Udo (2017), Nigeria is geographically separated from the Benin Republic to the west, Cameroon to the east, Chad to the north-east, Niger to the north, and Equatorial Guinea to the south along the Atlantic coast. Since gaining independence, Nigeria has seen a combination of positive and negative border ties with its neighbouring countries (Fayomi et al, 2015), resulting in several instances where diplomatic relations between them have been negatively affected. Similar to other regions in Africa, the division of the African continent in 1884/85 resulted in the separation of ethnic groups that had coexisted for generations between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries.

The division of the Yoruba and Bariba ethnic groups between Nigeria and Benin Republic at the western and north-western borders of both countries was exemplified by the Berlin debacle (Udo, 2018a). Likewise, certain regions of the Hausa community in northern Nigeria were partitioned between the nations of Nigeria and southern Niger. Similarly, the Kanuri people residing in the north-eastern region of Nigeria experienced a division between Nigeria and Chad. Similar observations may be made with the Mandara, Jukun, Chamba, and Efik ethnic groups residing in the region between Nigeria and Cameroon (Udo, 2018a).

The presence of Nigeria's border with its neighbouring countries presents a favourable circumstance for the leaders of both Nigeria and its immediate neighbours to foster and enhance the pre-existing relationships among their respective border

communities, which can be traced back to the pre-colonial period. Colonialism and the establishment of boundary lines resulted in the modification of the situation, leading to the division of the population into several territories. The border regions play a dual role in facilitating nation-building by fostering economic collaboration and fostering cultural connections among different populations. Furthermore, it provides the potential to address national concerns at the grassroots level and among border communities, notwithstanding the presence of demarcations that delineate their division. Nevertheless, the complex dynamics between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries have engendered scepticism and apprehension towards Nigeria due to its power, population, and resources.

The border ties between Nigeria and its immediate neighbours have exhibited ambivalence since the country gained independence. Nigeria and its immediate neighbours have experienced both periods of collaboration and strife. Following the attainment of independence, the Nigerian government promptly forged amicable relations with its neighbouring countries (Uwak & Ebong, 2023). As an illustration, the administration led by Sir Tafawa Balewa (1960-1966) founded the Chad Basin Commission in 1964, in collaboration with Chad, Cameroon, and Niger, with the aim of fostering economic connections between their respective countries. In addition to the establishment of the joint commission, the Nigerian government has also fostered bilateral contacts with its immediate neighbours in order to facilitate economic, cultural, political, and security cooperation throughout the years. The establishment of the Nigeria-Niger Joint Cooperation in 1971 aimed to address the diverse difficulties encountered by both nations, with a particular focus on the border villages (Aluede, 2017). The border-related concerns encompass several challenges like as smuggling, border conflicts, and irredentism, among other factors. The Nigeria-Benin Joint Border Commission was established by the Nigerian-Benin government in 1981 with the purpose of tackling border-related issues in their respective border regions.

Extensive documentation exists regarding the presence of animosity in the border relations between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. During the civilian administration of President Shehu Shagari (1979-1983), certain Nigerian villages in the Illo region of Sokoto State were subjected to an invasion by the Beninois military in 1981 (Adebakin, 2020). In these villages, they proudly displayed their national flag. In 1983, a recurrence of the aforementioned incident occurred, wherein Cameroonian forces launched an ambush and resulted in the fatalities of five Nigerian soldiers in Ikang, a border town located adjacent to Cross River State. Similarly, in 1983, Chadian military infiltrated Nigerian territory and assumed control over certain border towns (Aziken, 2019). This development has resulted in the emergence of tensions between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries. Although the Shagari administration successfully addressed the difficulties through diplomatic means rather than resorting to force, the scenario has given rise to security worries regarding border relations between Nigeria and its immediate neighbouring countries.

In April 1984, General Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985) implemented the closure of Nigeria's land border with its neighbouring countries. Subsequent to the alteration of its currency, the dictatorship implemented a policy of restricting both human and material traffic at Nigeria's borders with its immediate neighbouring countries (Raji, 2015). Similarly, the decision to close the border was motivated by concerns regarding the potential for illicit smuggling activities originating from surrounding nations and crossing Nigeria's borders. The closure of the country's border was justified by the imperative to safeguard Nigeria's nascent industry. The affordability of illegal items entering Nigeria has had a significant impact on the cost of Nigerian products. The economic well-being of Nigeria's immediate neighbouring countries was adversely

impacted by the border closure, notably among traders engaged in cross-border commercial activities. During the border closure, Niger Republic had a significant decline in its customs revenue, amounting to around 25% of its customs revenue in 1984. The closure of Nigeria's borders with its immediate neighbours by General Buhari was met with condemnation by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS criticised this decision as a violation of its protocol regarding open borders and the unrestricted movement of individuals and products throughout the sub-region. ECOWAS, founded in 1975, is the primary intergovernmental international organisation in the West African sub-region.

The governments of Nigeria's immediate neighbouring countries made multiple unsuccessful requests to General Buhari, urging him to reopen Nigeria's border. Efforts were undertaken to mitigate the circumstances that prompted the Nigerian government to implement border closures with its neighbouring countries. The Quadripartite Agreement was signed by Nigeria, Benin Republic, Ghana, and Togo, a group of impacted governments, with the aim of addressing and combating border-related concerns among them (Nwachuku & Uzoigwe, 2004). Notwithstanding these endeavours, General Buhari declined to reopen the border of Nigeria. It is noteworthy that Nigeria's borders were promptly reopened in 1986 following the overthrow of Buhari's dictatorship by General Ibrahim Babangida through a military coup in 1985 (Nwachuku & Uzoigwe, 2004). Therefore, Nigeria's foreign ties with its neighbouring countries were marked by a trend of open borders till the conclusion of his presidency.

During the military administration led by General Abacha in 1996, Nigeria implemented a policy of border closure with the Benin Republic. President Soglo's administration faced criticism for the assassination of the nine Ogoni activists (Nweke, 2018). However, it is worth noting that the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary dispute about ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula reached its zenith during the Abacha dictatorship administration. The leaders of both nations asserted their ownership over the contested peninsula, which is abundant in crude oil reserves. The aforementioned development resulted in the militarization of both sides of the border. In 2002, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) rendered a judgement that ultimately resolved the boundary dispute (Nweke, 2018). The crisis era had a significant impact on the relations between the two countries, particularly on the border villages that had coexisted for decades.

The incidence of trans-border criminal activities along Nigeria's border with its neighbouring countries has been steadily rising since the 1970s. The increase in illicit criminal activities can be attributed to various variables, including poverty, unemployment, the permeable nature of the border, the commercial viability of illicit enterprises, and corruption (Kehinde, 2019). The illicit enterprise in the Nigeria-Benin border has had a detrimental impact on both security and economic growth. Trans-border crime has emerged as a source of embarrassment for the Nigerian government, despite the implementation of several measures aimed at mitigating its occurrence. According to a report by the Nigerian Tribune in 2003, the Nigerian government under the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo was required to take dramatic action in order to persuade the Beninois government to take action.

The Obasanjo administration was compelled to block the border between Nigeria and Benin in 2003 because to the infamous actions of trans-border criminals, particularly those operating across the Nigeria-Benin frontiers (Sklar, et al., 2006). The closure of the border between the two nations had a significant impact on commercial transactions involving individuals from both countries, including both businessmen and women. In order to reopen the border, the Nigerian government requested that the Beninois government surrender Ahmed Tijani, a well-known criminal involved in transnational criminal activities, to the Nigerian government (Sklar, et al., 2006).

ENGAGING IN TRANS-BORDER COOPERATION WORKSHOPS TO FOSTER BORDER RELATIONS AND FACILITATE NATION-BUILDING: THE NIGERIAN CASE STUDY

The post-independence African republics faced numerous obstacles due to the colonial boundaries they inherited, both internally and in their relations with neighbouring countries. African politicians have exacerbated border-related issues between countries by their acts and policies. The proliferation and enlargement of trans-border criminal activities within the border regions of African nations, together with their consequential effects on the socio-economic and political progress of the continent, have emerged as significant obstacles faced by the continent in contemporary times. The presence of these border disputes has impeded collaboration among African nations as they attribute blame to one another.

Since gaining independence, the Nigerian government has demonstrated a strong dedication to fostering amicable relations with its neighbouring countries. The commitment is reflected in Nigeria's foreign policy objectives upon gaining independence, which include refraining from interfering in the internal affairs of its neighbouring countries and pledging to foster a policy of amicable relations with its near neighbours (Gambari, 2008). Similar to other nations in the continent grappling with border and boundary disputes, the Nigerian government has endeavoured to explore diverse approaches in order to address the numerous obstacles arising from border-related issues with neighbouring countries. The border issues between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries are a consequence of colonialism, which has impeded collaboration and, consequently, the process of nation-building. In 1987, the Nigerian government established the National Boundary Commission (NBC) as a means to tackle boundary and border-related issues with neighbouring countries (Aluede, 2017).

The NBC prioritises the organisation of trans-border cooperation workshops as a component of its initiatives to address border disputes between Nigeria and neighbouring countries, hence fostering the development of the nation. It is noteworthy to observe that the establishment of the National Border Commission (NBC) was a consequence of boundary and border-related issues between Nigeria and its neighbouring countries

In 1986, General Ibrahim Babangida reopened Nigeria's borders with neighboring countries, which had been closed by his predecessor in 1984 for security among other concerns. The Babangida-led military administration aimed to address the enduring boundary issues with Nigeria's limitrophe neighbors, leading to the establishment of the National Boundary Commission (NBC) to tackle challenges along Nigeria's internal and external boundaries (Agbiboa, 2014). The NBC has pursued the resolution of boundary and border disputes through trans-border cooperation, leveraging intellectual dialogues via workshops, conferences, and seminars. These NBC-organized events provide a collaborative space to explore border-related issues and foster regional integration efforts through constructive discussions (Agbiboa, 2014).

The inception of the NBC's trans-border cooperation workshops can be attributed to the initiative of the then Commissioner of International Boundary at NBC, now Emeritus Professor Anthony I. Asiwaju. His vision was to cultivate a specific bilateral cooperation policy and practice between Nigeria and its five adjacent countries (Asiwaju and Igue, 1992: xviii). From 1988 to 2005, the NBC hosted five significant workshops aimed at enhancing trans-border cooperation between Nigeria and its immediate neighbors. These workshops included:

1. The Nigeria-Benin Trans-border Cooperation Workshop in Badagry (1988),
2. The Nigeria-Niger Trans-border Cooperation Workshop in Kano (1989),

3. The Trans-border Cooperation Workshop between Nigeria and Cameroon in Yola (1992),
4. The Nigeria-Equatorial Guinea Trans-border Cooperation Workshop in Calabar (also in 1992),
5. The second Nigeria-Niger Trans-border Cooperation Workshop in Sokoto (2002).

These forums provided opportunities to address a range of challenges that had historically affected Nigeria and its neighbors, exploring avenues for mutual cooperation. They were inspired by the European Union's achievement in 1992 of creating "Europe without frontiers," highlighting the global aspiration towards seamless border relations.

The trans-border cooperation workshops serve as vital platforms where experts from academia, professional bodies, and traditional rulers from both sides of the international border convene to discuss a wide range of topical issues (Okoko, 2023). These workshops delve into matters concerning culture, local administration, border economy, delimitation, security, and legal aspects, culminating in conclusions and recommendations (Benson, 2016; Benson, 2023b). Not only have these workshops effectively addressed border-related concerns, but they have also played a significant role in fostering nation-building between Nigeria and its neighbors. The Nigerian government's sponsorship of these workshops underscores its commitment to rectifying colonial-era boundary issues and promoting cultural and economic cooperation among border communities, essential for nation-building (Benson, 2019). The success of Nigeria's trans-border cooperation workshops has influenced similar initiatives in West Africa and the African Union (AU). Inspired by Nigeria's model, the Malian government established the National Borders Directorate in 1999, advocating the policy concept of "Pays Frontiers" (Border Country) in 2002 (Benson, 2023a). Additionally, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) launched the ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP) in 2005-2006, later evolving into the ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation Programme housed within the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja (2015). Furthermore, the AU introduced the African Union Border Programme (AUBP) in 2007, aiming to transform colonial borders into proactive bridges between neighboring member states (Hailemariam, 2021). These initiatives underscore the enduring impact of Nigeria's trans-border cooperation workshops and highlight their pivotal role in shaping cross-border cooperation across the continent.

CONCLUSION

The colonial era left African nations, including Nigeria, with complex border issues, a legacy of arbitrary boundaries drawn by colonial powers. These problems were exacerbated by post-independence policies that further strained cross-border relations. Nigeria, like many African countries, faced several border disputes with its neighbors, impacting diplomatic ties. Despite these challenges, Nigeria pursued a policy of maintaining and enhancing relations with neighboring countries, recognizing the intertwined lives of border communities.

To address these issues, Nigeria and its neighbors established joint commissions, focusing on resolving border disputes and fostering cooperation. The Nigerian Boundary Commission (NBC) played a pivotal role in seeking permanent solutions to both domestic and international boundary challenges. Through its trans-border cooperation workshops, the NBC has made notable strides in bringing together various stakeholders, including policymakers, traditional leaders, scholars, and residents of border communities, to address and find solutions to border disputes.

Despite facing obstacles such as funding constraints, delays in organizing workshops, and implementing agreements, the NBC's commitment to enhancing border relations remains unwavering. These workshops have become crucial forums for dialogue, central to resolving border issues and promoting nation-building. By facilitating discussion on border-related challenges, the NBC's initiatives serve as a model for other African countries aiming to improve relations with their neighbors through informed dialogue and cooperation.

REFERENCES

- Adebakin, L. O. (2020). *Nigerian Immigration to the United States from 1925–1985*. North Carolina Central University.
- Agbibo, D. (2014). Under-development in practice: Nigeria and the enduring problem of corruption. *Development in Practice*, 24(3), 390-404.
- Aghemelo, A. T., & Ibhasebhor, S. (2006). Colonialism as a source of boundary dispute and conflict among African states: The world court judgement on the Bakassi Peninsula and its implications for Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 13(3), 177-181.
- Ajayi, O. E. (2021). *A Historical Case Study of Ethnic Agitations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: Creating the Path to National Integration* (Doctoral dissertation, Howard University).
- Alemazung, J. A. (2010). Post-colonial colonialism: An analysis of international factors and actors marring African socio-economic and political development. *The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 3(10), 62-84.
- Aluede, J. A. (2017). Border relations in Africa and the impact on nation-building: a study of Nigeria and her limitrophe neighbours since the 1960s. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 6(1), 10-26.
- Aluede, J. A. (2017). Border relations in Africa and the impact on nation-building: a study of Nigeria and her limitrophe neighbours since the 1960s. *African Journal of Governance and Development*, 6(1), 10-26.
- Aluede, J. A. (2019). The cross-border dimension of intrastate conflicts in Africa: An analysis of the Great Lakes region and Mano River. In *African borders, conflict, regional and continental integration* (pp. 115-135). Routledge.
- Asiwaju, A. I. (2007). Respacing for peace, security and sustainable development: The African Union border programme in European comparative historical perspective. In *Respacing Africa* (pp. 89-111). Brill.
- Aziken, L. C. (2019). SECURITY IMPLICATIONS OF THE CHADIAN CIVIL WAR ON NIGERIA, 1965-2010. *International Scholar Journal of Arts and Social Science Research*, 203-203.
- Balandier, G. (2020). The colonial situation: a theoretical approach. In *The new imperial histories reader* (pp. 23-40). Routledge.
- Benson, R. M. (2019). The Ibani (Bonny) Civil War of 1869 and the Obolo Response. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 16(3), 1-12. (8)
- Benson, R. M. (2023). Ogoni-Andoni War, 1993: The Role of Dialogue in Inter-Group Relations. *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, 11(1), 6-17.
- Benson, R. M. (2023a). Ogoni-Andoni War, 1993: The Role of Dialogue in Inter-Group Relations. *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research*, 11(1), 6-17. (8)
- Benson, R. M. (2023b). The Role of Language and Culture in Ethnic Integration in the Eastern Niger Delta: The Obolo-Ibani Example, 1800-1991. *Bassey Andah Journal*, 15, 187-199.

- Connell, J., Aldrich, R., Connell, J., & Aldrich, R. (2020). A Decolonised World?. *The Ends of Empire: The Last Colonies Revisited*, 1-34.
- Dennis, O. (2018). Heidegger, Subjectivity and Ethics of Posterity. *Plasu Journal of General Studies*, 1(1), 29. (7)
- Dennis, O. (2022). Diseases and New Moral Order in Society. *Philosophia Politica*, 1.
- Dennis, O., & Udo, I. L. (2021). Suicide: A Betrayal of African Communalist Personhood. *Meta: Research in Hermeneutics, Phenomenology, and Practical Philosophy*, 13(1), 220-240.
- Falola, T. (2022). Political Revolutions in Nineteenth-Century Nigeria. In *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian History* (p. 242). Oxford University Press.
- Fawole, W. A. (2018). *The illusion of the post-colonial State: Governance and security challenges in Africa*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Fayomi, O. O., Chidozie, F. C., & Ajayi, L. A. (2015). Nigeria's national image and her foreign policy: An exploratory approach. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 5(3), 180-196.
- Hailemariam, A. (2021). *School of Diplomacy and International Relation (SDIR) College of Leadership and Governance* (Doctoral dissertation, Ethiopian Civil Service University).
- Joseph, R., & Herbst, J. (1997). Responding to state failure in Africa. *International Security*, 22(2), 175-184.
- Kalu, K. A. (2021). Re-Building Peace after Conflicts in Africa. *Peacebuilding in Africa: The Post-Conflict State Its Multidimensional Crises*, 1.
- Kehinde, O. S. (2019). *CROSS-BORDER INSURGENCY AND THE COPING STRATEGIES OF BORDER COMMUNITIES IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA* (Doctoral dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa).
- Khanna, P. (2016). *Connectography: Mapping the future of global civilization*. Random House.
- Koter, D. (2021). Accidental nation-building in Africa. *Nations and Nationalism*, 27(3), 862-879.
- Marc, A., Verjee, N., & Mogaka, S. (2015). *The challenge of stability and security in West Africa*. World Bank Publications.
- Mbaya, R. (2018). *BORDERS DISPUTES* (Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand (Johannesburg)).
- Mkapa, B. W. (2010). Leadership for growth, development, and poverty reduction: An African viewpoint and experience. *Leadership and growth*, 19.
- Morrison, M. K. (2020). The Kwame Nkrumah Legacy: The Enduring Pan-African Impulse in Contemporary Africa. *National Review of Black Politics*, 1(3), 347-373.
- Munanye, F. J. (2011). *The impacts of refugees on security in the horn of Africa: an appraisal* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi, Kenya).
- Nwachuku, L. A., & Uzoigwe, G. N. (Eds.). (2004). *Troubled journey: Nigeria since the civil war*. University press of America.
- Nweke, R. (2018). *The Role of Nigeria In Restoring Peace In West Africa*. LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Nwiyi And Monica Udoette, J. (2022). Between Worlds: Narrating Globalisation, Identity and Alienation in Leila Aboulela's Short Stories. *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(2), 7-16.
- Okoko, C. O., Oforji, K., Ahamefule, C. I., & Romokere, B. M. (2023). Ethnicity, Monopolistic Closure, Shifting Inuendoes of Language and Restiveness: A Historicization. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 4(6), 1-19.

- Okoko, C. O., Oforji, K., Ahamefule, C. I., & Romokere, B. M. (2023). Ethnicity, Monopolistic Closure, Shifting Inuendoes of Language and Restiveness: A Historicization. *British Journal of Multidisciplinary and Advanced Studies*, 4(6), 1-19. (8)
- Otto, D. (2023). The Ethical Implications for Anthropocentric Causes of Environmental Warming and Flooding. *Alkebulan: A Journal of West and East African Studies*, 3(1), 101-107.
- Otto, D., & Udoh, M. (2024). Humanism and Aesthetics in the Light of Udo Etuk's Perception. *GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis*, 7(1), 14-23.
- Papaioannou, K. J., & Dalrymple-Smith, A. E. (2015). Political instability and discontinuity in Nigeria: The pre-colonial past and public goods provision under colonial and post-colonial political orders. *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal*, 10(1).
- Raji, A. F. (2015). *Nigeria's Foreign Policy Implementation in a Globalised World, 1993-2013* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Lagos (Nigeria)).
- Sklar, R. L., Onwudiwe, E., & Kew, D. (2006). Nigeria: completing Obasanjo's legacy. *J. Democracy*, 17, 100.
- Srinivasan, P. (1980). Political consocialization and nation-building in Africa. *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 41(3), 412-431.
- Udo, I. (2017). An Appraisal of John Locke's Concept of Private Property Ownership and the Nigerian Experience. *Sapientia*, 8, 62-69.
- Udo, I. (2018a). Crave for Miracles in Contemporary Religion: A Theological cum Philosophical consideration. *Aksu Diakonia: Journal of Religion and Culture*, 1, 235-244.
- Udo, I. (2018b). Relevance of Scepticism to the Development of African Thought System. *Akwa Ibom State University Journal of Arts (AKSUJA)*, 1, 228-241.
- Udo, I. L., & Inua, U. (2020). Hobbes's social Contract Theory: Implications for Citizens Cum Government Relationship In Nigeria. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 18(3).
- Udo, U. (2022). In Praise of Conscience as the Ultimate Ethical Guiding Principle. *Akwa Ibom State University Journal of Arts*, 2, 203-214.
- Udoette, M., & Nwiyi, J. (2015). New Role Perspective of African American Women in Terry McMillan's *Waiting to Exhale*. *MARANG: Journal of Language and Literature*.
- Udoh, I., & Udo, U. (2022). Covid-19: A Critical Analysis of Multi-Causative Factors and Mitigation. *AAN Journal of Law, Arts and Humanities*, 1(1), 21-37.
- Usoro, R. O., & Udoette, M. S. (2014). Authenticating Performance With Oral Forms: The Case of Uko Akpan Cultural Troupe. *LWATI: A Journal of Contemporary Research*, 11(2), 60-74.
- Usoro, R., & Udoette, M. (2020). Petals of Red, Blood and Sacrifice: Transcending Humanity in Akachi Ezeigbo's *Roses and Bullets*. *Langlit: An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal*, 6(3), 137-148.
- Uwak, U. E., & Ebong, V. E. (2023). NIGERIA BORDER CLOSURE AND THE ECOWAS PROTOCOL ON FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS, RESIDENCE AND ESTABLISHMENT AMONG MEMBER STATES: IMPLICATION FOR ECOWAS SUB-REGIONAL COHESION. *European Journal of Political Science Studies*, 6(1).
- Yusuf, H. O. (2018). Colonialism and the dilemmas of transitional justice in Nigeria. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, 12(2), 257-276.