

Border relations in Africa and the Impact on Nation-Building: A study of Nigeria and Her Limitrophe Neighbours Since the 1960s

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Abstract

Across Africa, and especially in countries of heterogeneous composition and religious differences, forging a nation has been a major challenge to nation-building in the continent. Similarly, the colonial boundaries inherited by African states from their respective colonial masters at independence have equally frustrated nation-building efforts in different parts of the continent. For instance, there is ample evidence of irredentism and boundary disputes arising from the manner in which the countries were partitioned in Berlin Germany in 1884/1885. Post-independence Africa's international boundaries, to a large extent, have served as a barrier to socio-economic cooperation and nation-building among shared ethnic groups abutting both sides of the international boundaries across the length and breadth of the continent. By foregrounding these issues, this paper examines the efforts by Nigeria and her immediate neighbours to promote nation-building through trans-border relations programmes. It interrogates the extent to which such programmes have encouraged nation-building across borders.

Keywords: Africa, Berlin, Border, Limitrophe and Nation-building

Introduction

Nation-building is an inevitable stage in the socio-economic and political development of both new and old nations. It is a continuous process of building a nation out of a people of different ethnic/religious and political background or history fused together by war; likewise, colonialism, plebiscite and the sanction of an international organisation like the United Nations (UN). Nation-building is a herculean task in which a new nation has to



emerge from the old. In Africa, and Nigeria in particular, one of the challenges that have continued to plague the continent is building a nation out of the diverse ethnic nationalities. Fused together by the respective colonial powers that colonized the continent namely the British, French, Spanish, Portuguese, German and the Belgian during the Berlin Conference on Africa in 1884/85 (Asiwaju, 1984: 7). Boundaries issues in Africa such as irredentism, border disputes and contention over mineral resources discovered in border regions have created tensions and hindered cooperation between limitrophe countries across the continent. It is within this context and other associated issues that this paper discusses nation-building: and border relations. The paper opens with a discussion on an overview of nation-building and boundary in Africa. This will be followed by an examination of border relations between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours since independence. Lastly, the paper examines the effort of Nigeria government in promoting nation-building across her international boundary. The work adopts a descriptive and analytical approach in analyzing and interpreting the sources of the paper. Primary and secondary sources such as published books, government records, journals and internet sources were utilized in the paper.

Nation-building and Boundary in Africa: An Overview

Building a nation from the various ethnic nationalities across the African continent forged together into a nation-state by colonialism has been a major challenge that has continued to elude African leaders since the second half of the twentieth century. Africa is not alone in this dilemma; the same has been the experiences of countries in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and parts of Central Asia. Nevertheless, nation-building is one of the major important national activities that every African leader must face (Uchendu, 1977). One of the hindrances to nation-building in post-independence Africa is the inherited modern boundaries of the continent, which is among the legacies of colonialism on Africa that emanated from the resolution of the Berlin Conference of 1884/1885. The singular act left an indelible imprint on the African continent and was responsible for several intra and inter-states conflict, socio-economic and political crisis within the length and breadth of the continent (Ikome, 2012).

Like many concepts in the social sciences and humanities, nation-building has been defined differently, by various scholars across the world. According to Karl Deutsch and William Foltz (1963), nation-building has to do with reshaping territories that had been carved out



by colonial powers or Empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries. Rupert Emerson (2014) in his definition of nation-building affirms that nation-building involves the citizens' loyalty towards their country of residence, and reduces their prioritizing towards their own ethnic. For Ali A. Mazrui (1972, 277), in a fundamental way, nation-building is more than a political activity; it is essentially culture-building. On his part, Ladipo Adamolekun (1988, 100) argues with respect to nation-building in Africa that it involves two primary activities: national integration, and the promotion of rapid social and economic development. From the above definitions, it is clear that nation-building involves building a new nation from an old characterized by ethnic/religious, cultural and political differences fused together by a hegemonic power irrespective of their heterogeneity.

In Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia, all other countries were forged together through colonialism (Akpan, 1985: 254). In the process different independent ethnic nations across the continent were amalgamated or assimilated for several reasons by the colonial powers, mainly to fulfil their political and economic interest. With total disregard to the consequences, their actions would have on post-independence Africa. For instance, in British and French colonial territories across West Africa, various ethnic nationalities (the Ewe, Aja, Bariba' Dahomey and the Yoruba's among others) which had lived together for centuries, if not millennium were separated, while some without any form of shared history were forged together (Asiwaju, 2003). Still, during the period little or nothing was done by the colonial powers to promote nation-building, within their respective colonies. Instead, they employed the 'divide and rule tactic' to further divide the people within their colonies as well as embarked on rival colonial policies and tighten their colonial international boundaries to distance separated ethnic nationalities. Post-colonial African leaders inherited the structure of divide and rule along ethnic line of the colonial masters. This to a large extent influenced the pattern of administrations, whereby appointments to public offices were based on ethnicity not merit. Some ethnic groups were marginalised from governance. These factors hindered efforts at promoting nation-building in some states in Africa.

Notwithstanding, nation-building was an inevitable process that was bound to take place in Africa, to correct the ills of colonialism across the continent. As a result, nation-building becomes imperative in fostering unity as well as integrating different nationalities into nation-states. Similarly, the process was equally to contribute to national integration. However, the colonial experience of forging and separating ethnic nationalities with shared



history has hampered effort by post-independence African leaders to actualizing nation-building in their respective countries. Carolyn Stephenson (2005, 4) in an article titled "Nation-building" further affirmed the ills of colonialism in Africa and other colonial territories across the world, and why nation-building is imperative in these countries with the demise of colonialism. In her words:

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.

Several reasons have accounted for why the African continent is lagging behind in nation-building. A majority of them point to the colonial legacy which entrenched ethnicity and ethnic marginalisation, tribalism, minority fear, underdevelopment and nepotism (Olayode, 2015; Onuoha, 2002; Lemarchand, 1997). Similarly, post-independence African leaders have equally played their part to hinder the process of nation-building by promoting ethnic rivalry within their states. Likewise, many of them disregard the rule of law, democratic processes and are involved in corrupt practices. The colonial legacy and the actions of post-colonial African leaders have resulted in political instability across several states in Africa such as coup d'états, intra- inter-states conflicts, ethnic/religious and communal conflicts in the following countries namely: Nigeria, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (Ikome, 2012; Imobighe, 2001, Lemarchand, 1997). In the same vein, the political instability had equally hindered efforts towards infrastructural and economic development critical for the continent's progress. These challenges have hindered efforts at promoting nation-building in the continent by its leaders. The ills of colonialism and the failure of continental leaders to manage the situation have continued to hinder nation-building domestically in post-independence Africa.

Nigeria like several countries in Africa has had her own share of the challenges of nation-building. Several works written by Nigerians and scholars abroad (Ajaye and Ajayi 2006; Bray and Cooper 1979; Francis 1968; Ade Ajayi 1961) have documented factors and actions of both colonial and post-colonial Nigeria in particular and Africa in general that have not



only stultified national integration, but also, negate efforts towards nation-building. Colonialism left an indelible imprint on post-independence Nigeria. Several of its socio-cultural, economic and political challenges are attributable to colonialism. Those to the British colonial master relate to falsely amalgamating the different ethnic nationalities without their consent. Likewise, they did not have any workable programme during the colonial period to unify them because they were not aware of their differences in culture, language, religious, political system and worldview. Hence, at independence, the new leaders who were a product of the colonial era carried out actions that further divided the peoples along ethnic and religious lines. Akinjide Osuntokun (2000 cited in Aworawo David 2003), claims that the British laid the foundations for disunity and political instability in Nigeria. The development accounts for the myriad of ethnic-religious, communal and political crises that have confronted the country since independence. The height of which was the thirty months Nigerian Civil War (1967- 1970), that almost resulted in the secession of the eastern part of the country. These seeds of ethnicity and religious sentiment were sown and still live among Nigerians, and influenced their relations with one another. This is a major challenge that the present generation will have to overcome to build a Nigeria in which every Nigerian will not be judged by their ethnic or religious background but as a Nigerian.

Similarly, nation-building in post-independence Africa and Nigeria had equally been hindered by the inherited boundaries bequeathed on the continent by her colonial masters. The colonial boundaries were arbitrary but acquired some significance on the continent with the demise of colonialism. Each territorial unit became the focus of national loyalty of its own (Emerson, 1961). These boundaries created rivalry among the newly independent African states. In the process, it somewhat frustrated efforts directed at promoting genuine cooperation and by extension nation-building. Furthermore, it promoted ties among ethnic nationalities with a shared history separated by the colonial boundaries erected by the colonial masters. The partition of the African continent introduced the state system and equally changed the boundary arrangements that had existed on the continent. The arbitrary demarcation of Africa in the nineteenth century, without the consent of its peoples, separated kith and kin, ethnic and linguistic groups and this delimitation created the concept of international boundaries that was alien to Africans before the Berlin Conference of 1884-1885.



African and Africanist historians and boundary scholars have documented the effect of the partitioning of the continent in several works. Anene and Asiwaju two Nigerian renowned historians and boundary experts captured succinctly the effect of colonialism on the partition and boundaries of Africa. Anene (1970, 2) affirms 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.

Asiwaju (1999, 11) argued that most of the challenges confronting the continent after independence were tied to the unjust partitioning of the continent. Asiwaju (1999, 11) observes:

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.

In recent times, other boundary disputes and issues have emanated from the continent all to a large extent are blamed on the partition of 1884/85, such as irredentism, genocide and dispute over mineral resources. For example, on one hand, the Bakassi Peninsula dispute boundary between Nigeria and Cameroon is one such boundary dispute in Africa (Asiwaju, 2009). The ethnic genocide in the Great Lakes Region of Africa between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, Burundi and the DRC is another case of border-related issues in Africa (Kanyangara, 2016). On the other hand, post-independence African leaders have



contributed to boundary problems in the continent by promoting irredentism. The defunct Organisation of African Unity (OAU), now African Union (AU), in 1964, at Cairo, Egypt unanimously agreed to retain the colonial boundaries left behind by the colonial masters, though some African leaders led by Kwame Nkrumah (1909 – 1972) of Ghana opposed the resolution. According to Chime (1969), Nkrumah argued for the remaking of the continent boundaries to its original state before 1884/85 arrangement. African boundaries, due to its colonial configuration, have stultified developmental efforts as well as approaches to promoting border relations between neighbouring countries.

Border Relations between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours since Independence

Nigeria is strategically located in the heart of West Africa and is surrounded by former French colonies in the sub-region. Nigeria shares her boundary with 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 on the Atlantic coast (Osuntokun, 2008: 142). Since independence, Nigeria has had mixed border relations with her immediate neighbours (Ate, 1992), which in some cases had impaired diplomatic relations between them. As it was in other parts of Africa, the partitioning of the African continent in 1884/85 separated ethnic nationalities that had lived together for centuries between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours. For instance, the Berlin debacle divided part of the Yoruba and the Bariba ethnic nationalities between Nigeria and Benin Republic in the west and in the north-west border of both countries. Similarly, some parts of the Hausa in northern Nigeria were divided between Nigeria and southern Niger. In the same way, the Kanuri of north-eastern Nigeria were separated between Nigeria and Chad. The same can be said of the Mandara, the Jukun, the Chamba and the Efik between Nigeria and Cameroon (Asiwaju, 1984, 6).

Nigeria's border with her immediate neighbours provides an opportunity for the country's leaders and that of her immediate neighbours to promote and build on existing relations among their border communities dating back to the pre-colonial era. That was altered by colonialism and the creation of boundary lines separating the people into different territories. The border areas equally serve as a platform to promote nation-building through economic cooperation and the promotion of cultural ties among the peoples. In addition, it offers the opportunity to resolve national issues at the local level and among border communities, despite the existence of borderlines that defines their separation.



However, the mixed relations between Nigeria and her limitrophe neighbours have created suspicion and fear of Nigeria based on her strength, population and resources.

Border relations between and Nigeria and her immediate neighbours since independence have been ambivalent. There have been the periods of cooperation as well as conflict between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours. Shortly, after independence, the Nigeria government established cordial relations with her immediate neighbours (Nwolise, 1989). For example, the Sir Tafawa Balewa led government (1960-1966) in 1964, in conjunction Chad, Cameroon and Niger established the Chad Basin Commission to promote economic ties across their borders. Apart from the joint commission, the Nigeria government equally established bilateral relations with her immediate neighbours to promote economic, cultural, political and security cooperation over the years. For instance, in 1971 the Nigeria-Niger Joint Cooperation was established to resolve the various forms of challenges facing both countries, especially the border communities (Asiwaju and Barkindo, 1993). The border-related issues include smuggling, border clashes and irredentism among others. In 1981, the Nigerian-Beninois government created the Nigeria-Benin Joint Border Commission to address border related challenges in their borderlands.

On the other side of the border relations between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours, involving rancour have been well documented. For instance, during the President Shehu Shagari's (1979-1983) civilian administration, some Nigerian villages in Illo district in Sokoto State, in 1981, were invaded by Beninois military (Nigerian Herald, 1981). They even hoisted their country flag in these villages. The same event repeated itself in 1983 when Cameroonian troops ambushed and killed five Nigerian soldiers at Ilang, a border town adjoining Cross River State. In the same vein, Chadian soldiers encroached into Nigerian territory and occupied some border towns in 1983 (Ate, 1992). This development created tensions between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours. Despite the fact, that the Shagari administration resolved the issues diplomatically, instead of force, the situation raised security concerns on border relations between Nigeria her immediate neighbours.

General Muhammadu Buhari (1983-1985) in April 1984 closed Nigeria's land border with her limitrophe neighbours. The regime closed Nigeria's borders with her immediate neighbours to all human and material traffic following the change of her currency. In the same vein, the border closure was influenced by the threat of smuggling from neighbouring countries into Nigeria through their borders. The decision to close the country's border



was reinforced by the need to protect Nigeria's infant industries. The prices of Nigerian products have been greatly affected by the cheap prices of smuggled goods entering the country. The border closure had negative effects on the economic well-being of Nigeria's immediate neighbours – particularly traders involved in carrying trade across the Nigerian border into their country. In the course of the border closure, Niger Republic lost nearly one-fourth of its 1984 customs revenue (www.country-data.com/cgi). General Buhari's decision to close Nigeria's borders with her immediate neighbours was condemned by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as a breach of its protocol on open border and free movement of persons and goods across the sub-region. ECOWAS is the major intergovernmental international organisation in the West African sub-region which was established in 1975.

Several failed appeals were made by the governments of Nigeria's immediate neighbours to General Buhari to re-open Nigeria's border. Efforts were made to address some of the factors that led the Nigerian government to close her borders with her immediate neighbours. One of such efforts brought together some of the affected states namely Nigeria, Benin Republic, Ghana and Togo who signed the Quadripartite Agreement to address and combat border-related issues among them (Gambari, 1989: 56). Despite, these efforts, General Buhari refused to re-open Nigeria's border. Significantly, it was after Buhari's regime was toppled by General Ibrahim Babangida in a military coup in 1985, that Nigeria's borders were re-opened with immediate effect in 1986 (Asiwaju, 2003). Thus, the trend of open borders characterised Nigeria's external relations with her neighbours until the end of his administration.

In 1996, during the military regime of General Abacha, Nigeria closed her borders with Benin Republic. This was because President Soglo had criticised his administration for killing the nine Ogoni activists (Abegunrin, 2003: 148). Still, during the Abacha military era, the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary dispute over who owns the Bakassi Peninsula came to a high point. The leaders of both countries laid claim to the disputed peninsula rich in crude oil deposits. The development led to the militarisation of both sides of border. The boundary dispute was finally resolved later by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) judgment in 2002 (Abang, 2010: 222-223). The period of the crisis affected relations between both countries, and especially relations between the border communities that had lived together for centuries.



Trans-border criminal activities in Nigeria's border with her immediate neighbours have been on the increase since the 1970s. Several factors contributed to the upsurge in the illicit criminal activities such as poverty, unemployment, the porous nature of the border, the lucrative nature of the illicit enterprise and corruption (Albert, 2006: 65; Donna, 1997). In the Nigeria-Benin border, the illicit enterprise had undermined security and economic development. Trans-border crime has become an embarrassment to the Nigerian government; despite the efforts she has put in place to stem the tide. The development compelled the Nigerian government of the civilian administration of President Olusegun Obasanjo to take decisive action to compel the Beninois government to act (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2003).

The notorious activities of trans-border criminals, especially across Nigeria-Benin borders forced the Obasanjo administration to close the border between the two countries in 2003. The closure of the border between the two countries affected commercial activities between businessmen and women from both countries. For the border to be re-opened, the Nigerian government demanded the Beninois government to handover Ahmed Tijani, a notorious criminal engaged in trans-border crime to the Nigerian government (The Punch 2003; *Daily Champion* 2003).

Promoting Border Relations and Nation-Building through Trans-Border Cooperation Workshops: The Nigerian Example

The colonial boundaries inherited by post-independence African states created several challenges for the new African states, internally and with their immediate neighbours. African leaders through their actions and policies have equally aggravated border-related problems between countries. The growth and expansion of trans-border crime across the border regions of African countries and their impact on the socio-economic and political development of the continent has become one of the major challenges confronting the continent in recent times. These border issues have hindered cooperation among Africa countries as they blame each other.

The Nigeria government since independence has shown commitment to promoting cordial relations with her immediate neighbours. The commitment is enshrined in her foreign policy objectives at independence, among which, Nigeria will not interfere in the domestic affairs of her immediate neighbours and vows to promote the policy of good neighbourliness with her immediate neighbours (Gambari, 2008). Like other countries in



the continent faced with border and boundary issues, the Nigerian government has sought various ways to find a lasting solution to the myriad of challenges emanating from borders related challenges with her neighbours. These border issues are a by-product of colonialism that has hindered cooperation and by extension nation-building between Nigeria and her limitrophe neighbours. One of the avenues that the Nigerian government has tried to address boundary and border-related challenges with her neighbours is through the establishment of the National Boundary Commission (NBC) in 1987 (Ahmad, 2015). The NBC focuses on organizing trans-border cooperation workshops as part of her strategies to resolve border issues between Nigeria and adjacent neighbours and by extension promote nation-building. It is interesting to note that the formation of the NBC was a by-product of boundary and border-related problems between Nigeria and her neighbours (Asiwaju, 2013).

General Ibrahim Babangida re-opened Nigeria's borders with her neighbours in 1986, closed by his immediate predecessor in 1984 for security and other reasons. The Babangida led military government sought to find a lasting solution to boundary issues between Nigeria and limitrophe neighbours. This development led the regime to establish the NBC to resolve boundary challenges emanating from Nigeria's internal boundaries (within the country) and Nigeria's external boundaries with her immediate neighbours (Asiwaju, 2013). One of the ways, the NBC has sought to resolve boundary and border issues between Nigeria and her neighbours are through trans-border cooperation and intellectual discourses through workshops, conferences and seminars. In line with the objective of intellectual discourse, the NBC has organised several workshops since its inception. NBC trans-border cooperation workshops are held to discuss border-related issues in a friendly atmosphere. The Communiqué crafted at each of the workshops serves as a blueprint of intent in addressing the numerous border challenges between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours. The workshops serve as a laboratory where solutions to border conflicts and efforts at promoting regional integration through the borders are discussed (Asiwaju and Barkindo, 1993). The idea of the trans-border cooperation workshops was initiated by the then Commissioner of International Boundary in NBC, now Emeritus Professor Anthony I. Asiwaju. In his words, the entire project is aimed at forging a border-specific bilateral cooperative policy and practice between Nigeria and each of the five adjacent countries (Asiwaju and Igue, 1992: xviii).



The NBC has organised five workshops of trans-border cooperation between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours from 1988 to 2005. The first workshop was held in 1988 in the ancient town of Badagry titled the Nigeria-Benin Trans-border Cooperation Workshop, the second was the Nigeria-Niger Trans-border Cooperation Workshop, which took place in Kano in 1989 (Asiwaju, 2014). The third was the Trans-border Cooperation Workshop between Nigeria and Cameroon and was held in Yola in 1992. Still, in 1992, the Nigeria-Equatorial Guinea Trans-border Cooperation Workshop was held in Calabar. The fifth and the last was the Nigeria-Niger Trans-border Cooperation Workshop of 2002, which took place in Sokoto. These workshops provided a forum to discuss various border-related challenges that had over the years confronted Nigeria and her neighbours. The workshops discuss an array of issues affecting border communities. They also, seek to establish areas of cooperation between Nigeria and her neighbours. Interestingly, the workshops are influenced by the feat achieved by the European Union (EU) member countries in 1992 of “Europe without frontiers”.

These trans-border cooperation workshops examine an array of topical issues in which leading experts in the academia and professional bodies as well as traditional ruler’s from both sides of the international border present papers. The workshops examine issues on culture, local administration, the border economy, delimitation question and border security, legal issues and close with conclusions and recommendations (Asiwaju and Igue, 1992). The trans-border cooperation workshop is a noble idea that has not only addressed border-related issues but also, serves as a platform to promote nation-building between Nigeria and her neighbours. The commitment by the Nigerian government through the NBC to sponsor these workshops reveals the country’s determination to correct the ills of colonialism on boundary relations between her and her neighbours. In the same vein, the workshops provide the platform to promote cultural and economic cooperation among border communities, a major requirement for promoting nation-building. The trans-border cooperation has come to stay. In this regard, the NBC should be encouraged to organise more of the workshops.

The Nigerian experience of trans-border cooperation workshops through the NBC to address and resolve border-related issues with her immediate neighbours have influenced similar programmes in West Africa and the AU. In 1999, the Malian Government influenced by the Nigerian model established National Borders Directorate, which promotes and articulates the policy concept of “Pays Frontiers” (Border Country or Cross-Border Area) in



2002 (Asiwaju, 2015: 26–38). Also, ECOWAS launched her version of the programme (2015) tagged “ECOWAS Cross-Border Initiatives Programme (CIP)” in 2005-2006. CIP has metamorphosed into ECOWAS Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, domiciled in the ECOWAS Commission in Abuja. In 2007, the AU launched the African Union Border Programme (AUBP), as a strategy for the transformation or systematic conversion of Africa’s inherited colonial borders from traditional postures of barriers to new pro-active roles and functions as bridges between limitrophe member states (Asiwaju, 2015).

Conclusion

The colonial boundaries bequeathed to post-independence African states by their respective colonial masters created several border problems for the continent. Similarly, the continental leaders, after independence worsened issues by pursuing policies and actions that created tensions across their international borders. Nigeria like many Africa countries had several border issues with her immediate neighbours as discussed in this paper. The various border problems created friction between Nigeria and her neighbours that affected their diplomatic relations. This notwithstanding, the Nigerian government was committed to maintaining cordial relations with them where some residents have relatives on the Nigeria side of the border. In this regard, the Nigeria government in collaboration with her immediate neighbours, established joint commissions to address pressing issues among them, including border-related issues. Similarly, the Nigerian government created the NBC to find lasting solutions to her internal and international boundaries problems. With respect to boundary issues between and Nigeria and her limitrophe neighbours, the NBC can be said to have recorded some significant progress. Through its trans-border cooperation workshops, the commission has been able to bring together policy makers, traditional rulers, the academia, residents of border communities to discuss and find solutions to their border challenges. The NBC trans-border cooperation workshops since their commencement as an intellectual exercise have been confronted with some difficulties such as funding, delays in hosting the workshops and implementing communiqués in respective countries. Despite these challenges, the NBC management has remained resolute in promoting border relations between Nigeria and her immediate neighbours through these workshops. This is because the workshops provide a platform to discuss and this is central to resolving issues. Through this avenue, it can be said that the Nigerian government through the NBC workshops, is promoting nation-building with her immediate neighbours through discourse on border-related issues. The NBC intellectual



workshops serve as a guide that should be emulated by countries in Africa seeking to promote border relations with their neighbours.

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