



UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA
Inaugural Lecture Series 2014

TOPIC:

**CLOTHING OTHERS WHILE NAKED:
WEST AFRICA AND GEOPOLITICS**

By
PROFESSOR OLAJOMPO ABAYOMI AKINYEYE

CLOTHING OTHERS WHILE NAKED: WEST AFRICA AND GEOPOLITICS

An Inaugural Lecture Delivered at the University of Lagos
Main Auditorium on Wednesday, 3rd December, 2014

By

Prof. Olajompo Abayomi, AKINYEYE

B. A., M. A., Ph.D., FHSN, MNAL

**DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
AND STRATEGIC STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS**

University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd

© Olajompo Abayomi Akinyeye, 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the author.

Published

By

University of Lagos Press and Bookshop Ltd
Unilag P.O. Box 132
University of Lagos
Akoka – Yaba, Lagos
Nigeria.

ISSN 1119-4456

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, Deputy Vice Chancellors, the Registrar, the University Librarian, the Bursar, the Provost, College of Medicine, the Deans of Faculties here present, members of Council, members of Senate, members of the Diplomatic Corp, members of the Security Community, members of the press, my fellow students — in the light of the Latin phrase: "*Alios docendo nos ipsi discimus*"; that is, by teaching others we also learn ourselves; in my view, a good professor is nothing more than a student in perpetuity — distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

It is with gratitude to God and a sense of service to humanity that I stand before you to present my inaugural lecture which is the seventh from the Department of History and Strategic Studies and the Lagos School of History. In both its course offerings and inaugural lecture presentations, the Department of History and Strategic Studies of the University of Lagos – the University of First Choice and the Nation's Pride, which with the grace of God and the diligence of man will soon be among the universities of first choice worldwide, has carved a niche for itself which justifies its claim to being a distinct School of History.

An inaugural lecture is supposed to inaugurate a Professor. However, for a Professor appointed in 2005 giving his lecture in 2014, nine years later, there is obviously a delay which deserves an explanation. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, my delay in giving the inaugural lecture is borne out of my desire to live up to the billing of the Lagos School of History in writing functional History without compromising the end thereof. As I will show presently, my area of concentration in historical studies has to do with understanding the use of force or threats of the use of force to attain the object of policy down the ages. On

becoming a Professor in 2006 backdated to 2005, three possibilities suggested themselves to me for the writing of my inaugural lecture. The first of these was to wait and see the consequences of a political economy which, in the words of Oliver Goldsmith in his poem *The Deserted Village*, enables wealth to accumulate while people decay. This is the situation in Nigeria; and among the potential consequences is a violent revolution leading to the emergence of a new order, as was the case in France of 1789 and Russia of 1917. However, upon a deep reflection, I discovered that while the similarities between contemporary Nigerian situation and pre-revolutionary France and Russia are impressive, the differences are compelling enough to make any lesson of significance possible. Also, the phenomenon of the Arab Spring has introduced another dimension to our orthodox ways of studying and understanding revolutions which calls for some circumspection in drawing lessons from past revolutions for contemporary uses.

I next turned my attention to insurgency and counter-insurgency, particularly when Nigeria was plagued with nascent Niger-Delta militancy and the current Boko Haram saga, to see how I can bring my skill to be of immediate use to the state. However, I was dissuaded from this because a publication of the prescription of how to terminate insurgency is a manual to insurgents on how to nullify such prescriptions, particularly when I have the opportunity of making my views known to the government through other discrete fora in which I have the privilege of participating. This is why I have settled for the subject of today's inaugural which will, in keeping with the tradition of the Lagos School of History, enable me to stimulate societal consciousness without compromising the state's ability to tackle its security challenges.

The lecture is divided into seven parts as follows: section one discusses the Lagos School of History, the second section examines geopolitics as a concept, the geopolitical importance of West Africa to the world constitutes section three while the fourth part is made up of the effects of West Africa's geopolitics on West Africa. An explanation of the paradox of the disadvantage of West Africa's geopolitical importance to the region is the focus of section five, while recommendations about how to avoid the paradox is dealt with in the sixth section. The seventh and final section deals with acknowledgements.

1. THE LAGOS SCHOOL OF HISTORY

A school of History is known for its approach to the study of the subject; and since the time of Herodotus and Thucydides, the acclaimed Fathers of History, several schools of History have arisen deriving their justification from their methodology and philosophy of the study of History. While I do not intend to make this lecture an introductory lecture in historiography, it is needful, for analytical purpose, to take a historical excursion into how different schools of History have emerged over the years to underscore the claim of our Department to being a School of History.

The field of History both "senso lacto" and "senso stricto" is an old and recent one. Going by the definition of History that I give to my students as the totality of the past activities of man as a means of understanding his present and anticipating his future on one hand, and the knowledge acquired from the study of this past of man on the other, History is both old and young. In the sense of the past activities of man, History is as old as man. In the sense of acquiring knowledge from the study of that past, History is relatively new or young. In the first sense, existing knowledge places the age of man (the

archaeological man) at about three million years.¹ To that extent, man has been acting for three million years. However, in terms of attempting to acquire knowledge about the past of man, the most liberal date is less than three thousand years, when Herodotus, who lived between 484 and 425 BC, saw History as the product of the activities of man.²

Before Herodotus and Thucydides, History had been seen as the outcome of a providential scheme manifesting itself through man. In other words, before Herodotus, History was seen as a drama written initially by the gods and later God Almighty and acted by man.³ It was Herodotus and Thucydides who first recognised that History is the result of conscious thoughts and actions by man. They did this by studying the wars among the Greek city states. The city states had been colonised by Persia which was located where modern day Iraq is. To throw off the Persian imperialism, the Greek had formed an alliance with Athens. After their liberation, Athens wanted to make itself another Persia. The Greeks' love of independence saw their forming another alliance under Sparta to defeat the Athenian pretensions after a long drawn out struggle. Herodotus and Thucydides attained their fame in History by analysing the conscious policies of both sides to these conflicts which made war inevitable, thereby establishing the fact that events occur as a result of the conscious thoughts and actions of man rather than the transcendental predetermined scheme of the gods or God. They thereby began the School of History that placed man at the heart of historical explanation.

After them, several approaches to the study of History have arisen. There had been the Whig School of History, the Rationalist and the Positivist. Positivism as a school of History postulates that there are specific patterns of

historical development and that a mastery of these patterns can make one to formulate general laws of historical development.⁴ This was why Aristotle the famous Greek philosopher could say that a major cause of revolutions is the desire of mankind for liberty and equality on one hand and the opposition to that desire on the other.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as I mentioned earlier, I do not intend to make this lecture an introductory class in historiography. I have only made the foray into that subspecialty to illustrate what is meant by a school of History as a background to establishing the claim of the Department of History and Strategic Studies of this great university to being a School of History.

Historical teaching and research in this great university started as an offshoot of the Ibadan School of History. The Ibadan School of History came into being against the background of nationalist struggles both for higher education and national liberation. Nigerians and indeed Africans had identified relative advancement of knowledge and learning as a major contributory factor to the easy colonization of Africa by the West. Nationalist agitation initially centred on a mastery of Western knowledge as a tool for self-empowerment and ultimately liberation. Accordingly, nationalists called for the establishment of higher institutions in West Africa.⁵ The National Congress of British West Africa was at the forefront of this request in 1922. Though scorned and derided initially, the call was gradually respected with the establishment of the Yaba Higher College in 1934 and the University College, Ibadan in 1948.

With its establishment in 1948, the University College, Ibadan had History as one of its pioneer subjects. This

was due mostly to the need to provide bureaucrats for the colonial civil service and other segments of the economy and society. History teaching and research in Ibadan came to see itself as the intellectual wing of nationalist struggle. African History was focused upon to demonstrate two significant facts. The first was that since Africa was not just a continent of wildlife and picturesque natural scenes, the continent had a History. Europeans, unused to non-documentary and archaeological evidence of historical research, had argued that Africa had no History.⁶ The Ibadan School of History pioneered a new methodology of historical research which in addition to the use of documentary and archival sources relied on oral evidence and historical linguistics to demonstrate the reality of African History. Kenneth Dike with his *Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta* which he wrote for Oxford blazed this trail.

The second area of great impact of the Ibadan School of History on African historiography was in researching into the African past to demonstrate that Africa and Africans had polities which compared with their modern counterparts. Such polities were well administered and met the existential challenges of their times. This was with a view to showing that if left on their own, the African peoples who had achieved this feat are capable of doing the same in modern times. This was in keeping with the time honoured historical fact that the best way of knowing what a person or people can do is by knowing what such a person or people have done. Histories of states, stateless societies, kingdoms and empires were robustly researched and published.

The Ibadan School acquitted itself well in this regard as the country and most African countries gained their independence in the sixties. The private and public sectors of most of these African countries, especially our

dear country, Nigeria, depended very heavily on the products of the Ibadan School. It is noteworthy that unlike what happens nowadays when History and historians are derided, the Ibadan School of History has provided manpower in every sector of the Nigerian society, polity and economy. This includes even a Governor of the Central Bank to wit. As a matter of fact, the first generations of scholars in the Lagos School of History such as A. B. Aderibigbe and G. O. Olusanya of blessed memory, A. I. Asiwaju, T. G. O. Gbadamosi, Jide Osuntokun and A. I. Adefuye are all products of the Ibadan School of History.

The Ibadan School of History was mostly noted for looking into the past to demonstrate future possibilities of History. In other words, the Ibadan School of History had sought to show that if certain events happened in the past and had certain consequences, precepts can be gained from such knowledge of the past for future instruction. The school was mostly looking backward in order to look forward. A product of the school, G. O. Olusanya who later pioneered the Lagos School succinctly put the preoccupation of the Ibadan School when he said:

In its heydays, any event that fell into the twentieth century was considered current affairs and not worthy of the attention of historians. This was of course a great limitation to its usefulness in our current situation. The school thus lost the opportunity of continuing to inspire the task of nation building.⁷

The preoccupation with the past to demonstrate future possibilities, while useful in itself, came to demonstrate its limitations. The future which the Ibadan School of History had anticipated came with shades of complexities either not anticipated or trivialized by the Ibadan School of History. While it is irrefutable that Africans established

states which they administered on their own in the pre-colonial era, the state Africa and Africans were called upon to administer in the post-colonial era differed from their pre-colonial counterparts and threw up challenges that had no parallel in African History. Post-colonial African states turned out to be foreign contraptions designed for foreign interests and had to be modified or adapted for African uses. The mechanism of state administration and the challenges posed by it are relatively unknown. For example, there were few pre-colonial African states with standing bureaucracies, wage earning labour force, monetized reward, labour and civil societies, independent judicial officers, strict separation of powers, government's obligations to its citizenry in the context of post-colonial setting, among others.

Also, while multi-nationality of the state was not a new phenomenon in Africa, the effect of this on the life of the state was relatively new in post-colonial Africa. Multinational pre-colonial African states had left the various nationalities in charge of their own affairs as long as they met their obligations to the central authority. However, post-colonial multinational states in Africa are administered as single entities, even where the federal system of government is adopted as is the case with Nigeria, where one would have expected some accommodation for the peculiarities of the constituent parts, the operation of the federation is usually unitary. This has created complex problems of human relations such as revenue allocation, majority and minority issues, disparity in the levels of development of constituent units and inequitable governmental attention to the constituent parts.

These are challenges which the Ibadan School of History was not prepared to examine or found difficult to tackle. In fairness to the Ibadan School of History, it did

recognize these new challenges. In his inaugural lecture presented in 1979, Obaro Ikime, a product and practitioner of the Ibadan School of History, did a review of the efforts of the school highlighting its achievements and indicating its inadequacies which necessitate new methodologies and philosophy to the study of History.⁸ In the lecture, Ikime referred to an address by another product and practitioner of the Ibadan School of History, who by any standard is an eminent historian. The address was given by Professor Ayandele to the Congress of Historical Society of Nigeria, which held in Calabar in 1979. In the address, Ayandele lamented the absence of biographies as a genre of History in the writings of the Ibadan School as a way of having a holistic understanding of Nigerian History.⁹

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, from the excerpts I have given above, it is quite clear that the Ibadan School of History which had discharged its duties competently in the context in which it was called upon to serve did recognise the need for a new approach to the study of History in post-colonial Nigeria. It is also gratifying to note that the Ibadan School of History did acknowledge that Lagos had started rising to the occasion of meeting the challenge for a new History. In the inaugural lecture I have quoted above, Professor Ikime did acknowledge that "there is a definite swing to economic and social History in quite a few of the departments of History in the nation's universities especially Ahmadu Bello University, the University of Lagos and the University of Calabar."¹⁰ It must also be conceded that the Ibadan School of History had started making efforts to respond to the need for this new approach to the study of History. Professor Ikime referred to the notable effort of then Dr. Wale Oyemakinde on labour and the railway. Ever since, there has been a number of new approaches to History that we follow in

Lagos. The point, however, is that Lagos has a distinct approach to the study of History. Also, the Ahmadu Bello University does a similar thing. The notable distinction between Lagos and Ahmadu Bello is the demonstrable ideological differences. While Lagos historians are liberal in their approach to the study of History, for a considerable length of time, the Marxist ideology influenced if not determined Ahmadu Bello University's writings on History. At present, I do not feel sufficiently informed to comment on the trend in the University of Calabar.

The Lagos School of History has established itself in the area of the recognition of the need to study History from a perspective different from its forebear, the Ibadan School of History. It believes, as J. A. Plumb did, that History should deepen understanding about man and society, not for its own sake but in the hope that a profounder awareness will help to mould human attitudes and action.¹¹ The Lagos School of History goes about studying History in the reverse order of the Ibadan School of History. While the Ibadan School of History started by looking into the past to understand the present and anticipate the future, the Lagos School of History allows the present to inform its look into the past. It allows contemporary concerns to influence its look into the past. The Lagos School looks into the contemporary challenges of nation-building, administration of the state, ethnic and minority conflicts, insurgencies, boundaries and border disputes, food and society, climate change and the environment, technology, diplomacy and strategy to influence its look into the past. It also has responded to the concern expressed by Ayandele in the address cited earlier on. The Department can boast of eminent works on biography which are of great illumination to Nigerian History.

A cursory glance at the syllabus of the Department of History and Strategic Studies of this great University will drive home graphically the point I am trying to make. In addition to the conventional courses of state formation and administration, the reigns of various rulers of these states, the Jihad, the colonial conquest and decolonisation, there are such courses as the History of the environment, warfare and diplomacy, gender studies, economic History of the various regions of the world, the African diaspora, conflict resolution, food and society, to mention but a few of our courses that are not usually offered in most conventional universities.

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I have gone this length to show the uniqueness of the Department of History and Strategic Studies which justifies its claim to being a School of History of its own. The Department subscribes to the dictum of the famous Italian philosopher of History, Benedetto Croce, that every age writes its own History.¹² By every age writing its own History, it is not intended to say, for example, that a biographer of Chief Obafemi Awolowo would say that the late sage was born to an *Alafin* or an *Awujale*, had his primary school education in Corona School, Ikene before proceeding to Eton College and finally ending up in Cambridge. Neither is it meant to say his counterpart on Sir Ahmadu Bello would write that the revered leader was born to a Fulani herdsman, attended nomadic Quranic School before finally emerging to the limelight. In other words, by every age writing its own History, it is not meant that the historian will fictionalise sacred facts. Rather, it is meant that the historian will allow contemporary concerns to influence his enquiry into the past.

This will make the biographers we have referred to find out why Chief Awolowo who was of humble origin was

able to scale the constraints of his time to get himself highly educated and whether the same feat can be attained today by somebody in a similar situation. It will also goad the biographer into knowing why Chief Awolowo who was not a beneficiary of any free education saw the wisdom of introducing such a scheme and why beneficiaries of free education at the helm of affairs in today's Nigeria question the wisdom of such a scheme. The need of every age writing its own History will make today's historian find out why proceeds from cocoa and other agricultural raw materials, which were paltry, could sustain free education in Western Nigeria, while proceeds from petroleum, which are substantial, are said to be inadequate to do the same for the country. In the same vein, the biographer of leaders and leadership in Nigeria will like to know why Sir Ahmadu Bello, a prince popularly elected by the people, would not become a millionaire while paupers from the same region, who got to power either through the barrels of gun or travestied electoral process, have become billionaires. Still allowing current concerns to influence quest into the past, the historian of conflict in modern day Nigeria will like to know how, using purely proceeds from agricultural raw materials and local expertise, Nigeria was able to successfully prosecute a civil war, while, sitting atop billions of dollars from crude oil, she is finding it difficult to tackle insurgency.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the Lagos School of History reflects contemporary existential issues in its course offerings and inaugural lecture presentations. I have shown a sample of the courses that we teach which clearly mark us out as a distinct school of History. Permit me to also show that the Department has had, still has and will continue to boast of an array of specialists in diverse areas of History, dealing with contemporary existential issues. There had been experts in borderland and boundary issues. As a matter

of fact, the Department had the world's leading expert in Africa's boundary and borderland studies (Prof. A. I. Asiwaju) my teacher, who I believe is in the audience and who is an Emeritus Professor of the University in the Department. There are also specialists in food and society, several in international relations and diplomatic History which is my broad area of competence. One of us who has served as an ambassador to the reunified Republic of Germany remains a pillar of strength in Nigeria's foreign relations. He continues to serve the country in various capacities in this regard and he is also an Emeritus Professor of the University. I am talking about Professor Emeritus, Ambassador and Chief Akinjide Osuntokun, my supervisor who I believe is also in the audience. There is an expert also in ethnic and minority studies (Professor R. T. Akinyele) whom fate has made my professional twin brother. We were supervised by the same supervisor, appointed to join the staff of the Department the same day and also appointed as professors the same day. Professor Akinyele is a shining light in that area. We also have competence in warfare and diplomacy, revolutionary struggles and insurgencies. This is where I have pitched my camp in the field of History. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, ever before Boko Haram became a concern to the nation, I had introduced courses in revolutionary warfare and insurgencies in our department to assist both our products and the Nigerian state to understand and tackle the menace. There are world class Economic Historians: Professors Ayodeji Olukoju and A. A. Lawal readily come to mind; and Social Historians, Professor Olufunke Adeboye, the first female Professor of History in the University of Lagos, is an easy reference. We also have specialists in the area of land use and agrarian reforms — Doctors Onyekpe and Faluyi are noteworthy in this regard.

Similarly, the inaugural lecture presentations in the Department have followed the pattern of allowing the present to appeal to the past for precepts in tackling the challenges facing humanity within and outside the country. Professor G. O. Olusanya of blessed memory blazed the trail in this regard with the first ever inaugural lecture in the Lagos School of History. In the lecture aptly titled *The Unfinished Task*, the erudite scholar traced the History of the efforts of Nigeria and Nigerians to fashion out a nation out of the motley lot of nationalities and concluded that the task was unfinished. Contemporary happenings in Nigeria where the diverse groups in the country bear allegiance and loyalty to their ethnic enclaves, which has earned Nigeria the unenviable appellation of a nation in space instead of a nation-state, is an eloquent testimony to the sagacity and aptness of that pioneer presentation.¹³ It is also note-worthy that Nigeria is still organising a national conference to work out a *modus vivendi* for the country.

Professor Asiwaju followed suit with his world class inaugural lecture in 1984, which has been translated into several languages, and has gone into several editions worldwide. He titled his own lecture *Artificial Boundaries*. In that lecture, the author magisterially looked at the challenges posed by colonially imposed boundaries to contemporary African states and argued that there was a pre-colonial unity among African peoples. He counselled African statesmen not to look at the boundaries as barriers of separation but as bridges of cooperation. That African states continue to grapple with the challenges of integration and imperialism in the contemporary world is a vindication of the lecturer's thesis.¹⁴ Other inaugural lectures and lecturers have followed the same pattern of interrogating issues of contemporary concerns. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it remains to mention that the Lagos School of History is in

line with the global trend in the study of the subject. There are studies in leading universities worldwide focusing on using the present to interrogate the past.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while Ikime in the inaugural lecture I have cited has demonstrated that an inaugural lecture can be a review of the works of other people and past inaugural lectures, today's lecture and lecturer are not intended to be one. I have taken a sample of past inaugural lectures in the Lagos School of History to illustrate the fact that the school has established a pattern of allowing the present to guide its look at the past in order to understand the present before providing guidance for the future about everyday and societal challenges. I intend to keep fate with this tradition. The legitimate question that arises from this tradition is that, if in spite of the past efforts, the challenges the Lagos School of History has examined continue to stare us in the face, what is the need for following the same line of endeavour? Our response will be the Yoruba proverb that *Ení jó bàtá tí ò tà'pá, àbùkù ara è ló ta kíí se ti oníbàtá*.

The *bàtá* drum is a popular Oyo Yoruba drum characterised by certain rhythms which require appropriate acrobatic response from the dancer. The proverb simply says that the *bàtá* beat dancer who refuses to give required response to specific rhythm disgraces him/herself and not the drummer. The failure and or inability of the dancer to respond appropriately to the drummer's beats and rhythms cannot therefore be a disincentive for beating the drum just as the biological law of ultimate death for all regardless of the state of health should not be an incentive for suicide.

Hence, lack of appropriate response to our past efforts and required outcome cannot, and will not, deter us from

continuing in that respect to attempt solutions to societal challenges through applied and functional History. It is in this regard that I have chosen my inaugural lecture to be *Naked While Clothing Others: West Africa and Geopolitics*. This is my chosen area of historical scholarship since my enlistment in the army of soldiers allowing the present to inform their enquiry into the past as a way of understanding the present, and in order to have a guide for the future. In the paragraphs that follow, I propose to tell you that West Africa has been, is and is likely to remain, of great geopolitical significance to mankind. The significance of West Africa in this regard has been to the benefit of other regions of the world, particularly the advanced ones, to the detriment of West Africa. I then hope to proceed from these two premises to explain this paradoxical situation and finally end by making some recommendations about what West Africa can and should do to avoid a continuation of this situation.

For analytical clarity, it is necessary to demarcate geographically the area referred to as West Africa in this lecture.

Political map of West Africa



West Africa is geographically used to describe the westernmost part of the African continent which is close to longitude 10°E and is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean to the West and the South, the Sahara Desert to the North, while a line running from Mount Cameroon in the South to the Lake Chad in the North is generally agreed to form the Eastern Boundary of the region. It comprises sixteen independent nation-states which, with the exception of Mauritania, constitute the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that was formed in 1975.¹⁵ The region is home to diverse peoples, geographical features and resources. It covers a landmass of five million square kilometres.¹⁶ It is strategically located on the Atlantic maritime route that links several parts of the world. Apart from the maritime route, West Africa was also connected by a network of routes across the Sahara to the Maghreb through which she traded with the outside.¹⁷

West Africa as demarcated above has been of great geopolitical significance to humanity almost from the dawn of recorded History as will be shown presently. However, before we proceed to discuss the geopolitical significance of West Africa to the world, it will be useful to understand what we mean by geopolitics. This is because it is the concept that is crucial to our discussion in this lecture.

2. GEOPOLITICS: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The word geopolitics is a syllogism or joining together of two words namely geography and politics. Geopolitics therefore has to do with the relationship between geography, demography and economics especially with respect to the foreign policy of a state. It is a combination of geographic and political factors relating to or influencing a nation's foreign policy. It is about the relations of international political power to the

geographical setting. It concerns itself with the high politics of security and international order, about the influence of enduring spatial relationship for the rise and decline of power centres and about implications of technological, political, organizational and ethnographic trends in relations to relative influence.¹⁹ Geopolitics as a field of intellectual pursuit examines the influence of geography on power relationship in international politics. The term was first coined by a Swedish geographer Rudolph Kellen (1864 – 1922). It implies that location and physical environment are important in power structure and that the state may be seen as a realm in space.²⁰ Apart from Kellen referred to earlier, other pioneer experts in geopolitics include the British Halford Mackender and Freidrich Ratzel, and the American Admiral Alfred Mahan. Even though the articulation of geopolitics as a field of intellectual pursuit was a phenomenon of the twentieth century, its practice is as old as human societies and polities. Geopolitical considerations, for example, were crucial to Roman-Carthaginian relation in which Rome believed that the existence of Carthage on the Mediterranean coast was a threat to Roman imperial and commercial greatness.²¹ The same consideration influenced, if not determined, British attitude to Belgium in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Britain believed that a Belgium under the control or influence of an unfriendly power was like a pistol in the enemies' hands pointed at one's heart.²² This was because a hostile country could comfortably shoot at targets in Britain across the channels from just a distance of about eleven miles or seventeen kilometres. Also, geopolitical concerns were at the heart of what was referred to, in nineteenth century European History, as "the Eastern Question".²³ The weakness of the Ottoman Empire which dominated the Balkan elicited a conflict of interests among the leading European states. While some wanted to keep Turkey weak in order to advance

their interests by preventing any powerful state from having control over the maritime highways in the Turkish empire, others (Russia in particular) saw their interests as best served with the liquidation of the Turkish empire. The History of Russia down the ages is replete with struggles to have control over the maritime highways or at least access to the seas as a guarantee of her defence and security of her commercial interests.

In West Africa, which is the subject of this lecture, geopolitical manoeuvres antedated the coming of the Europeans. Sunni Ali of Songhai Empire (c. 1464 – 1492) in an attempt to conquer both Jenne and Timbuktu saw the control of the Niger as crucial.²⁴ He therefore undertook the dredging of the Niger (just as the Federal Government is doing). In the same manner, successive rulers of Sudanese empires sought to control the location of the gold deposits in the region as vital to the wealth of their empires. It is on record that Mansa Sundiata of Mali (1230 – 1255) had to relocate the capital of his empire from Jerriba to Niani;²⁵ for both administrative and strategic convenience, just as the Federal Government of Nigeria saw the wisdom of moving its capital from the coastal extremity of Lagos to a more central location for similar reasons. The desire for the control of the salt mining town of Taghaza was the major 'casus belli' in the war between Morocco and Songhai in 1591. In today's Ghana, the Asante and Fante had running battles, if not prolonged wars, for access to the sea. In the same manner, in today's Nigeria, conflicts between the Egba and Ijebu, Urhobo and Itsekiri at different times in the nineteenth century were not unconnected with the quest for access to the sea.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, what we are talking about in the light of this definition and explanations is the significance of the West African

space, demography, resources and economies to world power and influence down the ages.

West Africa has been of geopolitical importance to the world from the dawn of recorded History. The famous father of History, Herodotus, in one of his accounts spoke of the quest for the road leading to the gold reserves of the Negroes.²⁶ West Africa was the leading source of gold supply to the world from as early as the first century of the Christian era until the "discovery" of the Americas in the fifteenth century. Even though there was no direct link between West Africa and Europe until the fifteenth century, through the trans-Saharan trade routes, West African goods got to Europe and vice versa. The French and the British were engaged in brisk business in gold with West Africa which they called Guinea at this time.²⁷ Even though West Africa's geopolitical importance dates to antiquity, it assumed a new height in the fifteenth century. I will therefore look at the geopolitical importance of West Africa from the fifteenth century.

3. WEST AFRICA AND GEOPOLITICS: FIFTEENTH CENTURY TO DATE

Even though West Africa had been of geopolitical importance to the world from time immemorial, it assumed a new significance in the fifteenth century when the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was instituted. The various European countries starting with Portugal, and then followed by Britain and France, after the discovery of the Americas introduced the plantation economy to cultivate various agricultural products. An attempt was initially made to use the native Americans for labour in this endeavour. The attempt, however, failed as the native population died in large number and were even completely wiped out in some localities in the Americas. It therefore became inevitable for the Europeans to look

towards Africa. West Africa bore the brunt of this human traffic.

Exactly how many West Africans were taken across the Atlantic to the 'New World' between the middle of the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries remains controversial and conjectural. While scholars of Western extraction argue that only a few millions were taken away, African scholars and those of African descent argue that several millions were taken. Philip Curtin, a leading authority on the Slave Trade, using mathematical instruments of calculation, has argued that the number of Africans taken across the Atlantic during the era of the Slave Trade was in the region of eleven million, while Joseph Inikori, an eminent Nigerian historian, also having his thesis based on mathematical calculations, has contended that the number was twice as much.²⁸ Arguments about the number of slaves taken from Africa in general, and West Africa in particular, continue till now. However, with the commencement of the trade, Europeans concentrated on West Africa. Thomas Cummings developed an elaborate plan to acquire French trading posts in Africa in the 1750s. The British responded to this challenge by rivalling the French in the Senegalese Coast in 1758. This led to the British conquest of the French Fort in St. Louis in today's Senegal in March 1758 and Goree, by the end of the year. With these conquests, the British were able to increase the areas from which slaves could be drawn, obtain gold dust and ivory as well as have a monopoly of the trade in gum Arabic used in the manufacture of silk.²⁹ The slave trade made West Africa to be of extreme importance to the European states.

Even though other European states participated in the slave trade, the British came to dominate it from the seventeenth century. In 1660, the British King, Charles II chartered the Royal African Company and granted it a

monopoly of the trade in African slaves. The French followed suit in 1664 with the establishment of the French West African Company.³⁰ British domination of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was enhanced in 1713 with the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht which granted Britain the exclusive right to supply Spanish settlements in the Americas for the next thirty years.³¹ Although a discussion of the benefits of the trade to the various participating European countries belongs elsewhere in this lecture, we can note in passing that the trade was at the root of the capital formation by them to inaugurate international capitalism and the industrial revolution.

Apart from shipment to Europe and the Americas, the West African manpower was used by both imperial powers for the colonisation of West Africa itself. The scourge of malaria as well as dietary complications made it difficult for both imperial powers to get the required labour force to work in West Africa. Hence, both the British and the French had to recruit their labour force within West Africa, sometimes with the payment of pittance to the labourers; at other times, outright forced labour was used to get the Africans to work free by both imperial powers. On the side of the British West Africa, Sierra Leone, because of its relative poverty and early exposure to Western education in relation to other British West African colonies, served as a recruitment ground for labour in these other colonies. They served in the mercantile houses, missions, and even in the army where they left indelible imprints. In Nigeria for example, one of their descendants, General Aguiyi Ironsi, even ended up being the first Military Head of State. The Temne, Mende and Kroomen from Sierra Leone were particular groups in this regard that were recruited for labour not only within West Africa but also as far as British Honduras.³² By far the most important sector where the British and the French made use of African manpower was in the

military. This was understandable. The colonies were by and large acquired and maintained by force. This called for a large body of troops. This was at a time when for a number of reasons such men could not be obtained elsewhere. Also, in the case of France, practical considerations made their dependence on the African troops inevitable. France was demographically inferior to her European rivals such as Britain and Germany. A demographic survey of Europe after the military humiliation of France in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71 showed that while Germany had an increasing, France had a decreasing, population. Moreover, while Germany had a large percentage of her population within the arms-bearing age, France had a very small segment in this group. Also, the terms of enlistment of French citizens in the army was such that placed France at a disadvantage militarily in pursuit of her imperial goals. Unlike in Britain where soldiers were to go anywhere by land or sea in the service of their motherland, French citizens in her national army could not be deployed outside French soil which was defined to include Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia. French imperial interest therefore needed another body of troops which could be more freely deployed. This they found in the West African soldiers.³³

Moreover, unlike the British who had many other sources of soldiers, the French were restricted in their catchment areas of men of martial quality to West Africa. While Britain had the Indian army maintained by the Indian tax payers and the Dominion's forces paid for by the Dominion governments, the French only had Africa to fall upon.³⁴ This made the use of the African soldier to, in the words of Chester Crocker, occupy a central position in French defence policy.³⁵ The need for a large body of troops for imperial assignments motivated the idea of *la force noire* initiated by French officers who had experience with the West African troops. Among such

were Generals Louis Archinard, Gallieni and the most celebrated of them, Charles Mangin. The French had used West African soldiers against the Native Americans in 1736; West African soldiers also fought in the French revolutionary wars and fought on the side of France against Prussia in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 which led to the birth of Germany.³⁶

As a result of this experience with the black troops spanning decades, the French had come to appreciate the martial qualities of the West African soldiers; and even while fighting to colonise West Africa, they had in sight the future military value of the West Africans. Mangin said it for all when he said:

*la sofa qui nous combattait hier etait le tirailleur de demain.*³⁷

The African soldier we fought yesterday was the soldier of tomorrow.

They therefore embarked on a recruitment of West Africans for military service not only in West Africa but in the entire French empire. In 1912, two years before the outbreak of the First World War, the French formally introduced universal conscription for military service in their West African colonies.³⁸ Annual conscription quotas were established for West Africa by the Ministries of War and Colonies. Instructions to this effect were sent to the Governor General, Lieutenant Governors, Commandants de Cercle and the local chiefs for implementation. On the outbreak of the First World War, West Africa supplied France with one hundred and eighty four thousand troops. These soldiers saw action in France, North Africa and the Middle East.³⁹ Out of this number, thirty thousand died in action.⁴⁰

After the First World War, French need for the West African soldier became accentuated. This was due to several reasons. There was again the demographic decline of France. It is estimated that France lost about two million men in the First World War.⁴¹ Not only was the labour of these men lost to the French labour market, they were also lost to the biological reproduction process of increasing the French population.⁴² This was at a time when the French were suffering from paranoia of the possibility of Germany's resurgence and demand for her lost colonies.⁴³ In the face of this loss in the French army, there was a huge pressure on French authorities to demobilise the war heroes and make them available for work in the French economy.⁴⁴ France also needed a large body of troops to occupy Germany. This called for continued need for troops which France could not get elsewhere. As a result of all these, the French government was compelled to see the African troops as indispensable for French survival. The African troops, in French strategic thought, were:

*Les troupes de souverantée que nous entretenons sur les theatres d'operations exterieures et dans certain de nos possessions d'outre mer (Afrique du Nord, Syrie, Madagascar, Guyane, Somalis).*⁴⁵

Sovereign troops that we maintain on certain theatres of external operations and in some of our overseas possessions (North Africa, Syria, Madagascar, Guyana and Somalis).

The West African troops were also:

*des forces mobile prête à intervenir en tous point de notre empire où l'ordre Française vien a se trouver menacée.*⁴⁶

mobile forces ready to intervene in all points of our empire where the French order finds itself threatened.

They also:

*contribuent des les temps de paix a fournir à la metropole, les effectifs necessaire a sa defense.*⁴⁷

contributed in peace times to give the metropole the troops necessary for her defence.

The French therefore decided to continue with the conscription of West Africans for military service. Another conscription law was promulgated in 1919 and fresh conscription quota of twelve thousand to fourteen thousand men annually was fixed for French West Africa.⁴⁸ Through this legislative enactment, the French were able to sustain an annual conscription of French West African troops in the interwar years. The French knew from the First World War experience that this heavy conscription was likely to meet with resistance, if not revolt, in West Africa. They therefore had an elaborate plan to combat likely West African resistance and or revolt. This consisted of using the air force in addition to military forces to defend West Africa against both external aggression and internal subversion. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while other writers have discussed colonial policing in West Africa with naval and infantry forces, I remain the only author worldwide to have discussed the air factor in colonial defence in West Africa.⁴⁹

As a result of the steady conscription of West Africans by the French, they had a large body of African troops on the outbreak of the Second World War. By the time France capitulated in June 1940, in addition to the eighty thousand African troops serving in Europe, Vichy France still had a reserve of one hundred and eighty thousand

troops in West Africa.⁵⁰ After the Second World War, the French continued to depend on West Africa for military manpower in metropolitan France and the French empire. They used West African troops in their Algerian war of independence and in Indochina.

Like the French, the British also had to rely extensively on West African manpower initially for service in West Africa but later on in other areas of the British Empire as well. For a very long time, both the Colonial and War Offices shared the same view about the limited value of the African soldier. However, with the approach of the First World War, both parted ways as the War Office saw the inevitability of the use of West African forces for British imperial assignments outside West Africa, while the Colonial office stuck to its original view about the role of the West African troops. The experience of the First World War vindicated the War Office as the British had to make use of the West African Frontier Force (as British West African Forces were known) in East Africa. Initially, the British had sent troops from India to East Africa. These succumbed to the climate in the region and fell sick in large numbers; they could not be reinforced from India because they were required to maintain internal security in India itself and for operations in the Middle East theatre of operation during the First World War. South Africa objected to the training of blacks for military service because even though apartheid was yet to become the official policy of the South African state, the white minority were afraid of the consequences of such training. The East African manpower resources were already overstretched while Allied reserves in 1916 also stretched British manpower itself. Britain was therefore left with no choice than to fall back on the manpower of West Africa.⁵¹ As a result of the heavy demand on British manpower resources during the First World War, not only did Britain seek and obtain succour from West Africa for

the East African campaigns, it was agreed in 1918 that a West Africa Service Brigade under the War Office should be formed and deployed to Mesopotamia, Palestine, Egypt and anywhere else except European Germany.

After the war, Britain once again reverted to its pre-war doubts about the value of black African troops even against the advice of its military experts on the need to have a more realistic view of the black African troops. As a matter of fact, Mr. Winston Churchill, as he then was, who was to be British war time leader during the Second World War, and was the Secretary of State for War and Air was devising a scheme for the integration of the African colonial forces into the imperial army. The Colonial Office continued to object. While this was going on, a war broke out in Mesopotamia (present-day Iraq). This engaged one hundred thousand British imperial forces. A hurried attempt was made to see how West African troops could be used in this part of the British Empire instead of Indians for cultural reasons.⁵² While efforts were being made to actualise this scheme, the Royal Air Force succeeded in suppressing the uprising. The British once again reverted to their view about the limited use of West African troops until 1935 when heightened international tensions once again exposed British manpower limitations. This made them to fall back on West African troops once again. With the Italian successful invasion of Ethiopia, Britain was faced with a powerful neighbour in East Africa. This was at a time when British manpower resources were already committed. The British therefore hoped to rely heavily on West African manpower to meet likely Italian challenges in East Africa.

To ensure the success of this scheme, General Giffard of the War Office was appointed Inspector General of the West African Frontier Force, and the King's African Rifles

of East Africa in October 1936.⁵³ The details of the deployment of West African forces to East Africa on the outbreak of the Second World War were worked out between the Colonial and War Offices. On the outbreak of the war, West African troops were sent to East Africa to defend the region against anticipated Italian onslaughts. They consisted of six battalions, two light batteries and a number of signalers. By 1940, the troops had been increased to two brigades. The first brigade consisted of troops from Nigeria which fought gallantly to conquer Italian Somaliland and liberate Ethiopia, and led the advance over one thousand miles from River Juba to Harar.⁵⁴

With the conclusion of the East African campaigns, West African troops were sent for action in British South East Asia command against Japan.⁵⁵ The British ran from pillar to post and adopted all tactics to ensure that adequate recruitment targets were met. In Nigeria, where the bulk of the colonial soldiers were recruited from the northern part of the country, the British portrayed Hitler as anti-Islam and Christianity. The Second World War was therefore, according to them, a Jihad in which Muslims were duty bound to defend their faith against the infidel Hitler by assisting the British.⁵⁶

Like the British and the French, the Dutch also had cause to use the West African manpower in the military for imperial pursuits. Between 1830 and 1872, the Dutch recruited two thousand African soldiers, mainly of slave origin, for service in the Dutch East Indies which is today's Indonesia.⁵⁷ This was also at a time that the Dutch had huge imperial commitment with a very thin manpower base. They therefore had to resort to the purchase of African slaves from the Gold Coast. Such slaves were obliged to serve the Dutch in exchange for their "freedom". In reality, however, the slaves continued

their servitude as the condition for their ransom was compulsory military service, ostensibly on the same terms as free Dutch citizens. This was the situation until the slave trade was abolished.

A combination of factors already competently and exhaustively discussed by eminent scholars led to the abolition of the trade. The industrial revolution began. The European states, above all, found out that their industries required markets both for raw materials and finished products. This made West Africa assume another geopolitical importance. Initially, Britain which was the leading industrial country in Europe had an unrivalled access to markets in Europe and other parts of the world. As other European countries started to challenge British industrial supremacy, not only did their domestic markets become closed to British industry, they also started competing with Britain for markets in other parts of the world. British industrialists thus started clamouring for the opening of Africa to British trade. Initially, these industrialists first focused their attention on Central Africa but later expanded their vision for new markets in West Africa.⁵⁸ The clamour for markets in West Africa first started in Lancashire and then spread to Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow and Birmingham where the Chambers of Commerce organised themselves into pressure groups to get the British government to aid them in their search for new markets. Partly as a result of the competition from other countries, the British industry and economy experienced a recession leading to the setting up of a royal commission of enquiry. These industrial centres through their chambers of commerce told the royal commission of enquiry in 1882 that the real hope of salvation for British trade could be found not in the crusade for free trade as Britain, a leading industrial country, was doing, but in the opening up of new markets. The United Kingdom Association of Chambers of

Commerce specifically called on the Colonial office to take interest in West Africa.⁵⁹ The British press was also not left behind in the call for the opening up of Africa in general and West Africa in particular to British commerce. As a result of the exertions of these and other interests, by the close of the nineteenth century, West Africa had come to be seen as a valued market for British industrial raw materials and finished products.⁶⁰

France was also not left behind in perceiving West Africa as a vital region of markets. As a matter of fact, more than Britain, France had a greater cause to search for both territory and markets outside Europe. Early in the nineteenth century, France was divested of some of the territories she had acquired in Europe during the French Revolution. Her plight was further compounded in 1870-71 after the Franco-Prussian War in which she was defeated. She was compelled to cede the cities of Alsace and Lorraine to the newly unified Germany. This robbed her of industrial raw materials and people. She therefore needed to make up for this.⁶¹ In 1879, French businessmen made representations to the French parliament about the need to open up the Niger basin to French commerce.⁶² They urged France to build a railway line from Algeria, a colony they established in 1830, to the Sudan and another one between the Niger and Senegal.⁶³ The Sudan in French usage referred to present-day Mali.

The acceptance of this suggestion led to a flurry of activities by both the British and the French in West Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries aimed at acquiring territories in the region for the benefit of their trade. The spate of activities by France for territorial acquisition in West Africa was consistent with her dream for the region from the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1815, after the Vienna Congress, the *Societe*

Coloniale Philanthropique in France had conceived the idea of creating for France, in West Africa, an equivalence of what India was to Britain.⁶⁴

The new perception of West Africa as a market for industrial raw materials and finished products led to rivalries for territorial acquisition. This story is already too familiar not to require any belabouring. In the respective West African colonies that belonged to the European states, they established a trade monopoly. Even though I have concentrated on the activities of the British and the French in West Africa, due purely to the fact that they were the two leading imperial powers, other European countries, notably Germany and Portugal, were equally active in the region.

With the sharing of West Africa among the European countries, the cultivation of various agricultural products needed by the industries of the European colonial powers was encouraged. To this end, cocoa, oil palm, cotton, groundnut and gum Arabic among others were encouraged. The colonies were compelled to trade exclusively with their colonial masters. West Africa either became the leading supplier of these products or supplied a substantial part to their colonial masters.

West Africa also came to support their respective colonial masters during the two World Wars with vital food and other raw materials. After the First World War, as a result of the economic devastation of the European countries in general and France in particular, they looked towards West Africa for continued support to re-establish their economies. The European countries took stock of their strength after the war in the light of their wartime experiences. The French came to the conclusion that:

Nos productions nationales, ne pouvaient suffire a assurer l'équilibre économique et la sécurité du pays.⁶⁵

Our national productions are not sufficient to assure the economic balance and security of the country.

To make up for this deficiency, the French decided that: *Les yeux sont portés sur nos possessions tropicales.* [Our eyes are directed to our tropical possessions.]⁶⁶

The French accordingly intensified efforts to enable West Africa to serve as a source of supply for vital agricultural products that France could not obtain elsewhere. Among these were cotton, palm oil, groundnut and leatherworks.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I have shown in details elsewhere the various efforts made by the French to prepare their West African possessions to support them in case of another war after the First World War.⁶⁷ It is therefore enough to note that French investment in this regard yielded a handsome dividend.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, West Africa is generally seen to be of value to her former colonial masters only economically. However, in global geopolitics, the region had been of immense value to world power equations. Not many historians have known this fact: West Africa is the closest point on the African continent to the Americas. As a matter of fact, the distance between Dakar in Senegal and Mexico in the Americas which, as will be shown later, was a vital trade link for the Europeans is just equivalent to the one between Lagos and Maiduguri in Nigeria (some one thousand six hundred kilometres).

West Africa during the colonial period was a storehouse of vital mineral resources which her colonial masters found indispensable at crucial moments. These included tin in Jos, manganese at Nsuta in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and iron ore in Sierra Leone. The Gold Coast manganese mines supplied 50,000 tons of manganese to both the United Kingdom and the United States annually and came in handy during the Second World War when the disruption of trade with the Far East made the supply from that area difficult to obtain.⁶⁸ The Sierra Leone iron ore field supplied 50 percent of the iron ore needs of Britain then. The region still remains the reservoir of vital minerals which the world needs. Perhaps the most notable of these is crude oil in which our dear country Nigeria leads the region in supply to the world. Others are uranium from which nuclear power is generated. France, a nuclear Power in the world, has no uranium deposit of her own; she depends substantially on the supply of this product from her former colony of Niger.⁶⁹ It is French continuous need for Uranium which has informed her intervention in the current crisis in Mali. She reasons that if Mali is allowed to fall to the Tuareg Jihadists, the ripple effect will reverberate in Niger thereby destabilising her source of uranium supply and putting her nuclear energy and economy in jeopardy.⁷⁰ West Africa continues to supply the world with a host of other minerals and agricultural materials. This is particularly true of cocoa which supports an industry with an annual business turnover of eighty-six billion U. S. Dollars.⁷¹ West Africa alone produces close to 75 percent of the world's cocoa of which Cote d'Ivoire alone accounts for 50 percent.⁷² The bulk of this cocoa ends up in Europe where it is processed into several finished products, the most notable of which is chocolate, a western delicacy.

The West African space has been, is, and will likely continue to be, of immense strategic value to the world.

The region is located midway on the commercial highway on the Atlantic. During the colonial period, it served as a base for the supply and provisions for commercial vessels in peace time and the defence of seaborne trade. This was what made her colonial masters, particularly Britain and France, establish strategic and naval bases at convenient points in the region. A royal commission of enquiry set up in Britain in 1878 made a recommendation about the need to establish a coaling station and then a naval base in Sierra Leone.⁷³ The British established their own naval base in Sierra Leone and defended ports in Ghana and Nigeria among others. The French on the other hand, established the naval base in Senegal and defended ports in several other colonies. Even though the Germans did not establish a naval base in West Africa, they had an important telegraph station in Togo until they were defeated in the First World War.

In the same manner, the strategic importance of West Africa to the French started to be appreciated from 1870. Dakar in Senegal was the first to be identified by the French in this regard. Dakar, in French strategic thought, constituted the only bridge between Gibraltar and Gabon. It was the first terminus of trade from the Sudan to the valley of the Niger.⁷⁴ The French saw in the geographical location of Dakar at the extreme and healthy western end of West Africa, the potentials of a commercial highway from Europe to Asia Minor, North Africa, the Antilles, Panama and South Africa as well as Equatorial Africa and beyond.⁷⁵ For Dakar to be able to fulfil this role, a naval base was deemed indispensable. Dakar was intended to be a port of refuge to battle flotilla in the Atlantic Ocean. In French strategic thought, Dakar was a bridge between the French Port in the North Atlantic, the English Channel and the Mediterranean which could enable the French navy to have a unity of combat. Dakar was well placed to combine her action with Brest and Fort

de France.⁷⁶ Also, like the British, the French planned that in the eventuality of the closure of the all important gateway of the Suez Canal, Dakar would become the indispensable access for the trade that would join the Far East and Madagascar. Dakar was therefore in a situation of first class strategic importance to the French.⁷⁷ In view of this great importance, the French carried out a series of defence arrangements and constructions that I alone of all historians have examined in a number of works.⁷⁸

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, as envisaged by the French and the British before the outbreak of the First World War, Germany did resort to submarine warfare thereby making British and French commercial highway through the Middle to the Far East unusable. Both Allies had to divert their trade to the South Atlantic. Their investments in naval bases and defended ports stood them in a good stead in those years of the war. While other historians have concentrated on the mobilisation and manpower resources of West Africa to assist the war efforts of the region's colonial masters, I remain, with all sense of humility and modesty, the only historian who has identified this strategic importance of West Africa as crucial to the victory of the Allies in both World Wars.

In appreciation of the significance of Dakar to them during the First World War, after the war, French strategic thinkers came to the conclusion that:

Dans les grands conflits Europeen de l'avenir, Dakar jouera un role plus important encore que pendant le derniere guerre.⁷⁹

In the great European conflicts of the future, Dakar will play a more important role again than during the last war.

As a result of this, Dakar was treated as a European theatre of military operation and its defences were so organised by the French in the inter-war years.⁸⁰ Apart from Dakar in Senegal and Freetown in Sierra Leone, the British and the French established defended ports in various other locations in West Africa. These were Etienne, Conakry, Abidjan and Point Noire with an auxiliary submarine station at Douala in the Cameroons, on the French side, and Accra, Takoradi in today's Ghana, in addition to Lagos and Port-Harcourt here in Nigeria.⁸¹ West Africa also served as an air route to the Middle East during the Second World War. To this end, air staging facilities were constructed in Takoradi, Ghana and Kano here in Nigeria.⁸² All of these were to ensure that British trade was not interrupted in time of war.

From time immemorial, British ability to withstand external attack had depended mainly on her ability to trade with other countries far and wide. It was the realisation of this that made Napoleon to describe Britain as a nation of factory workers and shopkeepers. After conquering nearly the rest of Europe, Napoleon was left with Britain alone. He therefore devised a scheme known as the Continental System to bring Britain to her knees. By this system, Napoleon sought to close the whole of the market of Europe to Britain and starve the country to submission. Unfortunately for Napoleon, Britain had a powerful navy with which she could protect her trade outside Europe. Hence, while Napoleon largely succeeded in hindering British trade in Europe, he could not prevent Britain from trading outside Europe and the rest of the world. Therefore, Britain remained strong and unbeatable by the great Napoleon and France. In effect, during the two World Wars, Germany did attempt to do, on a larger scale, what Napoleon could not do to Britain on a smaller scale, but failed because Britain depended very heavily on international trade. In fact, as late as

1937, two years before the outbreak of the Second World War and when plans were already being made for the war by both Britain and France as Allies, Britain on only a single day had fourteen thousand, five hundred ships engaged in overseas trade.⁸³

Britain received 160,000 tons of sea-borne cargo of which a third was made up of foodstuff. West Africa then, as at now, supplied most of British cocoa, meat came from Australia and Canada, butter from Australia and New Zealand, and cheese from Canada. Seventy-five percent of British wool came from Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Jute came to Britain mostly from India and copper from Canada. The supply of these products was through maritime trade spread over routes of not less than eighty thousand square miles.⁸⁴

Hitler, like Napoleon, knew that if he could prevent Britain from accessing these vital materials, Britain would capitulate in no time. To do this, Hitler resorted to the use of submarine boats to sink vessels trading with Britain. Hitler's submarines however could mostly be effective in the Middle East if he had control of, or alliance with, countries bordering the route to the Far East and on the North Atlantic. Britain and France were aware of this and made plans to divert their trade to the South Atlantic to avoid the submarines, using the convoy system to protect the trade. In the pre-war plans of the British and the French, West Africa occupied a key position.⁸⁵

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, West Africa still occupies this strategic position today in world geopolitics. The increased terrorists threat to the Middle East, the major source of oil supply to the world, has seen a direction of attention to the Gulf of Guinea. West Africa occupies a pride of place in its strategic location on the Gulf of Guinea. Also, the current crusade

by America against terrorism makes West Africa a geopolitical beautiful bride.⁸⁶ This is because America's leadership of the crusade makes her vulnerable to terrorist attack worldwide. America's investment in her national defences may be embarrassed if she ignores West Africa, particularly Senegal. As pointed out, Senegal, through Dakar, is a stone's throw to the U. S. She is the quickest and perhaps most vulnerable place from which the U. S. can be attacked.⁸⁷

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, may I, at this point, show the impact of West Africa's geopolitical importance on the region. It is our argument that the geopolitical importance of West Africa has been to her disadvantage and the benefit of the Western world.

4. THE IMPACT OF WEST AFRICA'S GEOPOLITICS ON THE REGION

Right from the era of trans-Atlantic slave trade, West Africa's geopolitical importance has been to her own disadvantage and the benefit of the Western world. The first area of disadvantage to West Africa was in the area of demography. As pointed out earlier, the exact figure of the people taken out of Africa remains controversial. What is not in dispute, however, is that the trade led to a demographic retardation of Africa. Most healthy men of between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five were taken into slavery from West Africa. This was because women were largely ignored for several reasons. The intensiveness of the labour required on the plantations was too harsh for women. Also, as a result of their reproductive obligation, women would be incapacitated for a long time during pregnancy. In addition, women would require some time to nurse their newborn infants during which they would not be much useful for manual labour.⁸⁸ Statistics of slave-importation over the years show a disproportionate preference for the male.

Regardless of the gender of the slaves, the demographic effect on West Africa was the same. Even if women were left behind, they would have required the male gender to reproduce. Hence, the population of Africa continued to decline. Walter Rodney had given a comparative analysis of African and European demography before and after the slave trade.⁸⁹ Whereas Africa and Europe were at a stage of demographic parity, after the slave trade, Europe enjoyed a huge demographic advantage over Africa.

There was also the economic loss to West Africa. The labour of the huge number of men and women taken from West Africa was lost to the region just as it was a gain to the Western world. The exact economic value of this labour is a subject of lively intellectual debate. It is on record that slaves worked round the clock in their captivity. Sometimes, they laboured for up to between sixteen and eighteen hours a day.⁹⁰ The value of this labour has been calculated at various times. As at 1973, it was estimated that the value of slave labour lost to Africa (the majority of which came from West Africa) was in the neighbourhood of U. S. \$ 448 and \$995 billion.⁹¹ Of recent, a Professor of Physics, using mathematical models and the conservative man-hours of forty working hours a week in the U. S. at a wage of \$7.5 an hour, has put the value of slave labour in the U. S. between 1760 and 1860 (just one hundred years) at U. S. \$59 trillion.⁹²

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the economic value is best appreciated when we juxtapose the plight of contemporary Africa with the amount in question. The G-8, suffering from a guilty conscience about the successive plunder of Africa, with the prompting of Tony Blair as the Prime Minister of Britain, not too long ago, stated that Africa needs a total economic aid of U. S. \$64 billion to bring it out of the doldrums. One can then imagine what either U. S. \$448

or \$995 billion as at 1973 would have done to the economy of Africa, not to talk of the current figure of U. S. \$59 trillion.

While the labour lost to West Africa went to enhance productivity in the New World, what West Africa got in exchange for the slaves did not enhance productivity. In exchange for West African manpower, the region got alcoholic drinks, tobacco, guns, gun powder and other firearms. There were also trinkets, loin cloths and jewels. These articles either perished shortly after they were brought or their use instilled terror and insecurity which were not conducive to economic productivity in West Africa. The intake of alcohol encouraged irresponsible use of firearms and this, in turn, increased intergroup feuds.⁹³ While it is true that there had been inter-group conflicts in West Africa before the trans-Atlantic slave trade, the desire for captives to be sold as slaves served as an inducement for such wars.

The pandemonium caused by these wars led to the destruction of cities and the displacement of people. Kidnapping of people which was another mode of acquiring slaves was a disincentive for outdoor activities.

The rate of exchange in slave trade was so unequally made in favour of the West. What West Africa got was nothing that could be reinvested into the economy even if there were people to carry out economic productivity. For example, while a slave from West Africa sold averagely for £20 in Jamaica where the least price was offered for slaves, in the seventeenth century, he was bought at the rate of between £3 and £4 or 600lbs of sugar or 16 trade guns in West Africa.⁹⁴

Meagre as this amount was, it was attractive enough to encourage slave raiding at the expense of other

economic activities, as in the words of Rodney in relation to the Gold Coast (modern Ghana):

Slave raiding and kidnapping made it unsafe to mine or to travel ... and raiding for captives proved more profitable than mining ... as one fortunate marauding makes a native rich in a day, they exerted themselves rather in war, robbery and plunder than business of digging and collecting gold.⁹⁵

On the other hand, the slave trade benefitted Europe and the West in several ways. The unequal rate of exchange has been noted. This made the trade attractive to the Europeans who were sure of a handsome profit after all probable losses must have been indemnified. In Bristol for example, a successful voyage of a cargo of two hundred and seventy slaves could fetch the owner a profit of between £7,000 and £8,000 as at 1730. This will probably be in the range of seventy to eighty million pounds by modern day conversion. This was excluding returns on ivory and other products. The value of 303,737 Negroes in 1878 Liverpool ships between 1783 and 1793 was over £15,000,000. In the 1780s, slave trade alone brought Liverpool an annual profit of £300,000.⁹⁶ The goods produced by West African labour brought prosperity to Europe and America. In Europe, such goods served as raw materials for European manufacturers. This was the case with tobacco and cotton. The capital accumulated from the trade infiltrated into European hinterland cities to induce growth.

The geopolitical benefits of West Africa to the West were not restricted to the era of the slave trade but continued in a greater way during the colonial period. Like the slave trade, a lot has been written about colonialism in Africa not to require any belabouring. This is particularly so when our concern in this lecture is geopolitics. Hence,

only the aspects of colonialism with relevance to our focus will be discussed.

Colonialism restructured the economies of West Africa in such a way that they would minister to European and Western capitalist demands rather than satisfy the needs of the region. The economies were geared towards producing needed agricultural raw materials for European industries and importing the finished products from these industries. To this end, the British encouraged the peoples of West Africa to cultivate: cocoa, palm trees, rubber, groundnuts and cotton in Nigeria; cocoa in Ghana, and groundnuts in The Gambia. The efforts of the French in their West African possessions have been noted earlier. In doing this, special care was taken to destroy West African technology which managed to survive the ravages of the slave trade in order to frustrate West African independent efforts at industrialisation.

The most notable instance of doing this was in the textile industry. Before European imperialism in West Africa, there was a flourishing textile industry in the region. Much of West Africa's trade was concerned with the distribution of cotton from the great weaving centres such as Kano, Mende, Moss, Nupe, Kong, Segou, Yorubaland, Borgu and Boule among others.⁹⁷ Europeans were aware of the success of the textile industry of West Africa and its threat potential to European, especially British, textile industry. Alfred Moloney, a British administrator in Lagos commented in 1889 that:

Country cloths are now exposed for sale in every market place beside the European goods and are not unlikely in time to beat them out of market.⁹⁸

Of the nearly 31,000 yards of cotton, silk and mixture cloths consumed annually by the Yoruba, 95 percent

were produced locally by nearly 25 percent of the population. The same trend was later observed by Lugard in 1904 when he noted that:

Native cloth is manufactured in great quantities and competes favourably with Manchester cottons, local salt competes with British salt ... the leather work and dye of Kano and other large cities supply local wants to the exclusion of imported goods.⁹⁹

The people preferred this local fabric because in the words of Lugard:

Though less showy than the English cloth, is more durable and better value to the native than the grey baft ... and no native will take the English material if he can get the latter.¹⁰⁰

To stop this trend and undermine the West African textile industry, the colonial masters took certain steps: The British government abolished duties on British textile materials to Nigeria and by extension to British West Africa. The Germans also pursued a similar policy of destroying local industries in order to make way for German manufacturers. The French did the same.

In order to facilitate the exploitation of West African resources, the colonialists had to establish some infrastructures. The French, for most of the period, for the construction of infrastructure, resorted to outright forced labour in their West African possessions. The British did the same in the northern territories of the Gold Coast and in some parts of Nigeria.¹⁰¹

West African economies were tied to Western economies in a centre-periphery nexus whereby West Africans produced solely for Western economies and traded exclusively with the West and on terms dictated by the

West. This, as will be shown later, was invariably to the disadvantage of West Africa. So tight was this linkage that several years after their independence, the economic relationship established by the West in West Africa remained.

It is only now that the Chinese are making a remarkable inroad into West Africa, like the rest of Africa, that there appears to be a diversification of African pattern of international trade. After independence, and up till now, West African economies have remained essentially monocultural. They export either a single agricultural raw material or crude minerals to the Western world and usually at prices dictated by the world market.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the disadvantages of this linkage of West African economies to the Western ones are legion. Among them is the phenomenon of neo-colonialism which Nkrumah discussed with matchless logic and elucidation.¹⁰² It means in effect that West Africans like the rest of Africa had not been in control of their own affairs. The external control of West African economies has made the economies vulnerable to the vagaries of fluctuation in the international economic situation. Hence, when Western economies sneeze, African economies catch cold.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we started this lecture by saying that the Lagos School of History prides itself with attempting to find solutions to existential problems on the basis of its understanding of History. How then can West Africa exit this paradoxical situation of being a geopolitical benefit to the outside world to her own disadvantage? A good starting point of finding solution to any problem is by understanding the problem. What then has been responsible for the situation of West Africa being like a needle that clothes

others while it remains naked? Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we now examine the reasons for West Africa's geopolitical disadvantage to itself and benefit for others.

5. CAUSES OF WEST AFRICA'S GEOPOLITICAL DISADVANTAGE

A major cause of West Africa's geopolitical disadvantage is that it has engaged, and continues to engage, the world with crude and unprocessed materials. This has been in the form of the West African manpower, raw agricultural or mineral resources. Throughout the era of the slave trade, the West only valued the West Africans for their raw physical strength. The result of this is that West Africa derives only the minimum benefits possible from the export of these raw materials in monetary terms. In addition, as noted earlier, West Africa produces up to 75 percent of world's cocoa export annually.¹⁰³ The cocoa bean generates a chocolate business to the value of U. S. \$86 billion annually. Hence, from the chocolate components of the cocoa business alone, West Africa should derive nothing less than 64 billion dollars. Yet, West Africa's earning from the sale of the cocoa annually stands at 5 percent of 86 billion dollars.¹⁰⁴ Apart from chocolate, there are other derivatives from the cocoa beans for which West Africa does not derive any benefit. The same is true of other export commodities; be they agricultural or mineral exports. A classical example is oil. From the crude oil exported by Nigeria and now many other West African countries, several products can be derived. From the crude oil, you can have the premium motor spirit (PMS) otherwise called petrol by English speaking people and *essence* by the French. You can also have aviation fuel, kerosene, engine oil, and several other petrochemical products. Yet, what is taken into consideration in pricing crude oil is only the premium motor spirit.

The rawness of West Africa's export commodities also deprives the region of the synergy that would have come to the area from ancillary industries that would have flowed from the attempt to add value to the exports. The need to produce chocolate from cocoa, for example, will demand certain other synergetic industries. All of these are lost to West Africa just as they are gains to the economies that turn the raw materials into finished products. A barrel of crude oil contains about forty-two gallons of oil. Each gallon contains about four litres. This then means that a barrel of crude oil contains about one hundred and sixty-eight litres of oil. A gallon of oil has sold for between U. S. \$1 and \$2 between 1998 and 2004; then, rose to U. S. \$4.11 in 2009.¹⁰⁵ This means that a barrel of crude oil should sell for between U. S. \$42 and \$84 between 1998 and 2004 for its prime motor spirit content, and should have risen to \$168 in 2009. Yet, the price of crude oil never came close to this level during the period in question.

Another reason West Africa's geopolitical importance has been to the region's disadvantage is that, substitutes have been found for her raw materials with which she has traded with the world in general and the West in particular. This has been right from the era of the slave trade. A number of reasons had been suggested for the abolition of the slave trade. The one reason that is most convincing is that the industrial revolution which substituted mechanical for manual efforts in the production and distribution processes made the African manpower redundant. With the introduction of machines to the production process, duties performed by human beings started to be done faster and on a larger scale. Unlike human beings, machines do not revolt, fall sick or die; even though they require tendering like man. This removed the need for constant replenishment unlike

slaves. The moment this happened there was no longer the need for the African manpower; hence, the stoppage of the trade in slaves. This had a serious destabilising effect on West Africa's political economy as some time was required before the region could adjust to the trade in sylvan products that were required by Western industries. When the economies adjusted to the production of agricultural raw materials, they prospered for some time until synthetic substitutes started to be found again for the raw materials. This led to a collapse in the prices of the commodities of West Africa with consequent impoverishment in the economies of the region while her trading partners were spared the ordeal. Like the situations with the slave trade and raw agricultural products, moves are now being made to find substitute for fossil fuel which is the queen of exports in West Africa. As a matter of fact, some countries, such as Brazil, have succeeded in producing prime motor spirit from agricultural products such as sugar cane¹⁰⁶. The French have been conducting research on how to produce same from what they call *oleagineau* or oil-bearing plants since the 1920s.¹⁰⁷ There are moves to produce electric cars which will not run on fuel as is the case at present. While success in this direction is still modest, the logic of History is that, like in the past when substitutes were found for similar products, other sources of fuel will be found. Should and when that happens, there would certainly be a substantial reduction in the demand for crude oil. Should this occur, the destabilising effects on West Africa's economies (particularly Nigeria's) can best be imagined than described. Like in the past, it will most likely plunge these economies back into abject poverty. This trend of finding substitute for West Africa's raw materials has been a major cause of her geopolitical disadvantage over the years.

There is also the under-pricing of West Africa's raw materials. Again, this goes back right to the era of the slave trade. While the typical West African slave was bought for between £3 and £4 in West Africa, he sold for about £20 in Jamaica where the least price was offered for the West African slave¹⁰⁸. The African cash crops for exports were similarly underpriced. For example, while groundnut sold for £110 per ton in Europe, it was bought by Europeans in West Africa for mere £15. Palm oil which sold for £95 in the world market was bought for £17 in West Africa¹⁰⁹. The West African labour was similarly underpaid for the same work all over the region during the colonial period.¹¹⁰ The case of crude oil has been mentioned earlier. The result of this has been that West Africa has never got enough returns on its resources for developmental purposes while her trading partners have ripped her off over the years. This has also been a major reason for the geopolitical disadvantage.

In addition, West Africa's geopolitical relations with the rest of the world have made her dependent on the vagaries in international trade and vulnerable to fluctuations. West Africa's long and short term development plans had been based on their projected earnings from their exports and Overseas Development Assistance. More often than not, the prices of these products fluctuate in the international market leading to the collapse of such plans and hurried adjustments, while Overseas Development Assistance entraps West African states into debt payment. The results of this have been that West Africa's developmental plans have hardly been met over the years, while the debt trap has compelled West Africa to commit a huge proportion of her resources to debt service. By debt servicing, it is meant the payment of interests on loans and not the liquidisation of the amount borrowed itself. The result of this is that monies that ought to have been used for development by the

respective West African states are spent in debt repayment. This leads to a continuous drainage of West Africa's resources to benefit her creditors.

There is also the almost intractable problem of corruption which leads to substantial loss of resources in the West African region. Earnings from exports are pilfered by the leadership. Also, West African leaders in many instances go to source for overseas development loans which have not been used to develop anything. Donors of these loans identify projects on which the loans can be used. In most cases, these projects are hardly in the interests of West African countries. There have been instances when West African countries went to take loans to be able to import agricultural materials and foodstuff, which they can grow on their own, just because leaders in the region knew what they stood to gain from such loans. As indicated above, the loans have ended up entrapping West African states in the debt shares. In several instances, huge proportions of the loans are expended in paying for technical advice from the donors or crediting states. West Africa ends up the worse for it.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, having known the causes of West Africa's disadvantages in geopolitics, you need to know what can and should be done to remedy the unsatisfactory situation.

In our discussion of the causes of this problem, we have identified the rawness of West Africa's products as a major cause of her disadvantage. The first thing West Africa should do is to ensure to add value to whatever it wants to engage the world with. It is gratifying to note that some steps are already being taken in this respect. Like the situation during the slave trade, West Africa's manpower continues to be drawn to the advanced

economies. The United States has the American lottery programme through which people from all over the world are encouraged to emigrate and settle in the country. West Africa, with Nigeria leading, accounts for the largest number of immigrants to the U. S. under this programme.¹¹⁰ Unlike during the era of the slave trade, West Africans who emigrate to other states are not the rustic manpower but highly seasoned professionals. Hence, apart from earning decent incomes in their host countries, unlike the era of the slave trade, their labour is not a total loss to West Africa. They continue to remit substantial amounts of money to cater for relations they have left at home who would otherwise not have been cared for and even engage in developmental projects in their respective home countries. Some invest in real estates and others even attract capital projects to their countries from the diaspora. While one is not saying that skilled manpower should continue to emigrate from West Africa to the overall disadvantage of the region, the point we are making is that because of the addition of skill to power, West Africa is not entirely losing unlike what happened during the slave trade and that the sub region stands to gain more by adding value to its raw materials.

West Africa can still gain more from its émigré manpower by working through their respective embassies in the host countries of the economic migrants to demand for the repatriation of a reasonable part of the tax they pay to such countries to compensate their home governments for the cost of training such manpower who have now emigrated to other economies that have not in any way contributed to their upbringing and training.

For the agricultural and mineral raw materials, West Africa should seek out ways of adding value so that they get appropriate values for these exports. It is in this respect that West Africa should seize the opportunity of

the coming of another trading partner China, to redefine its term of engagement with the world in international trade. West African countries should negotiate with China with a view to getting assistance for the establishment of processing industries. In other words, raw cocoa, crude oil and the like should not be the form of trade between West Africa and China. The continuation of this trend would simply mean that West Africa has not learnt anything from its past involvements with the world. The region would be repeating the same thing it has done over the years, and it is only fools who would do the same thing the same way and expect a different outcome. If West Africa continues along the same line, she will never develop.

To be able to do this, West Africa has to revive its agriculture. It is in this regard that I call on the various governments in the region to explore ways of increasing agricultural productivity which had seen the region as leading exporters of such commodities as cotton, groundnut, palm oil, hides and skins. Products of these efforts should be manufactured and exported to other markets. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, while West Africa leads the world in the exportation of some of these products, a major reason for her leadership is the fact that other regions turn their own raw materials into finished products. This is for both their domestic consumption and exportation.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, an acceptance of this suggestion will see a country, such as Nigeria, establishing a chocolate producing industry in my state, Ondo State; revamping the textile industries in the different parts of the country; establishing several vegetable oil industries particularly in the northern part of the country, and consuming and exporting the products of such industries.

If the raw materials for these industries cannot be entirely sourced from our own local capability, Nigeria can use her oil wealth to import from leading producers in West Africa. This will, for example, see Nigeria importing cocoa from Cote d'Ivoire, turning it into chocolate and then exporting it to China and other non-Western markets.

This suggestion has become imperative in view of the fact that there are serious moves by Western markets to stop patronising West African agricultural products. There are moves by the E. U., for example, to find substitute for the cocoa butter in the production of chocolate and thereby stop buying West African cocoa.¹¹¹

The trade in raw materials among West African states will remove the present situation whereby poor intra-regional trade constitutes a barrier to regional integration. Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, West Africa has, since 1975, seen the need to integrate the region for mutual developmental purposes. However, not much progress has been made in this regard due to several reasons. Two major reasons for the lack of progress with regional integration are that there is little intra-regional trade and that West African economies compete with rather than complement each other.¹¹² The share of intra-regional trade out of the total trade of West Africa has hardly gone above 10% since 1975. The mutual trade in raw materials to be processed into finished goods will remove these barriers and create *economic complementarity* which will in turn foster regional integration. As opposed to a situation where West African raw materials compete in the same overseas market to the advantage of their foreign trading partners, the trade in raw materials will make West African economies to complement themselves.

Also, West African states should stop the practice of indiscriminate receipt of Overseas Development Assistance or Foreign Aid. Foreign aids should not be received to build stadia and recreational facilities or to import food from donor countries or to prosecute projects that are not mutually beneficial to both donor and recipient countries. Rather, foreign aid should be received to revive the cultivation of the agricultural raw materials that West African countries are naturally and comparatively advantaged to produce and to establish the industries for turning them into finished products.

In addition, the repayment of such aid should not be in monetary terms with skyrocketing or run-away interest rates. It should be tied to the importation by the donor countries of the products of the industries established to process the various agricultural raw materials for which the aid or assistance was taken in the first instance. This arrangement will see countries extending foreign aid to West African countries to revive the production of cocoa, cotton, groundnuts and the like being obliged to import the end products from these products and then gradually deduct their loans or aids from the profits from these commodities at an agreed rate and period.

The addition of value to West Africa's raw materials will lessen or cure the region of what an economist friend has called AIDS¹¹³ (Acquired Import Dependency Syndrome) in its economy with all the salutary effects. The cure to AIDS in West Africa's economies will create jobs, facilitate development in the entire region, reduce the much talked about brain-drain and gain for the region the benefits of the skills of high level manpower that advanced economies now enjoy at no cost to them.

Mr. Vice Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is my conviction that, if West Africa can implement the

above-stated recommendations, she will cease to be like a needle which clothes the world while remaining naked herself.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is now left for me to acknowledge those whom God has used to make me what I am today in the course of my life journey so far. I place on record my immense gratitude to God Almighty for creating me a human being and charting the course of my life's journey. To Him be all honour, dominion, glory and majesty.

I next acknowledge the wonderful parents God used to bring me to this complex world: Madame Esther Olufunmilayo and Chief Moses Eniola Akinyeye both of blessed memory. Eternal rest grant them Oh Lord and let your perpetual light continue to share on them.

I also thank my Dad's friends who took over the mantle of parenthood when my Dad passed on. Among them are the Owa of Idanre himself (His Majesty Oba F.A. Aroloye) and High Chief S.A. Akintan, the Lisa of Kosofe (Lagos) and Ojomo of Idanre. Though a lawyer by profession, High Chief Akintan has a passion for History. This made him support my quest for scholarship in History even though he would have wanted me to be a lawyer. He has just completed a monumental work on the History of Ife Oke popularly known as Idanre which promises to open a revolutionary vista in Yoruba History. He accommodated me for a considerable length of time in 1989 after the end of my Fellowship with the British Council and this enabled me to stay much longer. Others are Chief M.A. Dairo, Chief O. Akinde and Mr. S.T. Dinakin, all of blessed memory.

I thank my numerous siblings and step mothers. Among my siblings are Mr. Diran Akinyeye (a Deputy Commandant with the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence), Mr Jimmy Akinyeye, Mrs Kemi Samabo, a school proprietress, Mr. Olu Akinyeye, a small scale entrepreneur.

I have also been lucky to have been taught by a host of dedicated teachers too numerous to name individually. However, a representative number is indicated. At Methodist Primary School, Idanre, I remember Mr. Olu Gbadebo one of our headmasters, a strict disciplinarian; Mr. Makinwa, Mr. Adeyosoye and Sir. S.K. Akinkuehin. In Children's Boarding School, Osogbo, the Proprietor, Chief M.A. Fadeyi readily comes to mind for his sound moral education to us. He would give a Hausa proverb and translate it into English. This is to the effect that whatever God will give to the frog, He will never put on top of a tree because He knows that the frog has not been designed to climb a tree. Hence, whatever we aspire to get, if we find it difficult after diligent efforts and prayerful supplications, we should know that, for our own good, God has not given us such a thing. This remains a guiding moral principle for me even today.

At Okitipupa, I had a number of good and compassionate teachers. Among them were Late Chief M.A. Lebi, Mr. W.M. Aladedunye, Very Rev. Omobuwajo, Pa E.O. Agagu, the Principal, and of course Mr. B.B. Opadare who identified me as a Professor as far back as class three and advised me not to consider any other profession apart from academics. In Government College, Ibadan, I had Mr. Adelegan, Mr. Akande, Mr. A.R. Arstil, Mr. J.P. Lister, Mrs Onifade, Mrs. Alo, (a sister-in-law of the DVCA & R) to mention but a few. In this great University there were several other teachers of mine both within and outside the Department of History

and the Faculty of Arts. Within the Department was my mentor and academic father, Professor A.I. Asiwaju, who has taken a keen interest in my academics since 1981 when he had cause to teach a select few of us in a special paper. He was instrumental to getting me to come and do my national service in the Department and finally changing my mind to go back to the University to read Law as my father would have wanted. He has since remained an abiding guide. Sir, I am very grateful and I hope I have not disappointed you. There is also my Supervisor whom providence has made an intellectual factory for the "scholarfactory" of Professors in the University system worldwide. I am talking about Professor, Ambassador, Pastor and Chief Akinjide Ishola Oladepo Idowu Osuntokun (the Abidakun himself). So many of his products are Professors within and outside Nigeria; within the University itself, two of us, namely, Professor R.T. Akinyele and my humble self are his products and full professors. There are some in LASU, Maiduguri, Jos, ABU to mention but a few. Sir I am very grateful.

There were also Professors T.G.O. Gbadamosi, A.I. Adefuye, A.A. Lawal and Roger Grivil. Equally acknowledged are the late Dr. J.J. White, Drs. E.K. Faluyi and Dr. Ofonagoro who combined a magisterial grasp of his subject matter with oratorical dexterity to make European History a delight.

Outside the Department of History were Drs. Dagogo Idoniboje, T.D.P. Bah and Professors J. Omoregbe and Sophie Oluwole from Philosophy Department. In Political Science were the Late Dr. Ben Amuno and Professor Steve Olugbemi, Dr. Jide Coker, Professor Remi Anifowose and of course Professor Godwin Aforka Nweke who taught us that syndicalism as a political

ideology postulates radical and cataclysmic overhaul of society through the instrumentality of trade unionism.

Outside the four walls of the classroom, I have also come under the influence of some senior academics within and outside the University of Lagos. In this group are Professor T.N. Tamuno, a legend in the discipline of Nigerian History; Professor Union Edebiri, who retired from our Department of European Languages; Professor David Killingray, who retired from the Department of Historical and Cultural Studies, Goldsmith College, University of London, and who was my local supervisor in London; Dr. Tony Clayton, who retired from the Department of War Studies, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, who invited me to Sandhurst during my field trip to London in 1989; Professor Christian Culon of the Centre d'Etude d'Afrique Noir, who was my local supervisor while in France and Professor Marc Michelle of the University of Aix-Marseille who was my guide while in France. There are also my brothers and compatriots, Professor Ralph Akinfeleye of the Department of Mass Communication and Prince Andrew Aroloye.

I have also had a host of colleagues and friends too numerous to mention individually. I acknowledge all my colleagues in the Department of History and Strategic Studies and the Faculty of Arts as well as the University entirely. I place on record for particular acknowledgement, the immediate past Registrar of the University, Olu Shodimu, Esq; popularly called 'Olu 70' but whom I call 'Odumade' because of his dexterity in managing difficult situations. We have been friends since our undergraduate days. He was my usual host in his modest flat at No. 2, George Alade Lane, Fola Agoro, and later Ransome Kuti Road, each time I had to come to Lagos when I was outside Lagos. The Registrar's lodge remains the only official residence in which I never had cause to

lodge with him. This is, as he usually jokingly puts it, because the University has officially lodged me in his boys-quarters — my resident at No. 3, Abudu Attah Road is directly behind the Registrar's lodge. There is also Professor Ayodeji Olukoju and his late wife, who bore the initial and critical burden of reintegrating me to Lagos from the North. I also remember the late Dr. E.A. Babalola of Department of English, who accommodated me in his boys-quarters in my trying days during my postgraduate studies and Dr. Adeyemi Daramola, who was my roommate in the PG Hall and turned out to be a long lasting companion in the BQs of: first, Professor Agiri and, then, Dr. Babalola. Not to be forgotten is my friend and brother, Mr. Dimeji Ajikobi of the Department of Linguistics, African and Asian Studies. I thank, particularly, one of my former students, Mr. Seyi Williams and my Secretary, Mrs. Falola who typed this lecture.

Equally deserving of my gratitude are the numerous institutions that have impacted on my life and career. I place on record, my gratitude to the primary and secondary schools I attended. I also acknowledge the institutions I have had the opportunity to work in. In this regard, I wish to thank the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna, from where I proceeded to undertake my research for the doctorate degree and where I came across some wonderful people with whom I have cultivated long lasting relationship.

I thank General Salihu Ibrahim, then the Commandant of the Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna for granting a study leave with pay that enabled me to proceed abroad for my field trip and General Isola Williams who was instrumental to my getting the study leave. Equally grateful am I to Professors A.E. Ekoko, C.N. Ubah and A.A. Lipede of the Nigerian Defence Academy, my acquaintanceship with whom was rewarding. I am also

delighted to have been able to teach some cadets who are today Generals in the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Some of them are in the hall.

I thank the numerous archivists and librarians whose facilities I had cause to use both at home and abroad. Among these are the Arewa House Library in Kaduna, Library of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs here in Lagos. There are also the British Library then at Russel Square, Senate House Library, University of London, Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, Library of the Gold Smith College, University of London, Commonwealth Library, London, Public Record Office as it then was (now National Archives, London). In France, were the Bibliotheque National (Quai Voltaire) Archives, National Rue de la Quatre fils, Archives Diplomatique (Quai d'Orsay) Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre, Service Historique de l'Armée de l'Air, Service Historique de la Marine all at Chateau de Vincennes in Paris, Centre Militaire d'Information d'Outre Mer Versailles, Centre d'Etude d'Afrique Noir Bordeaux, Archives d'Outre Mer Aix-en Provence.

I also wish to thank the numerous Associations and circles that I have interacted with. I particularly thank the Old Boys Association of Government College, Ibadan ably represented in the hall; I think by both our national President, Mr. Biodun Jolaoso and our Branch Chairman, the one and only Dr. Wale Babalakin, a distinguished alumnus of the University of Lagos himself. I also thank the Methodist Church Nigeria particularly the Mainland Diocese in whose circuit I worship at the Hoare's Memorial Methodist Church. I remain grateful to the Academic Staff Union of Universities, on whose platform I have been able to serve my colleagues and humanity at large.

I place on record, my gratitude to the British Council and the French government for the award of Fellowships that enabled me to go abroad for my fieldwork in 1989.

By far my greatest gratitude goes to the University of First Choice and the nation's pride (the University of Lagos) with which I came in contact in 1978 and have remained glued ever since. I have taken all my degrees here. I came here as a young visionary man and, to the glory of God, I am a happy family man today. I met my wife here, and all my children have been born and educated here. Even though I have had brief stints in other Institutions, I have spent a greater part of my life and career in the University. My wife also works in the University. I think I can say without any equivocation that the Akinyeye family is a Unilag family.

The last, but by no means the least, is my family. I thank my wife, Stella Eserie Akinyeye, also an outstanding historian with a sharp and perceptive intellect, pushful character, sound and quick judgment and a discerning mind. Like me, she was the best graduating student in her set; but in addition, she was a University scholar throughout her undergraduate years here in the University of Lagos. I also thank my children: Ibijoju Oluwaseun Isimeme Akinyeye, a Year Three Chemical Engineering student of this University; Olatunji Akinkugbe Akhigbe Akinyeye, a newly admitted One Hundred Level Civil Engineering Undergraduate and Arinola Oluwabunmi Eghogho Akinyeye, a JSS 3 pupil at the International School. I also thank the management and Governing Council of the University with whom I have been in contact in various capacities and to varying effects in the course of my career.

I thank you the distinguished audience for your kind attention.

ENDNOTES

- 1 www.allaboutcreation.org/stages-of-evolution-tag.htm (Accessed 13/04/2013).
- 2 E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vantage Books, 1961) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herodotus>
- 3 Ibid
- 4 R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 126.
- 5 J. S. Coleman, *Nigeria, Background to Nationalism* (Benin City: Broburg and Wistrom, 1986)
- 6 Leading exponents of this view about African History include Huge Trevor-Roper and Reginald Coupland.
- 7 G. O. Olusanya, "The Debt We Owe the Past" in G. O. Oguntomisin and S. A. Ajayi (eds.), *Readings in Nigerian History and Culture: Essays in Memory of Professor J. A. Atanda* (Ibadan: Hope Publications, 2002), 361.
- 8 Obaro Ikime, "Through Chancing Scenes: Nigerian History Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow", Inaugural Lecture, University of Ibadan, 1979.
- 9 E. A. Ayandele, "The Task Before Nigerian Historians Today", Keynote Address at the 24th Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, 5th April 1979. Cited in Ikime's Inaugural Lecture above, p. 19.
- 10 Ikime, "Through Changing Scenes", 17.
- 11 J. H. Plumb, *The Death of the Past* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1971), 106; cited in Ikime, "Through Changing Scenes", p. 23.
- 12 Croce Benedetto, *History as the Story of Liberty* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1941), 19.
- 13 G. O. Olusanya, "The Unfinished Task"
- 14 A. I. Asiwaju, *Artificial Boundaries*, (New York: Civiletis International, 1990)
- 15 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Africa (Accessed 20/08/2011)
- 16 Ibid
- 17 Ibid
- 18 <http://www.answers.com/topic/geopolitics> (Accessed 20/08/2011)
- 19 Gray S. Collins, *The Geopolitics of Super Power* (Kentucky: The University of Kentucky Press, 1988), 4.
- 20 <http://www.answers.com/topic/geopolitics> (Accessed 20/08/2011)
- 21 H. A. L. Fisher, *A History of Europe*, Vol. 1 (London: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1965), 54-62.
- 22 A. J. Grant and H. Temperley, *Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries, 1789-1939*, Harlow, Longmans, 1952.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 E. W. Bovil, *The Golden Trade of The Moors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 136.
- 25 Bolanle Awe, "Empires of the Western Sudan: Ghana, Mali, Songhai" in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Ian Espie, *A Thousand Years of West African History*, (Lagos: Thomas Nelson, 1965), 61.
- 26 Bovil, *Golden Trade*, 136.
- 27 Ibid
- 28 Philip D. Curtin, "The Atlantic Slave Trade 1600 – 1800" in J. F. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), *A History of West Africa*, Vol. 1 (New York: Longman, 1976); Joseph Inikori, *Forced Migration: the impact of the Export Slave Trade on African Societies* (London: 1982).
- 29 David Aworawo, *From Pirates' Haven to Sugar Island: Anglo-Spanish Rivalry and the Transformation of Jamaica, 1655 – 1720* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, The Charles Warren Centre for Studies in American Culture, 2007), 12.
- 30 Ibid
- 31 Ibid
- 32 Yomi Akinyeye, "West Africa in British and French Geopolitics", 1886 – 1945, in Leo Otoide (ed.) *History Unlimited: Essays in Honour of Abednigo Ekuko* (Benin: Mindex Company, 2012), 148.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 A. Clayton, *France, Soldiers and Africa* (Pergamum: Brassey Defence Publishers, 1988), 5-6.
- 35 Chester Crocker, (1974) "Military Dependence: The Colonial Legacy in Africa", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2. pp. 265-286
- 36 Charles Mangin, *La Force Noire* (Paris: 1910). Cited in C. J. Balesi, *From Adversary to Comradeship in Arms: West Africa and the French Military, 1885 – 1919* (Massachusetts: Waitham), 2 – 6.
- 37 C. J. Balesi, *From Adversary - - -*
- 38 M. Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857 – 1960* (London: HkI, einemann, 1991), 46.
- 39 Ibid, 48.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Yomi Akinyeye, "German Threat and the Value of West Africa to the French in the Interwar Years", *Ife Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1995, 36-52.
- 44 Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*.
- 45 Service Historique de L'Armée de Terre (SHAT hereafter)/AOF/02/A¹/Carton 6/dossier 3, Report of Inspector General's Tour of Tirailleurs Senegalais, 1936.

- 46 Ibid
- 47 Yomi Akinyeye, "German Threat and the Value of West Africa to the French in the Interwar Years", *Ife Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1995, 36-52.
- 48 Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts*, 50-51.
- 49 Yomi Akinyeye, "The Air Factor in West Africa's Colonial Defence 1920-1945: A Neglected Theme", *Itinerario: European Journal of Overseas History*, Vol. XXV, No. 1, 2001, 19.
- 50 Michael Crowder, "The 1939-45 War and West Africa" in F. J. Ade Ajayi and Michael Crowder (eds.), *A History of West Africa*, Vol. II (London: Longman, 1974), 598.
- 51 D. Killingray, "British Imperial African Army" in *Journal of African History* (JAH hereafter), Vol. 20, No. 3, 423.
- 52 Ibid, 430.
- 53 D. Killingray, "Race and Rank in the British Army" in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1987, 431.
- 54 Public Record Office (now National Archives, London; PRO hereafter)/10968/94/1. File 13018/36. Military Affairs No. 6 of 13/1/1944.
- 55 D. Killingray, "The Colonial Army in the Gold Coast 1890 – 1947: Official Policy and Local Responses", Ph.D. Thesis, School of Oriental and African Studies 1982, p. 4.
- 56 PRO/WO106/2910. Desp of 8/12/1942, Wood to Harry.
- 57 http://elwimminternational.com/java_revolts.html (Accessed 26/04/13)
- 58 W. G. Haynus, *The Economics of Empire: Britain, Africa and The New Imperialism in the 19th Century* (London: Longman, 1979), 32.
- 59 G. N. Uzoigwe, *Britain and the Conquest of Africa: The Age of Salisbury* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), 25.
- 60 Ibid, 27.
- 61 Yomi Akinyeye, "State Actors and Regional Integration in Western Europe and West Africa: The French and Nigerian Cases" in Yomi Akinyeye (ed.), *Nation-States and the Challenges of Regional Integration in West Africa: The Case of Nigeria* (Paris: Karthala Press, 2010), 153.
- 62 S. C. Davis, *Reservoir of Men: A History of the Black Troops of French West Africa* (New York: Negro University Press, 1970), 56.
- 63 B. O. Oloruntimehin, *The Segu-Tukulor Empire* (London: Longman, 1972), 235.
- 64 PRO/Admin. 199/2365. Trade Divisions, Pre-War Preparations. CID Paper 13180 of March 1937.
- 65 Ibid
- 66 SHAT/7N4193/3. Meeting of the Study Commission on the Defence of Dakar; PRO/Admin. 199/2370. Mercantile Atlantic Routing Instruction

- 67 Akinyeye, "German Threat.
- 68 PRO/WO/106/2885. Gen Spears' Memo of October 1940 to C. O. S.
- 69 <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/country-profiles/countries.A-F/France>. (Accessed 19/04/2013).
- 70 http://middleeast-abrut.com/od/terrorism/tp/reasons_for_French (Accessed 20/04/2013)
- 71 www.cargilcocoachocolate.com/sustainable-cocoa/thecargil-cocoa-promise/index.Gton?Gclid=ckil (accessed 18/08/14).
- 72 <http://www.ghanaweb.com/ghanahomepage/newsarchive/artikel.php.ID=271216>.
- 73 A. E. Ekoko, "British Defence Policy in Western Africa, 1878 – 1914", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1976, 129.
- 74 SHAT/Cartron III/Point D'Appui de Dakar, Undated publication of the Comité Consultatif de Defense des Colonies (CCDC hereafter) for the Ministère des Colonies, p. 1.
- 75 Ibid
- 76 Ibid
- 77 Ibid
- 78 Ibid, 182.
- 79 SHAT/7N/4193/3. Minutes on the Defences of Dakar 1921 and 1922.
- 80 Ibid
- 81 Ibid; Yomi Akinyeye, "A Comparative Study of British and French Defence Policies in West Africa 1886-1945", Ph.D. Thesis, University of Lagos, 1991.
- 82 Akinyeye, "Air Factor", 19.
- 83 PRO/Admin. 199/2365. Trade Divisions, Pre-War Preparations. CID Paper 1318^B of March 1937.
- 84 Ibid
- 85 SHAT/7N4193/3. Meeting of the Study Commission on the Defence of Dakar; PRO/Admin. 199/2370. Mercantile Atlantic Routing Instruction.
- 86 <http://www.nigerianoilgas.com/?p=484> (Accessed 30/04/13)
- 87 PRO/WO 106/2885. Gen Spears' Memo of October 1940 to C. O. S.
- 88 Jan Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean* (New York: Plume Books, 2000), 141.
- 89 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*.
- 90 National Archives, London, C. O. 137/2, Letter of 19/12/1689, and Rogozinski, *A Brief History ...* 116-117, cited in David Aworawo, "Bitterness on a Sugar Island: British Colonialism and the Socio-Economic Development of Jamaica from 1655 – 1750" in *Lagos Notes and Records*, Vol. 16, 2010, p. 203.
- 91 Bittker I. Brois, *The Case for Black Reparations*, New York: Vintage Books, 1973, 9.

- 92 Denis Rancourt, "Calculated Minimum Reparation Due to Slave Descendants: \$1.5 Million to Each Black Citizen of the USA", in <http://activistteacher.blogspot.ca/2013/01/calculated-minimum-reparation-due-to.html>. (Accessed 23/01/2013).
- 93 Curtin, "Atlantic Slave Trade ... 315 – 316.
- 94 Ibid, 317.
- 95 Rodney, *Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 107.
- 96 E. Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1962), 26.
- 97 Marim Johnson, "Cotton Imperialism in West Africa" in *African Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 291, April 1974, 181.
- 98 Ibid, 182.
- 99 Ibid, 183.
- 100 Ibid, p.184.
- 101 R. G. Thomas, "Forced Labour in British West Africa: The Case of the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast, 1906-1927", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 42, No. 4, December 1970, 77-103.
- 102 Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Panaf Books, 1965)
- 103 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/gasoline> (Accessed 8/7/2013)
- 104 <http://www.web.net/-bothonson/fairtrade/fair68.html> (Accessed 9/7/2013)
- 105 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/gasoline> (Accessed 8/7/2013)
- 106 sugarcane.org/sugarcane-products/ethanol accessed 18/02/14).
- 107 Yomi Akinyeye "German Threat and the Value of West Africa to France in the Inter-war Years" in the *Journal of History*, Volume 2, No. 1, 1995, p.40.
- 108 Curtin, "Atlantic Slave Trade ... 315 – 316.
- 109 Claude Ake, *A Political Economy of Africa* (Ibadan: Longman, 1981, reprinted 2005), 64.
- 110 Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Lagos, Panaf Publishing, 2005.
- 111 www.dw.de/new-european-union-impoer-laws-west-african-cocoa-exports/a-1684-2178(accessed 18/08/14),
- 112 Yomi Akinyeye, "Regional Integration in Africa: Past Experiences, Present Realities and Future Challenges", in Yomi Akinyeye (ed.), *That They May Be One: African Boundaries and Regional Integrations, Essays in Honour of Anthony Ijaola Asiwaju*. Imeko: African Regional Institute, 2008, 136.
- 113 This view is credited to Professor Oyinlola Olaniyi of the Department of Economics, University of Abuja in one of his seminar papers as a young academic way back in the 1980s.