

5/NG  
L  
36  
L25  
184

# ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

By

A. I. ASIWAJU

U. I. ARCHIVE



LAGOS UNIVERSITY PRESS - 1984  
INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES



## ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

An Inaugural Lecture delivered at the University of Lagos  
on Wednesday, 12th December, 1984

# U. I. ARCHIVE

By

A. I. ASIWAJU  
*Professor of History*  
and  
*Dean, Faculty of Arts*

STEVE A. ORIMOLOYE,  
Lagos University Library,  
Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria,  
West Africa.

10 APR 1985

Lagos University Press  
1984

281258



# ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

An inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Lagos  
on Wednesday, 12th December, 1984

© A. I. Asiwaju 1984

A. I. ASIJAWU  
Professor of History  
and  
Dean, Faculty of Arts

ISBN 978-0-2264-561-3

Printed by  
Lagos University Library,  
Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.  
West Africa.

10 APR 1985

Lagos University Press  
1984

281258

## ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

### Introduction

ABOUT a month ago, it was exactly one hundred years of the inauguration of the Berlin West African Conference of 15 November 1884 through 26 February 1885. The event marked for Africa the beginning of the modern state system with a demand for precise and, characteristically, artificial and often arbitrary territorial framework. I feel a strong sense both of self-fulfilment and some measure of trepidation in the decision to make this centenary the subject of my reflections today as Professor of History at the University of Lagos. Self-fulfilment because, as far as I know, this is the first public lecture on this scale anywhere in the season, devoted to this most important event; the several centennial seminars, symposia and conferences that are currently being planned in Europe and Africa, are mostly projected for February and March 1985.<sup>1</sup> Berlin 1884 took place at the absolute exclusion of African representation. It may be as well that the first formally organised public pronouncement on the centenary be made by an African who not only has spent a life career of research on the localized impact of the boundaries which ultimately resulted from the Berlin negotiations, but also one whose personal life has been bound up by these local consequences.

My trepidation arises from the ease with which the arguments can be misunderstood by the impatient and the exuberant. At this time in Nigeria in particular, when we are all committed to 'War Against Indiscipline (WAI)' with emphasis on nationalism, patriotism, national anthem,

1. Among the centennial programmes are those planned for Berlin in February, 1985 by a group currently co-ordinated by the Director of the German Historical Institute of the University of London and the Seminar scheduled for Brazzaville, Peoples Republic of the Congo, in March 1985, being organised by the Paris-based Societe Africaine de Culture, publishers of *Pre-sence Africaine*.



national pledge and the Flag, it may initially sound an exercise in sabotage to mount the rostrum before an audience like this and declare the nation's boundaries (officially closed since April) as artificial and, by implication, untenable. However, it should not take this audience too long to know that this lecture is an exercise in pursuit of the truth and *WA/* is not about untruth. Nigerians, like other African nationals, do not need my own lecture to know that the borders separating their particular nation-state from each of the neighbouring nation-states are artificial. The daily, even monotonous, reports of the news media (the press, the television and radio) about the porous nature of these borders and the utter helplessness of the nation's law enforcement and state security agencies to control movement of men and material across the international boundaries have preceded this lecture; and the problems described illustrate nothing other than the commonplace fact of the artificiality of the borders.

What the lecture attempts to do is to draw attention to the need for a more systematic research into our border problems than is in evidence and to allow policy formulation to be informed and inspired by the concrete knowledge that relevant research has generated. The fact of artificial boundaries, as will be made clear presently, is one shared by nation-states all over the world and has not been known to have adverse effects on the need for nationalism and patriotism. On the contrary, nationalism and patriotism must rest on a clear awareness of the nation-state as a system relating to similar systems especially those in the same neighbourhood. Nationalists and patriots who do not have a firm knowledge of the nature and character of the boundaries of their own particular system cannot appreciate the nature of the balance and may not be in position to design appropriate policy instruments for the survival of the system or its proper management.

The Berlin West African Conference may be a one-hundred-year-old event; but the centenary can only remind us that the process of African partition and manipulation

from outside, aided as always by internally-based interest groups, cannot be said to have been over. The centenary of the inauguration of the Berlin West African Conference, which took place four weeks ago, incidentally also coincided with the highly problematic twentieth OAU Summit at Addis Ababa in the midst of threats, uncertainties and anxieties about the organisation's own ability to survive, created more or less by the same forces of division that were at work to bring about formal and direct balkanisation of the continent by European powers at the turn of the last century.

There is no other way of making a sense out of the factors at work in the Moroccan expansionism which has, since the 1960s, been a major destabilizing factor in her relations with other states of the Maghreb, leading to the contested presence at the OAU Summit of the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic delegation. A similar general observation holds for the problem of Chad without forgetting the situation in Southern Africa vis-a-vis the racist and expansionist Republic of South Africa. These dramatic examples of international tension must be added to the scores of boundary disputes, such as those that have torn apart the states of the Horn and posed serious challenge to African continental peace. In Nigeria, those who once entertained the complacency about the safety of our borders must have learnt some lesson from the incursion of *Benin* gendarmes into Sokoto in 1981, the fatal incident at Ekang on the border with Cameroon in 1982 and the exchange of artillery fire between our armed forces and those of war-torn Chad over shared boundary in the waters of Lake Chad in 1983.

In all these events, there is a demonstration of a basic continuity. The several volumes of scholarly works that have been published on the subject of neo-colonialism in Africa show that while imperialism has a way of changing appearance and method, it is hardly known to have changed in its purpose.

But attractive and relevant as these other issues are, the focus of this lecture is on questions of policy raised by border regions characteristically defined as 'sub-national



areas whose economic and social life is directly and significantly affected by proximity to an international boundary.<sup>2</sup> In Africa, these are none other than the special regions which have resulted from the localized impact of the same inter-colonial (today's international) boundaries negotiated as aftermath of the Berlin West African Conference. The main ambition is to draw together thoughts on this subject, which I have had the privilege of developing as a result of sustained research and publication activities that have spanned the past 18 years.

Having been born and raised in the shadow of the Nigeria-Benin (formerly Dahomey) border and with an ancestral Ketu-Yoruba homeland artificially divided into two by the boundary, I seized the earlier opportunity offered by the Ibadan School of History, with emphasis on indigenous African perspective and therefore on the use of internally generated source material, to do my doctoral work originally on the impact of rival French and British colonial administrations on the Western Yoruba sub-groups on both sides of the inter-colonial boundary. Much encouragement derived from the generally flattering reviews of the resultant book entitled *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule, 1889-1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism*, published in 1976 by Longman Group of London in the highly distinguished Ibadan History Series.

This success and the felt need to draw generalisations for wider areas soon led to further research on a number of other West African border regions, notably those of the Ivory Coast-Upper Volta (now Bourkina Fasso)—Ghana (formerly Gold Coast) and the Senegambia. I was especially fascinated by local migrations as impacted by the inter-sovereignty boundaries. The article on 'Migrations as Revolt' in the *Journal of African History* (No. 4, 1976), one of the several publications that resulted from these endeavours, has remained a distinct and resounding echo in the general field of

2. Niles Hansen, *The Border Economy: Regional Development in the South-west*, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 19.

human migration studies. The collaborative work entitled *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884-1984*, about published by Lagos University Press in association with C. Hurst of London, constitutes the climax of the labour on African research sites. The half dozen papers presented at international seminars and symposia within the last one year or so have been devoted to comparisons with the Western European and North American border regions and the lessons of experience for Africa. In all this, the methodology has been decidedly comparative, involving not only an analysis all the time of two or more socio-spatial systems in mutual interaction but also the use of techniques and data from disciplines other than History.

My antecedents and status as an African or specifically Nigerian *fronterizo*, a 'marginal man', and close to twenty years of comparative study of localized impact of international boundaries in Africa, Europe and North America have imposed a global perspective. After years of continuous readings and recordings, based on close and keen observations of the behaviours of border populations of diverse cultures in three continents, I hope I can be trusted with the view that the similarities have been far more remarkable than the differences. Border regions contain certain common features which make them suitable laboratories for studying and generalising on the nature of man as man. As meeting points between nation-states and constituent peoples, cultures and institutions, borders have always provided the hitherto little explored opportunities for the most effective and most profitable study of international sociology. Raimondo Strassoldo, a highly perceptive analyst and Director of the Institute of International Sociology at Gorizia, Italy, said it for all when he observed of European border regions that they:

... are the laboratories in which new principles of political organisation may be tested and refined. They are particularly promising environments for such tinkering in 'social invention' because here the



grip of 'national' ideology is less firm than elsewhere. The drive to uniformity and centralisation has done them extensive harm; frontiers hinder their development; the proximity of the adjacent state makes national stereotypes less pervasive; trans-frontier relationships highlight the common humanity emerging from national diversity.<sup>3</sup>

It comes out well, for example, that when due allowance has been made for local particularities of geography and culture, including varying levels of technological development, ethnic groups or culture areas, split by borders, tend commonly to resist the divisive or barrier functions. The feeling of inconvenience posed to peoples in culture areas straddled by borders is so universally shared and encountered that an organisation is bound to attract as worldwide subscription to membership as the UNO if it makes the problem and interest of artificially partitioned groups or regions its concern.

Such an organisation would, for example, have within its fold peoples and lands as widely dispersed as those of the Yoruba and the closely related Aja and Bariba peoples of Nigeria, Benin and Togo; the Hausa of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger; the Kanuri of Northeastern Nigeria and Chad; the Mandara, the Jukun, the Chamba, the Efik of Nigeria and Cameroon; the Ewe of Ghana, Togo and Benin; the Wolof, the Serrers and the Mandinka of Senegal and the Gambia; the Somali of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti; the Maasai of Tanzania and Kenya, the Cokwe and the Lunda of Angola, Zaire and Zambia; the Chewa and the Ngoni of Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique; Bakongo of Gabon, Congo, Zaire and Angola; the Alur of Zaire, Uganda and Sudan — all in Africa.

3. Raimondo Strassoldo, *Frontier Regions: An Analytical Study*, Background Paper to the Second European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning, 25–27 September, 1973, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1973, p. 23.

In Europe, the same membership must attract the French in France and Belgium, the Catalans and the Basques in France and Spain; the German in France, Switzerland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the German Democratic Republic, Netherlands, and Austria; the Irish of the Republic and of Great Britain; the Dane in Denmark and Netherlands; the Slavs in Italy, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia; the Lapps in Norway, Sweden and Finland. In Asia and the Americas, the enrolment of partitioned culture areas will include those of the Kurds in Syria, Iraq and Iran; the Karzai of China and the U.S.S.R; the 'Chicano' and the Mexican of the United States and Mexico, the Iroquois of Canada and the United States, the Aymaras of Peru and Bolivia and the Mapuches or Araucanians of Chile and Argentina. It is, indeed, against the generally held view of these specifically affected human groups that frontiers between nation-states must be categorized as artificial boundaries.

#### Definition of The Basic Concept

Since Lord Curzon attempted his admittedly highly qualified distinction of the terms in his very influential Romanes Lecture at Oxford in 1907,<sup>4</sup> it has been fashionable in texts, written mostly by geographers and some by scholars in International Law, to describe as 'artificial' all boundaries other than those made up of natural features such as oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, swamps, forests, deserts and mountains. Boundaries (Lord Curzon preferred the more problematic alternative label of 'Frontiers') marked by such features are the ones categorized as 'natural'. Accordingly, artificial boundaries are defined as 'those boundary lines which, not being dependent upon natural features of the surface of the earth for their selection have been artificially or arbitrarily created by men'.<sup>5</sup>

4. Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *Frontiers, The Romanes Lecture*, Oxford 1907, Oxford University Press, 1907, p. 23.

5. *Ibid.*



Subsequent writers, prominent among whom was Fawcett, accepted this mode of distinction.<sup>6</sup> For the same reason writers such as K.M. Barbour, Boutros-Ghali and, more recently, Gilles Sauter have chosen to stress the predominance of astronomically and mathematically determined lines as evidence of the artificiality of Africa's international boundaries.<sup>7</sup> Sauter summarized this viewpoint when he stated that 'the artificial character of African boundaries is perfectly demonstrated by the statistical evidence to the effect that 44% are made up of astronomical lines (meridian parallels), 30% of mathematical lines (arcs, curves etc.) while only 26% are of geographical feature [i.e. the so-called 'natural frontiers']'.<sup>8</sup>

However, in this lecture, our working definition of 'artificial boundaries' is the simpler one with the advantage of a cross-cultural applicability. The emphasis is on the exclusivist or divisive functions as assigned by man. Consequently, all boundaries are artificial so long as the intention is the one relating to man's need and concern for visible lines of demarcation which, as it were, seek 'to render asunder what God has put together.' Whether they are oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, swamps, mountains, forests and deserts or they are deliberately erected dams and dykes, astronomical and mathematical lines, they are artificial boundaries if the purpose and ultimate function is to divide and separate lands and peoples within definable eco-systemic entities.

Nothing proves the fallacy of the classical notion of 'Natural Frontiers' better than the dream of it which drove the French into endless wars with their continental neigh-

6. C. B. Fawcett, *Frontier*, London, 1918.

7. K. M. Barbour, 'A geographical Analysis of Boundaries in Inter-Tropical Africa', in K. M. Barbour and R. M. Prothero (eds), *Essays on African Populations*, London, 1961, pp. 304-305. Boutros Boutros-Chali (with Nabia El-Asfahany), *Les Conflits de Frontières en Afrique* (Etudes et Documents), Paris, 1973, and Gilles Sauter, 'Quelques Reflexion sur les Frontières Africaines', Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch (ed), *Problèmes de Frontières dans le Tiers-Monde*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 1982, p. 42.

8. Sautter, *op.cit* p. 42.

bours. Bloody battles had to be fought to achieve the hexagon bounded by the Rhine, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Sea. Yet, as Macphee has correctly asserted in a recent study,

the territorial map of France does not correspond to an ethnocultural map, either within the hexagon or along its borders. To the north-east the border slices into the Flemish ethnic entity [the rest in the adjacent area of Belgium]. In the South, the border cuts through two Iberian lands: the Basque country and Catalonia [each shared with Spain]. Corsicans speak Italian dialects. Lower Brittany has a million people who speak the Celtic language. There are at least ten or twelve million people who know something of Occitan [To this list must be added French-speaking Germans in Alsace-Lorraine]. Inversely, the territorial map of France does not include the French speakers of Belgium and the Bernois Jura. Franco-Provence is spoken between St. Etienne and Fribourg, Grenoble and Lons-le-Saunier, even in the Val d'Aosta.<sup>9</sup>

The regionalist tendencies in these partitioned culture areas have for a long time been a source of anxiety to the French State. The centralism in French administration and their patriotism and nationalism in politics must be regarded as a response to the vulnerability posed by the inherently weak ethnographical structure of the state.

Our working definition agrees with P. de la Pradelle, one of the few scholars in International Law to realize that 'All boundaries are by their nature artificial and can only be viewed as an invention of the human mind'. 'Lines', de la Pradella continued, 'may be a topographical convenience, they are not natural facts'. 'Nature abhors lines', he correctly

9. Peter McPhee, "A case study of Internal Colonization: The Francisation of Northern Catalonia", *Review*, 111, 3, 1980, pp. 400-401.



concluded.<sup>10</sup> I believe that the basic principles stated in this submission laid behind the dictum, '*Natura non facit saltus*' which has been usefully translated to mean that "the paths of behaviour and of ideas do not stop abruptly at lines, but just gradually die out; the points of minimum density are taken as breaking points and this statistical interpolation constitutes the boundary line, which is almost always a statistical fiction". It has, therefore, been concluded quite rightly that 'all boundaries are zonal'.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, Por Cesar Sepulveda, Director of Matias Romeo Institute of Diplomacy, Ministry of External Relations of Mexico, has in an independent reflection on the U.S.-Mexico border, also expressed an approval when he stated that '... just as territorial boundaries cannot sharply divide nature, water or the atmosphere, nor impede the flight paths of birds and insects, they equally cannot segregate the human spirit. . . Talents cannot be territorially confined, because it surpasses all physical barriers that people may wish to impose upon it'.<sup>12</sup>

Because 'nature abhors lines', oceans and seas, lakes and rivers, mountains and deserts have functioned as barriers for only as long as the means for crossing or breaking through them have not been found. Astronomical and mathematical lines are obviously even more vulnerable to activities and manifestations of the boundless reality including man's natural resentment against confinement.

But to rest these comments here will be to indulge in fantasy. For while reality is boundless at one level, at another it admits of certain forms of boundary. Otherwise,

10. P. de la Pradelle, *La Frontiere, etude de droit international*, Paris, 1958, p. 56 as cited in J.-M. Quintin, *European Cooperation in Frontier Regions*, Background Paper to the Second European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning, 1973, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1973, p. 14.

11. Strassoldo, op. cit., p. 26

12. Cesar Sepulveda and Albert E. Ultton (eds), *The U. S. - Mexico Border Region: Anticipating Resource Needs and Issues to the Year 2000*, Texas Western Press, 1984, p. 2.

how can one comprehend the infinite varieties of individual forms, shapes, roles and functions in natural phenomena, each variety constituting a discernible or definable system or sub-system depending on the unit and level of analysis. If nature's abhorrence of lines were not to be qualified, why a universe of clearly separated planets or an earth of distinct continents; why the distinction between land and water, between flora and fauna, between categories of animals and plants, between the male and the female, between the Black and the Whiteman, between the round and the oblong face, between day and night, between yesterday and today? The varieties make for such over-all harmony and beauty that easily make the otherwise extremely frightful to imagine. No one, for example, would wish for any or, worse still, all of these faces to be an undifferentiated mass. Were we to have such an abomination, which the good Lord has so kindly forbidden, this lecture would not have taken place in the first instance, for there will not exist the possibility of the arrangement which for this crucial hour makes for the extremely important differentiation between *me* as lecturer and *you* as audience.

Like the author of the universe of which he is a part, man, too, has been reported to be genetically disposed to think and behave in binary oppositions. This disposition has been traced rightly or wrongly by experts to the functions of the right and the left cerebral hemisphere, the one or the other specifically stimulated depending on whether the dominant pressure is to find similarities, harmony, unity and continuity or it is to discover differences, diversity, contrasts and division. There is a natural demand for both capacities. As Strassoldo once noted,

the right cerebral hemisphere is no less credible than the left, and the psychological needs expressed by the champions of monism, of unity, of harmony, of communality, of synthesis, of holism are not less real and important than the opposite need to break down into manageable parts, the



sorting out of differences, the analysis of confused wholes into simple units.....<sup>13</sup>

Even by reason of our efforts in this lecture to define our terms, we are engaged in boundary making since "etymologically, to define means to set boundaries."<sup>13a</sup>

Boundaries are, therefore, inevitable. The extent of our admiration for varieties and our abhorrence of monotony is the measure of our acceptance of the notion of boundary and its usefulness. What is proposed for rejection is not boundary *per se*, but a particular type — the artificial category-characterized by a disregard for mutual tolerance and prone not only to the kind of disagreements and conflicts that have led to most of the wars in Europe and the Euro-centric world since the rise of nation-states. There are also the equally tension-generating negative discriminations and exclusion on grounds of race, culture, language, ethnicity, sex, religion, social class and the like. Our own concept of 'natural boundaries' would apply only to situations where, as in a musical concert, functions are instrumentally separated for no other purpose than the calculation for ultimate unity and harmony. Paul, the Apostle, would appear to have shared this view of natural boundaries, based on the emphasis of the unity in diversity, when in his famous letter to the Corinthians he used the brilliant imagery of the human body which must continue to function as a whole in spite of separability into distinct parts and faculties.<sup>14</sup>

The centenary of the Berlin West African Conference, therefore, offers a unique opportunity for a reflection on the lot not only of Africans in a continent divided by European

13. Raimondo Strassoldo, 'Boundaries in Sociological Theory: A Reassessment', Paper at the International Conference on Boundaries, Regions and International Integration, Gorizia, Italy, Dec. 6-8, 1979, pp. 2-3.

13a. Raimondo Strassoldo, 'The Study of Boundaries: A Systems-Oriented Multi-Disciplinary, Bibliographical Essay', *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2., No. 3, 1977, p. 81.

14. *Holy Bible*, 1 Corinthians, Ch. 12, Verses 12-26.

powers; the occasion must also be utilized to give some generalized thoughts to the fate of fellowmen elsewhere in the wider world of invidious differentiation into competitive rather than complimentary nation-states, characterized by exclusive borders. In this reflection, the boundaries of nation-states are viewed essentially as a spatial dimension of the equally dangerous and patently harmful division or negative discrimination of all kinds. The intransigency of Apartheid South Africa, the Capitalist-Communist divisive interventions in the Horn, the inter-ethnic tension created and sustained by African politicians, the religious intolerance in Niemeiri's Sudan, the Maitaisine revolts within our own borders — all demonstrate the interconnections between the strictly functional and the essentially territorial systems or sub-systems and their artificial boundaries.

#### Berlin West African Conference and the Genesis of the Exclusive Boundary

In Africa, the story of exclusive boundaries as a basic requirement of the modern state system must begin with the Berlin West African Conference. The Conference was a response to the need to bring a little order into a state of affairs that was fast degenerating into imminent danger of armed friction among the competing imperialist states. Although the initial suggestion was by Portugal whose much older colonialist stakes in Africa had suffered an increasing encroachment by such relatively new comers as Britain, France and Belgium, the initiative for the Conference was quickly seized by Otto Von Bismarck, the famous Iron Chancellor of Germany, who then characteristically exploited the occasion to further the assertion of his newly united country's leadership in Europe and its colonial interest in Africa.

After due consultations with France, Britain and Belgium, invitations went out to all European powers with manifest imperialist interests or ambition in the Blackman's continent. The Conference was attended by representatives



of all leading European states except Switzerland; there were also delegates from the United States of America and the then Ottoman Empire. The agenda for the meeting had presumably been circulated; but as if to avoid any doubt, a large wall map of Africa, cast in the usual image of a colossal question mark, had been caused to be conspicuously displayed in the Conference Hall.

The stage was set for a familiar-type operation, an 'International Share-out'. European and Eurocentric powers have habitually employed this strategy to resolve difficult territorial disputes. The Gordian Knot solution is known to have been regularly applied inside and outside Europe both before and after Berlin 1884 — 1885. Witness the partition and repartition of Poland; the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire and resultant emergence of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Hungary and Austria as separate sovereign states; the so-called Settlement of the Eastern Question; the partition of Ireland; the dissolution of Germany and the creation of the ideologically opposed successor states of Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic in Europe; the settlement of rival imperialist claims mostly between Britain and France, in North America in the 18th and 19th centuries, and the creation of contemporary colonies of Britain, France and Netherlands in Asia. The more recent cases of Korea and Vietnam represent the neo-imperialist partition on ideological lines. The creation of Israel and all the attendant border problems in the Middle East must be counted as a feature of the same experience.

But while Africa was not the first or the last part of the world to experience European or Eurocentric political partition, the scale of the operations made the African case the most dramatic. The number of the powers involved was much larger and the size of the land in question was that of the world's second largest continent. Besides, the relative brevity of the time taken — basically the last 15 years of the last century — tempts one to regard the entire event as revolutionary. The point to be emphasized is that much of this 'success' was owed to the special planning care and skill

that were brought to bear on the conduct of Berlin 1884.

Few subjects have evoked as much controversy among historians as the assessment of the Berlin West African Conference.<sup>15</sup> But whatever the arguments, one point seems reasonably clear: it was at Berlin that the theoretical foundations were laid for the subsequent balkanization of the Blackman's continent. The conference was certainly not the beginning or the end of European imperial rivalry for territories in Africa, but the rules and regulations that were drawn up by the delegates rationalized the previous activities of the contracting powers and dictated the pattern of subsequent development. For example, it was the rule about 'effective occupation' that resulted in colonial territories with a demand for definitive boundaries and visible administrations. In other words, it was this Berlin rule that launched Africa into the orbit of a new world of sharply bound territorial states on the model of the European nation-states.

From the viewpoint of political boundary makers, then, what happened to Africa at Berlin was the initiation of 'delimitation', a term that has been held to refer to what Lord Curzon has called 'all the earlier processes for determining a boundary, down to and including its embodiment in a Treaty or Convention'.<sup>16</sup> Thus, whereas 'delimitation' is the phase for policy-decision dominated by statesmen and bureaucrats, 'demarcation' — the term which denotes the final processes of actual marking of the boundary on the ground — is a function of experts made up generally of a mixed team of surveyors, cartographers and ethnographers appointed by each of the governments concerned. The Berlin West African Conference was, therefore, understandably followed by a series of smaller and more focussed international conferences — to enable particular European powers

15. For works on the Berlin West African Conference or Partition of Africa generally, see R. J. Gavin and J. A. Betley, *The Scramble for Africa*, Ibadan University Press, 1973 and the select bibliography on pp. xxxi-xxxiv.

16. Curzon, *op. cit.*



reach specific diplomatic agreements and set up appropriate commissions for the demarcation of the agreed boundaries.

It is both impossible and unnecessary to treat this audience to the details that are fortunately easily found in several publications including Ian Brownlie's magisterial volume entitled *African International Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia* (C. Hurst & Co. London, 1979) and the more sub-regional works of J.C. Anene on *The International Boundaries of Nigeria* (Longman, 1970) and A. C. McEwen's on *The International Boundaries of East Africa* (Oxford, 1971).

However, we may illustrate the point by a reference to the leading agreements, mostly Anglo-French in character, which have more or less determined the present alignments of our own national boundaries. These include the Anglo-French Agreement of 10 August 1889, which formed the basis of the western boundary with present-day Peoples Republic of Benin (formerly the French colony of Dahomey) drawn through Western Yorubaland from the Atlantic seaboard to Latitude 9°N. Then, there was the Anglo-French Convention of 14 June 1898, which settled the remainder of this border northwards, breaking historic Borgu into two. The Anglo-French Conventions of 1890 and 1904 defined the northern boundary with present-day Republics of Niger and Chad, causing a division of Hausaland and the Kanuri culture area into two different colonial and subsequent national spheres.

The Eastern Boundary with Cameroon deserves a particular mention for reasons of its status as currently the most worrisome of our borders and one calling for the highest level of caution and care of handling on the part of the two inter-relating sovereignties. Unlike Benin, Niger and Chad which were straightforward ex-French colonies and whose boundary arrangements vis-a-vis Nigeria as an ex-British colony were relatively simple matters of bilateral relations between Britain and France, Cameroon was originally a German colony. Like the rest of the German colonial possessions in Africa, it was re-partitioned between Britain and

France and the portions were more or less absorbed by both as Allied Powers following their joint defeat of Germany at the conclusion of the First World War.

In the context of the normally Eurocentric International Law, both the British and the French portions of Cameroon were administered as 'mandated territories' of the League of Nations and later as Trusteeships' of the succeeding United Nations Organisation. Thus at the end of the Second World War, to seek to understand the legal instruments relevant to the border between Nigeria and Cameroon one must be prepared to study not only the original Anglo-German diplomatic correspondences but also the documents relating to the subsequent Anglo-French repartitions and regimes under the auspices, first of the League of Nations and then the United Nations Organisation.

A major boundary adjustment followed the UN-arranged plebiscite of 1960 when British Southern Cameroon elected to join the French Cameroon to form present-day Republic of Cameroon. This resuscitated the original Anglo-German boundary alignment as the effective border between Nigeria and Cameroon as independent states. This section of the international boundary, based on a series of essentially inconclusive Anglo-German Arrangements of April – June 1884 and June – August 1885 (the ones before and the others after the Berlin Conference), was drawn through an observably intricate geographical and cultural terrain stretching from the Cross River estuary in the south to Yola on the Benue River. It split into two several interlocking indigenous culture areas including those of the Efik, the Ekoi and the Ododop. Quite apart from the question of shared strata of off-shore mineral oil, which recently introduced a particularly complicating factor, it is easy to see the seeds of the current dispute in the uncertainty of the terms of the original Anglo-German diplomatic documents and the allied fact that the border was never satisfactorily demarcated.

The UN plebiscite of 1961 in British Northern Cameroon (present-day Gongola State) produced the opposite effect of ultimate integration of this part of the former



German colony into present-day Federal Republic of Nigeria. For reasons of this difference in the outcome of the 1961 vis-a-vis the 1960 Plebiscite, the Nigeria-Cameroon boundary north of the Benue has been based, not on the original Anglo-German diplomacy but rather on the line of division agreed by Britain and France at the conclusion of the 1914 – 1918 War. Like the others, the Nigeria-Cameroon border from the Benue to Lake Chad severed such indigenous culture areas as those of the Jukun, the Chamba, the Manga, the Mandara and the Shuwa Arabs. However, partitioned culture areas straddled by the Nigeria-Cameroon border have been, more than their counterparts elsewhere in the Nigerian region, vulnerable to the same kind of "erratic vicissitudes of international relations, wars... and negotiations (which) have caused frequent changes in boundaries in Europe. They have similarly been subjected to 'forced shift of allegiance, with ensuing problems of psychological, cultural and economic adaptations".<sup>17</sup>

### The Artificiality of African Boundaries

It does not take much erudition to show the arbitrariness and artificiality of the inter-colonial boundaries so negotiated for Africa under European domination. As indicated in an often-quoted after-dinner humour by Lord Salisbury, the British Prime Minister, at the signing of the Anglo-French Convention of 1890 in respect of Nigeria's northern boundary, the Europeans themselves acknowledged the arbitrary manner of the boundary arrangements. Observed Lord Salisbury:

We have been engaged in drawing lines upon maps where no whiteman's foot ever trod; we have been giving away mountains and rivers and lakes to each other, only hindered by the small impediment that

17. Strassoldo, *Frontier Regions*, p. 5.

we never knew exactly where the mountains and rivers and lakes were.<sup>18</sup>

Another Briton, an official who participated in the drawing of the southern section of the Nigeria-Cameroon border, is also recorded to have recalled, years after that—

In those days we just took a blue pencil and a ruler, and we put it down at Old Calabar, and drew that blue line to Yola... I recollect thinking when I was sitting having an audience with the Emir [of Yola] surrounded by his tribe, that it was a very good thing that he did not know that I, with a blue pencil, had drawn a line through his territory.<sup>19</sup>

Even when colonial officials later operated as members of Boundary Commissions appointed to carry out the more serious and painstaking business of demarcation, with a demand for a thorough assessment of the human and geographic realities on the ground, the ultimate emphasis on the self-interest of the negotiating European powers generally resulted in boundaries that are glaringly disrespectful of the local realities of human settlement pattern and the natural environment.

But arbitrary and casual as the colonial boundary arrangements have been, they have come to determine in perpetuity the destiny of whole peoples and countless individuals. In spite of their indisputable attribute as arbitrary and artificial lines of demarcation, the boundaries have had to be accepted as legal alignments of the territorial framework of the post-colonial nation-states. From this point, they assumed the same kind of negative roles known of international boundaries in such older parts of the wider world of

18. Lord Salisbury as quoted in J.C. Anene, *The International Boundaries of Nigeria, 1885–1960: The Framework of an Emergent African Nation*, Longman, 1970, p. 3.

19. *Ibid.*



nation-states as Europe and North America. The international boundaries in Africa thus come to match the generalized description offered by Whittemore Boggs who sees a 'State Frontier' as

(T)hat line which marks the limit of the region within which the state can exercise its own sovereign Rights. . . The location of the boundary may therefore determine for millions of people the language and the ideas which children shall be taught at school; the books and news papers which people will be able to buy and read; the kind of money they shall use, the markets in which they must buy and sell and perhaps even the kind of food they may be permitted to eat; it determines the national culture with which they shall be identified; the army in which they may be compelled to serve . . . ; the international boundary is a wall within which one brand of propaganda is confined and against which another is supposed to beat ineffectually. . . <sup>20</sup>

Yet, for man in Africa, nothing but the chances which characterized the colonial boundary negotiations at the turn of the last century have determined his varied status as Ethiopian, Somalian, Kenyan, Tanzanian, Ugandan, Zairean, Angolan, Gabonese, Central African, Sudanese, Egyptian, Libyan, Algerian, Tunisian, Moroccan, Mauritanian, Senegalese, Gambian, Francophone and Lusophone Guinean and so on. To bring the point closer home, nothing other than the accidental in the history of our borders may be said to have conferred the Nigerian national status on the Aja or Gun, the Yoruba and the Barba in the west; the Hausa and the Fulani in the north; the Kanuri in the north-east; the Mandara, the Chamba, Manga, the Jukun and the Efik in the east when the

20. S. W. Boggs, *International Boundaries: A Study of Boundary Functions and Problems*, Columbia University Press, 1940, p. 5.

extensions of exactly the same 'indigenous communities' in the neighbouring countries have had to be identified statutorily as Beninois (formerly Dahomeyans), Nigerians, Chadians and Cameroonians.

These cross-border ethnic networks are not the simple contemporary phenomena assumed by policy, nor are they limited in scope to just the intra-group dimensions sketched above. They, on the contrary, are rendered both wider and more complex by the fact of the familiar pattern of ethnic and cultural interlinks and interpenetrations associated with the centuries, if not millenia, of intergroup relations in the continent and its sub-regions. Let me illustrate the nature of the intricacies with the data on the Nigeria-Benin border, the example closest to the venue of this lecture and one of the best researched in the continent.<sup>21</sup>

To appreciate in full the localized impact of the border, a good knowledge of the culture areas prior to the partition is necessary. There were in the area through which the border was drawn three concentric cultural ecumenes. First were the specific communities of identical culture, kinship ties and political organisations, which lay directly on the path of the border when it came to be drawn. The southernmost of these were the Gun sub-group of the Aja-speaking peoples in Badagry (Nigeria) and Porto Novo (Benin) regions.

Then follow the six Western Yoruba sub-groups. From the south to the north, they are the Awori, the Anago, the Ifonyin, the Ije and the Ketu in the present-day Egbado South and Egbado North Local Government Areas (LGA's) of Ogun State in Nigeria and their exact opposite numbers in the adjacent Weme (Oueme) Province of the Republic of Benin. Then, there are the Sabe, mostly in what are today the Kajola (Oke-Iho) and Ifedapo (Saki) Local Government Areas of Oyo State of Nigeria and their kinsmen in the adjacent areas of Şabe (Savé) District of the Zou Province

21. Studies of Nigeria-Benin Border include those of Alfred Mondjannagni J. C. Anene (op.cit.), Robin Mills, John O. Igwe and Ife present writer's (see References below).



in Benin Republic. North of the Western Yoruba sub-groups was the Borgu Kingdom of Nikki, split into two by the border so that Nikki (the capital) was placed in the area of present-day 'Borgou Province' of Benin while the rest of the ancient kingdom — including Yashikersa and Kaima — was situated in what became the identically named Borgu Local Government Area (LGA) of Kwara State of Nigeria.

The specific communities directly impacted by the border were linked to the wider areas of each of the three main culture areas of the Aja, the Yoruba and the Borgu. Thus the Gun who are directly affected by the boundary arrangement were linguistically, culturally and historically linked to the other Aja-speaking peoples to their east and most importantly to their north-west including the Wemenou of the Weme River Valley and the Fon of Agbome (Abomey), Alladah and Whydah who dominate the southern half of the Republic of Benin.

Similarly, the Western Yoruba sub-groups astride the border share a sense of community with the rest of the Yoruba culture area in the present-day Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Kwara and Ondo States of Nigeria to the east and the more westerly sub-groups such as the Jaluku, Mayinbiri, Ana and 'Fe in the middle latitudes of the Republics of Benin and Togo. Nikki, whose specific territory was sliced into two by the Anglo-French border, partakes of the same language, traditions of origin, political and social institutions and over-all group consciousness with all other Borgu states centred on Bussa and Illo in the area of present-day Kwara and Sokoto States of Nigeria and Kandi, west of Nikki in the Republic of Benin.

While the three culture areas remain reasonably distinct in terms of language and specific geographical location, all three are historically interlinked and culturally interconnected. Several concrete studies have supported the easily observed phenomenon of the cultural and historical affinities between the Yoruba and their Aja and Borgu neighbours. Such affinities have been found to be so numerous and complex that the frontiers between these three

ethnic groups have proved extremely difficult to place. Individually and severally, the three culture areas were also known to have operated within a much wider cultural ecumene which has been argued to include Nupeland in the area of present-day Niger State of Nigeria to the north, the Edo-speaking peoples in that of Bendel State to the east and the Ewe, the Adangbe and the Ga of Southern Togo and Ghana to the west.<sup>22</sup>

The pattern of historical and cultural interlink and inter-penetration, so much a feature of inter-group relations in pre-colonial Africa, has continued to be maintained; and they go to support the point which Alex Quaison-Sackey made in 1983, though with some measure of journalistic flavour, that

all West Africans are citizens of West Africa.

They were ever before the promulgation of ECOWAS [the Economic Community of West African States]. From Muaritania to Nigeria, the peoples criss-cross linguistically and culturally. Thus Nigerians have relations in Benin who have relations in Togo, who have relations in Ghana, who have relatives in Liberia, who have relatives in Sierra Leone and so on.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of its outermost circle, then, the over-all cultural ecumene on which the Nigeria-Benin border was imposed has been significantly more extensive than the immediate frontier zones.

22. For Studies of interconnection between the Yoruba, Aja and Borgu, see Akinjogbin, I. A.: 'Toward a Historical Geography of Yoruba Civilization' in I. A. Akinjogbin and G. O. Ekemode (eds), *Proceedings of the Conference on Yoruba Civilization*, University of Ife, 1976, Vol. 1, pp. 19-23.

B.A. Agiri; 'Yoruba Oral Tradition' with special reference to the Early History of the Oyo Kingdom" in Wande Abimbola (ed), *Yoruba Oral Traditions*, University of Ife Institute of African Studies, 1974; R. C. C. Law, "The Northern Factor in Yoruba History" Akinjogbin and Ekemode (eds), *op. cit.*

23. Alex Quaison-Sackey in *West Africa*, Feb. 21, 1983, p.47.



The difficulties in maintaining an exclusive border in situations of this kind of ethnic interlink and geographic contiguity have been more than adequately demonstrated in episodes such as the political deportation to Chad in 1980 of Alhaji Abdulrahman Darman Shugaba, a Nigerian Kanuri of Borno State origin but with obvious ancestral and kinship ties with Chad, a neighbouring sovereign state with which Nigeria shares its Kanuri population. Whatever doubts about the impracticability of the policy of closed borders in our kind of situation, which the Shugaba affair might have left behind, must have been cleared, not only by the failure of the later decision also by the Nigerian Government to flush out and keep off 'aliens' including citizens from the geographically contiguous neighbouring countries. Equally illustrative of failure is the agonizing helplessness of the measure against contraband and its corrupting influences on both the predominantly peasant and largely innocent populations of the border regions and the state security agencies operating there. What these failures demonstrate is the inadequacy of the prevailing policy and a yearning for a major revision and modification.

#### Policy Recommendations

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Guests. I wish to conclude by offering a set of suggestions for bringing about the required policy re-orientation. In doing so, I should also wish to continue to stress the Nigerian situation as window on the rest of Africa and the wider world of the nation-state category of artificial boundaries. This is necessary if only to be able to say that, after all, the problems presented here are intrinsically not different from those encountered on borders elsewhere and that, rather than being a dream of a dweller of the Ivory Tower, the policy suggestions that I am going to make are those that have been tried and are being tried with appreciable success in other parts of the real world where problems similar to our own have been encountered.

Our present policy practice is inspired by an attachment to the classical notion of national sovereignty and the age-old perception of diplomacy — i.e. the Law and Politics of International Relations — as the acceptable medium for dealing with relations between sovereignties, including relations along and across their shared borders. Consequently, policy studies and guidance on international boundaries as a component of International Relations have generally proceeded on the assumption that the nation-states are the primary units of analysis. Accordingly, they are presumed to be structurally differentiated entities. While this assumption may be justified on ground of the prevailing Law of Nations, investigations and policy practice based on this traditional assumption have remained inadequate to the extent of the analytical exclusion of the realities of transborder ethnic and geographical continuities and flows.

The main challenge posed by border regions is in their attributes as sub-national areas where locality is internationalized. There is an inherent conflict between the national concern and local perspective. Managers of nation-states always emphasize the former to ignore the latter. Yet, because border regions are localities, the solutions to most of the problems presented must reckon with local interests and resources if they are to succeed. The present strategies based solely on the national concern and the exclusive application of classical diplomacy, are unsuitable precisely because control is with central authorities seated in distant capitals away from the realities of the border areas. A locality that operates in an inherently international setting is also not the place for the success of nationalistic and necessarily unilateral policies of one state vis-a-vis its geographically contiguous neighbours.

Imagine, for example, the obvious difficulty which the Nigerian Government has always encountered in the use of high politics of relations between sovereignties or the internal exercise of our sovereign rights for the management of the local situations presented by the 'gateway' states and Local Government Areas abutting directly on our boundary with



the Republic of Niger. The Nigeria-Niger boundary splits into two an observably coherent Hausa culture area in exactly the same way as our border with Benin is known to have created the double image for each of the Aja, Yoruba and Borgu culture areas. On both sides are the same Central Sudanese terrain and vegetation; a predominantly Hausa society with shared pockets of the nomadic Fulani; the same Islamic history and culture; since the 11th century and particularly since the Jihad of Uthman dan Fudi in the nineteenth century, it is basically the same prayers to the same Allah; the same farmers, planting mostly the same type of crops (cereals like sorghum for subsistence and, later, groundnut for export); the same animal husbandry; the same traders; the same craftsmen.

Aside generalities of common geography, culture, history and economy, the adjoining borderlands of Northern Nigeria and Southern Niger share the areas of specific Hausa sub-groups and traditional states. Thus the areas of Argungu, Bagodo and Gwandabawa L.G.A.'s of Sokoto State and the adjacent *arrondissements* (the equivalent of our own L.G.A.'s) of Gaya, Doutchi, Koumi and Madaoua in the *Departments* (equivalents of our own states) of Dosso and Tahoua in Niger approximate to the area of the traditional Hausa state of Kabbi with headquarters at Birnin Kebbi, now capital of the Nigerian LGA of the same name east of Argungu, also in Sokoto State.

In the same manner, the Katsina and Mani LGA's in Kaduna State constitute the southern and metropolitan parts of *Kasar Katsina* (Later Katsina Emirate) from which grew such Southern Nigérien townships and *arrondissements* as Guidan Roumji, Maradounfa, Aguié and Tessaoua in the Department of Maradi. The Daura L.G.A. (incidentally the homeland of Nigeria's present Head of State) as well as the L.G.As of Gumel and Dambatta of Kano State in Nigeria and the *arrondissements* of Matameye, Magaria and Gouré in the Department of Zinder in Niger were once integrated parts of the same traditional Hausa Kingdom (later Emirate) of Daura, customarily regarded by all traditional Hausa States as

their common ancestral base.

This 'Siamese Twin' pattern of relationship between the Nigerian and Nigérien borderlands is replicated in Borno State vis-a-vis the adjacent areas of Chad, or Gongola, Benue and Cross River States in relation to the neighbouring communities and areas in the Republic of Cameroon. The significance of the issues involved is easily indicated by the fact that 11 of the 19 states of Nigeria are of borderland location and there are all together 35 'gateway' Local Government Areas according to the 1979 Local Government Reform to which we have reverted since the change of government on 31 December 1983. The situation with our neighbours is dramatized by the case of Niger where six of the seven constituent *Departements* abutt directly on the border with Nigeria.

The transnational structure and orientation of our borderlands dictate the imperative of transborder co-operation and a systematic use of regional planning techniques for development. This means a call for a radical re-interpretation of the traditionally cherished doctrine of National Self-Interest, basic to conventional diplomacy, and a modification in favour of what Ellwyn Stoddard, in reference to the U.S.-Mexico border, has described as the alternative doctrine of Mutual Necessity, based on the recognition of an objective symbiotic relationship.<sup>24</sup> As on the U.S.-Mexico border and elsewhere in the world of adjoining borderlands, the nationalistic and essentially unilateral policies towards our neighbours and theirs towards us on matters of local government and regional development would not work in adjoining frontier zones.

It is impossible for a local or regional community or authority in such border areas to undertake coherent local development programmes and law-enforcement without adequate input from counterparts on the other side of the

24. Stoddard, E. R., 'Functional Alternatives to Bi-National Border Development Model: The case of the U.S.-Mexico Border Region', Paper presented at the 1978 Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco.



given border. In recent times, the Nigerian Government has been extremely embittered by the syphoning into neighbouring countries of essential commodities which the authorities have had to provide at great cost for their own citizenry. A similar situation has generated complaints by the Zambian government about Mozambican and Malawian Chewa and Ngoni kinsmen who over-burden the medical, agricultural and educational facilities provided under the State's Rural Integrated Scheme for kinship groups resident on the Zambian sides of the boundaries with these neighbouring states.<sup>25</sup>

Our advice is for a supplementary policy that will allow co-operation between sovereign nation-states at the level of the specific localities directly impacted by their shared boundaries. The new practice will be based on the genuine needs and aspiration of the local populations organised into *responsible* Local Governments with appropriate powers and mandates of the supervisory national authorities. Such authorisation will enable regional and local authorities in border regions to function as agencies for international relations at this strictly local level. In other words, rather than continue in the practice of the sole use of agencies and procedures that place control directly in the hands of the usually distant and inadequately informed national governments and bureaucracies, based in Lagos and Niamey with respect to our example of the Nigeria-Niger borderlands, the peoples through the local administrations listed for the adjoining sides of the border could be directly charged. The 'gateway' regional and local authorities should be so enabled to liaise with counterparts across the border for the purpose both of control and the development of shared resources.

The policy suggestion being made here is not an entirely new idea: not only is transborder co-operation the vogue today in the border regions of Western Europe and in North

25. Phiri, S. H. 'Some Aspects of Spatial Interaction and Reaction to Government Policies in the Border Area: A study in the Historical and Political Geography of Rural Development in the Zambia-Malawi and Zambia-Mozambique Frontier Zones (1870-1970)', Ph.D. Liverpool, 1980.

America with particular reference to the twin-cities and the municipalities astride the U.S.-Mexico border,<sup>26</sup> there are significant indications about the relevant use that has been made of it in our own history. To start with, there is the widely acknowledged fact of the African 'genius for integration' and our ancestors' impatience with exclusive boundaries.<sup>27</sup> Besides, there was the lesson of experience in the colonial era when, as in the case of French and British colonial regimes in West Africa, rival territorial administrations had to abandon their national pride and mutual isolation to seek co-operation at the level of local authorities in adjoining border regions. This was compelled by the necessity to cope with several common problems including those posed by cross-border protest migrations, smuggling and the transit needs of landlocked territories and enclaves. From the 1930s to the end of formal colonial rule in West Africa, the need to provide local solutions to these essentially local problems led to regular periodic meetings of French and British administrators in adjacent border regions.<sup>28</sup> It was the attainment of formal political independence mostly in the early 1960s that led to the termination of what, for want of a better term, has been referred to as 'sub-national micro diplomacy' and the adoption of the more fashionable Bismarckian alternative of 'Summits' and 'Mini-Summits' based on the model of the concert of Europe.

26. There is a deliberate exclusion of the militarized borders of the type maintained by communist states in Central and Eastern Europe or that between the North and South Korea. This is because of the obvious inconsistency with our own type which fits more into the model of Western Europe and North America.

27. For notes on the notion of boundary in pre-colonial Africa, see Basil Davidson, p. 267 Asiawaju, A. I., 'Frontier in the setting of state in Pre-Colonial Africa', *Presence Africaine*, No. 127/128, pp.43-50, 1983 and V.G. Fanso, 'Trans-frontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroon-Nigeria Colonial Boundaries, 1916-1946' Ph.D. Yaounde, 1983, Ch. 1.

28. Asiawaju, A. I.: *Western Yorubaland Under Colonial Rule*, Ch. 5 and 6, 'Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and the Upper Volta Before 1945', *Journal of African History*, Vol. xvii, 4, 1976, 'The Socio-Economic Integration of the West African Sub-Region in the Historical Context: Focus on the Colonial Period' *Bulletin de L'IFAN*, Dakar, Senegal, Serie B Tome 40, No. 1, 1978.



The new policy option operates best in situations where sub-national authorities enjoy appropriate measures of local autonomy and initiative. In Europe, it has thus been found to have worked more easily between Swiss cantons and West German Landers than between any of these and the equivalent regional or local authorities in centralist France. The policy alternative is, therefore, bound to encounter difficulties in the centralist atmosphere such as prevails all over Africa. In the Nigerian region, centralism is the settled fact of politics and administration in all the ex-French colonies around us. We have a Federal constitution; but a centralist practice has also been imposed by the fact of military intervention and prolonged martial rule, compelled by the irresponsibility and culpable mismanagement of supposedly democratically elected governments.

Yet there are important opportunities in the generally good diplomatic relations between us and each of our four immediate neighbours — Benin, Niger, Chad and Cameroon — and the fact of common membership of several inter-governmental organisations (IGOs) most of which generally support the types of regional understanding necessary for a trans-border local government and development plans. Indeed, transfrontier co-operation at the local level must be regarded as the most appropriate test of the sincerity of the IGOs. In Africa, as Viktor Von Malchus has correctly noted in respect of Europe, frontier regions must be the starting point for the realisation of continental and sub-continental integration schemes and programmes.<sup>29</sup> Commitment to transborder co-operation is the only way for the IGOs to demonstrate their relevance to local peoples, best symbolized by border communities who, more than any other sub-national groups, stand in the need of the international socio-economic integration efforts pursued by the IGOs.

29. Viktor Von Malchus, *The Co-operation of European Frontier Regions: State of the Question and Recent Development*, Basic Report for the Second European Symposium on Frontier Regions, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1975, p. 14.

There is a legion of inter-governmental organisations in this continent; but for the purpose of our concern in this lecture, there appears no better choice than the Organisation of African Unity (OAU). The human and material resources necessary for the adoption of transboundary planning and co-ordination have been found to be a truly Africa-wide phenomenon. Aside the current anxiety about OAU's commitment to its own preservation and survival, there is no doubt about its potentialities to play the required roles. The OAU should resolve to promote borders that join in the same manner as it once resolved to maintain the inter-sovereignty boundaries that have since tended to separate. The same concern for continental unity, peace and over-all development which decided the resolution for the status quo in 1964 is today all the more compelling for another decision to devalue the divisive functions of the retained boundaries.

The specific recommendation is for the creation of appropriate specialized organs within this continental body, able to fulfil purposes and functions analogous to those of the Council of Europe (founded in 1949) and such institutions within it as the European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning and more especially the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE). Made up of representatives of 'districts', 'cantons', 'kreise', 'lander', 'counties', 'départements', 'provinces' or 'regions', depending on the structures and categories of regional or local authorities in use in the nations concerned, the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe is particularly useful as model of a body, the only such body anywhere in the world, which officially represents local and regional authorities across several international boundaries in their relations with international institutions, in this case those established by member states of the Council of Europe.

The OAU equivalents, which this lecture is asking Nigeria to initiate, may then be used to bring about an achievement similar to the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities



or Authorities, which was open to the signatures of members of the Council of Europe at Madrid in 1980 and has since been ratified by all, including centralist France. The Convention<sup>30</sup> covers a wider range of essentially local issues which, in border regions, require collaboration of local authorities of foreign jurisdictions for effective management. The new outlook in Europe overturns the hitherto exclusive use of traditional diplomacy as sole instrument for the management of relations between sovereign nations. The developments in Europe have been inspired by the need to make a positive use of the informal relations within and between ethnic groups and geographical regions that have been straddled by the European nation-state boundaries. Not surprisingly, the dynamic elements in the new movement have been the several organisations of the artificially partitioned peoples and regions. These include the Conference of Upper Rhine Valley Planners, the Regio Basiliensi and the Euregio in the Middle and Lower Rhine Valleys, the Committee for the Promotion of Alpine Region Co-operation and the Association of European Border Regions to mention only a very few examples. The lesson here is that active involvement of the local people is essential for the success of formalised trans-frontier co-operation.

The sub-national areas inhabited by 'gateway' communities have been among the most depressed socially and economically. In the colonial period when borders in Africa fell under more or less the same assumptions that influenced thoughts in Europe of the Inter-War years when border regions were traditionally viewed as 'disadvantaged areas', our borderlands were left out of whatever was done in the

30. The text of the Convention is contained in *European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation Between Territorial Communities or Authorities*, European Treaty Series No. 106, Council of Europe Strasbourg 1982. The impressive developments, following the ratification of the convention by member states of the Council of Europe, have been systematically documented and compiled in the Information and Documentation Office on Transfrontier Co-operation, a sub-unit of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

way of the development of infrastructure for social and economic development. The neglect of the colonial era has been continued in the era of independence, thanks to the adoption of a socio-economic development strategy which, in spite of rhetorics about even development, has continued to emphasize 'centres' at the expense of the periphery'. As periphery of the Nigerian state, the nation's border regions are among the most neglected of the traditionally recognized "Neglected Rural Majority". As in most other African borderlands, modern communication networks generally peter out as one approaches our frontier zones; there are no standard educational and medical facilities, and, of course, no industries. What border communities get most of the time is the presence of the nation-state's coercion apparatuses the conduct of which tend to generate negative attitude to government. All these have the effect of alienating rather than integrating the periphery with the centre.

To achieve accelerated development of the border regions and reverse a disadvantage imposed by accident of history, we suggest a policy of 'Compensatory Action' which will enable authorities to single out these areas for specially accelerated development. African border regions must be treated as negatively "impacted areas" deserving the sympathetic treatment of nations of which they form a part and whose borders have, far more than other factors, relegated them to backwaters of development. For Nigeria, it is strongly recommended that the 35 'gateway' Local Government Areas be covered by a special development fund of the Federal Government. The new 'gateway' roles and the national security considerations involved in the management of borderland LGAs make such special 'Compensatory Action' Fund both reasonable and urgent.

The need to adjust established policy, based on the notion of sovereignty and the use of classical diplomacy, must extend to the allied tradition of formal education and scholarly research. So far, what our educational system and scholarship have done in the main is to mirror establishment. Present attachment to sovereignty and traditional diplomacy



has been particularly nurtured by the curricula in Law, History, International Politics and Cartography. If we are to convert nation-state boundaries 'from barrier to junction', legal educators in this audience must go out in appreciation of the need to research and teach "a new branch of the law of nations, the international law of good neighbourhood".<sup>31</sup> Similarly, cartographers must leave here to withdraw from bookshops and classrooms, their atlases with maps dressed in sharply defined national grids which ignore realities of human and geographical extensions across inter sovereignty boundaries. Henceforth, teachers of Social Studies must insist that while children in our schools should learn by heart only the anthems of their own nation, they should also be made to know at least something of the national anthems and flags of geographically contiguous neighbouring sovereign states. Our foreign language teaching should stimulate more serious interest than we can now show in literatures other than in English. In Nigerian border regions in particular, the facilities in our secondary schools must be improved to allow for a compulsory course in French, the official language of the adjacent foreign jurisdictions.

At the university level, educational planners must recognise the danger in the present arrangement, geared more to producing experts in sharply bound disciplines than in problems. The latter emphasis requires a breadth of mind beyond the scope of single-subject specialisation. The study of boundaries demonstrates that for any science or branch of knowledge to be truly relevant to the need of man, it must be made to operate in association with other sciences; exclusive boundaries between academic disciplines are as artificial and harmful as are the frameworks of nation-states.

African borderlands generally, and the Nigerian frontier zones as specific examples, stand in dire need of being systematically researched. Statesmen and bureaucrats still deal with them less out of certainty of knowledge but

31. Sepulyeda, *op. cit.*

more out of the type of ignorance that ruled the behaviour and action of imperialist powers during the boundary negotiations at the turn of the century. Our borders define our very existence as a people and as a nation; and a firm knowledge of them is a *must* for a proper appreciation of the nature and character of the balance. The nation and the continent require research centres devoted to the study of the border phenomenon.

Since November 1983, we have circulated a proposal for the establishment of such a centre at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) for reasons of the border locational characteristics and resources of the institution.<sup>32</sup> We have here manifestations of the border in all its ramifications. There are examples of the predominantly spatial category. Quite apart from the sea front bearing the nation's entrepot, there are the international boundary with Benin Republic, the intra-national which separates Lagos from Ogun State and the local ones such as those of University of Lagos, walled against encroachments and infiltrations from Iwaya, Abule-Oja and Bariga. There are as well the predominantly functional borders between religious and ethnic groups and sub-groups; the wealthy class in Victoria Island and the ruling elite in Ikoyi vis-a-vis 'the Wretched of the Earth' in Ilubirin, Maroko and Ajegunle Apapa. A particularly pertinent sub-set are the transnational corporations whose operations have always depended on a notion of boundary that rejects the barrier function of nation-state frontiers.

The write-up we have done and widely circulated is necessarily one calling for a multidisciplinary, inter-University and international co-operation and participation. With particular reference to the nation's borderlands, the specific suggestion has been for a UNILAG-based consortium that will stimulate and harness appropriate research interests and activities in Nigerian Universities and Polytechnics located in

32. See, A. I. Asiwaju, "The Area Study Approach to Research on Nigerian Borderlands: A Proposal", Paper presented at the 1984 Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria held at the University of Sokoto, Nigeria, March 19-24, 1984.



the 11 'gateway' States. The consortium will also cultivate appropriate institutional linkages with relevant establishments in each of the geographically contiguous nation-states. The proposed arrangement, which should be a model for Africa, is the only guarantee for a balanced and regular flow of scientifically processed data on a more permanent and reliable basis than is possible with the alternative of ad hoc study groups and in-house enquiries by Government Departments supplemented at best by ordinary intelligent observations.

I wish to thank this University publicly for the support it has given for the research so far undertaken. I now call upon the Federal Military Government and other agencies concerned about problems of borders and border impact, to provide the funds for the furtherance of border research at the University of Lagos. The imperative for research is dictated by the need for us to march forward with confidence into the 21st century, better prepared to demolish those barriers which man has erected against fellowman even to the extent of the threat now posed to his own survival in a world of all sorts of invidious divisions.

I thank you for your kind attention.

## REFERENCES

- Adamu, M., 1978: *The Hausa Factor in West African History*, ABU Zaria, Press.
- Anene, J.C., 1970: *The International Boundaries of Nigeria* Longman
- Asiwaju, A.I. 1970: "The Alaketu of Ketu and the Onimeko of Meko: The Changing Status of Two Yoruba Rulers under French and British Colonial Rule", in Crowder, M. & Ikime, O. (eds) *West African Chiefs*, Ife University Press.
- 1973: 'A Note on the History of Sabe', *Lagos Notes and Records*.
- 1976: *Western Yorubaland Under European Rule, 1889 - 1945: A Comparative Analysis of French and British Colonialism*, Longman.
- 'Migrations as Revolt: The Example of the Ivory Coast and Upper Volta Before 1945', *Journal of African History*, xvii, 4, 577 - 594.
- 'Migrations as an Expression of Revolt: The Example of French West Africa Up to 1945' *Tarikh*, Vol. 5, No. 3.
- 1978: 'The Socio-Economic Integration of the West African-Sub-Region in the Historical Context: Focus on the Colonial Period', *Bulletin de L'IFAN, Dakar, Serie B, T. 40, No. 1*
- "The Aja-Speaking Peoples in Nigeria: A Note on Their Origin, Settlement and Cultural Adaptation up to 1945, *Africa* (International African Institute, London), Vol. 49, No. 1 15 - 28.
- 1982: 'Border Populations as a Ileglected Dimension of the Study of Boundary Problems in Africa: The Case of the Nigeria-Benin Boundary' Paper presented at the request of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs for its National Seminar on Nigeria's International Boundaries, April 7 - 8.
- 1983: "Centenary of African Partition: Whose Celebration?: *West Africa*, February 28.
- Borderlands Research: A Comparative Perspective*, Border Perspectives Series No.6, Centre for Inter-American and Border Studies, The University of Texas at El Paso (C.I.A.B.S. UTEP) November.
- 'Borderlands as Regions: Lessons of the European Trans-boundary Planning Experience for International Economic Integration Efforts in Africa', Paper presented at the International Seminar on the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and Lagos Plan of Action, N.I.S.E.R., University of Ibadan, December, 12 - 16.
- 'The Concept of Frontier in the Setting of State in Pre-Colonial Africa: *Presence Africaine* No. 127/128, 43 - 50.
- 1984: 'Towards an Ethnohistory of African State Boundaries' in *The Methodology of Contemporary African History*, UNESCO, Paris, 91 - 110.



'Problems—Solving Along Borders: The African Experience with particular reference to the Nigeria-Benin Case Since 1889', Paper presented at the International Symposium on Problem-Solving Along Borders: Comparative Perspectives, C.I.A.B.S. — UTEP March 21.

'The Area Study Approach to the Study of Nigerian Boundaries: A Research Proposal' Paper presented at the Annual Congress of the Historical Society of Nigeria, University of Sokoto, Sokoto, March 20 — 21.

"The Human Face of Borders: African and European Experiences Compared", Paper presented at the Symposium on the U.S. — Mexico Border and the Mexican American Experience in Comparative Perspective Joint School of Comparative American Studies, University of Warwick, Coventry, May 5 — 6.

'Local Government in Border Regions: The Special Functional Requirements of Nigeria's 'Gateway' States', Memo. to the Local Government Review Commission, Federal Republic of Nigeria, 29 June — Also accepted in a revised version for inclusion in Ladipo Adamolekun (ed.), *Local Government in West Africa* (University of Lagos Press forthcoming).

1985: *Partitioned Africans: Ethnic Relations Across Africa's International Boundaries, 1884 — 1984*. London, C. Hurst & Co. (Book already produced).

Asiwaju, P.O. 1984: "College Gaskiya, Porto Novo: A National School in a Non-National Environment" (B.A. Education Essay) University of Lagos.

Ayo, S.M. 1982: "L'Administration Locale et le Developement Rural en Republique du Benin de 1960 a 1981", These de Doctorat de 3eme Cycle, Bordeaux, October.

Biersteker, T.J. 1978 "The Limits of State Power in the Contemporary World Economy" in Peter G. Brown and Henry Shue (eds) *Boundaries, National Autonomy and its Limits*, Rowman and Littlefield, New Jersey.

Boggs, S.W. 1940: *International Boundaries: A Study of Boundary Functions and Problems*, Columbia University Press.

Brownlie, I. 1979: *African Boundaries: A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopaedia*, London: C. Hurst & Co.

Cham—Langhee, B. 1976: 'The Kamerun Plebiscites, 1959 — 1961: Perception and Strategies' (Ph.D. Thesis, British Columbia).

Collins, J.D. 1976: 'Clandestine Movement of Groundnut Across the Niger—Nigeria Boundary', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, x, 2, 259 — 276.

Crowe, S. E. 1942: *The Berlin West African Conference 1884/1885* London, 1942.

Davidson, B. 1959: *Old Africa Rediscovered*.

Eguntola, J. 1984: "Ifonyin—Ile and Ifonyintedo: A Case History of Yoruba 'Twin Towns' on the Nigeria-Benin Border", (B.A. Essay, Unilag).

Fanso, V. G. 1983: "Trans-Frontier Relations and Resistance to Cameroon-Nigeria Colonial Boundaries, 1916—1945" Doctorat d'etat, Yaounde.

Hansen, N. 1981: *Border Economy: Regional Development in the South West*, University of Texas Press.

1982: "European Transboundary Co-operation and Its Relevance to the United States—Mexico Border", Seminar Paper.

Igue, J. 1976: "Un Aspect des Echanges Entre Le Dahomey et le Nigeria: Le Commerce du Cacao", *Bulletin de L'IFAN*, Dakar, T. 38, Series B, 636—669.

Konrad, V. A. (ed) *The Transfer of Culture on the Land Between Canada and United States* (The American Review of Canadian Studies, xii, 2, 1982).

Malchus, Viktor Von 1975: *The Co-operation of European Frontier Regions: State of the Question and Recent Developments*, Council of Europe Strasbourg.

Maadua, G.A. 1982: "The Impact of the Border on Daura", B.A. (Essay), Bayero University, Kano.

McEwen, A. C. 1971: *The International Boundaries of East Africa*, Oxford University Press.

Mills, R. L. 1973: "The Development of a Frontier Zone and Border Landscape Along the Dahomey — Nigeria Boundary", *The Journal of Tropical Geography* Vol. 36, 42 — 49.

Mondjannagni, A. 1963: "Quelques Aspects Historiques, Politiques, Economiques et Sociales de la Frontiere Dahomey—Nigeria", Etude Dahomeenes (Nouvelles Series), 17—58.

Phiri, S. H. 1980: "Some Aspects of Spatial Interaction and Reaction to Government Policies in Border Area: A Study in the Historical and Political Geography of Rural Development in the Zambia—Malawi and Zambia—Mozambique Frontier Zones (1870 — 1971)", Ph.D. Thesis, Liverpool (also contribution in Asiwaju, ed. *Partitioned Africans*).

Prescott, J.R.V. 1967: *The Geography of Frontiers and Boundaries* London. 1971: *The Evolution of Nigeria's International and Regional Boundaries*, Vancouver.

Quintin, J. M. 1973: *European Co-operation in Frontier Regions*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Sloa, J. W. and West, J.P. 1976: "Community Integration and Policies Among Elites in Two Border Cities: Los Does Laredos", *Journal of Inter-American Studies and World Affairs*, Vol. 18, 451—474.



1977: "The Role of Informal Policy Making in U.S. - Mexico Border Cities", *Social Science Quarterly* Vol. 58, No. 2, 270 - 282.

Smith, N.C. 1978: *The Affairs of Daura*, UCLA Press.

Stewart, M. 'The Borgawa of Nigeria and Benin: The Disruptive Effect of the Border on Traditional Political Relations & Economy', Manuscript for *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria*.

Strassoldo, R. 1970: *From Barrier To Junction: Towards a Sociological Theory of Borders* (Mimeo)

1973: *Frontier Regions: An Analytical Study* Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

1977: 'The Study of Boundaries: A Systems-Oriented Multi-Disciplinary, Bibliographical Essay', *The Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 2, No.3.

1979: 'Boundaries in Sociological Theory: A Re-Assessment', Paper at the International Seminar on Boundaries, Regions and International Integration, Gorizia, Italy, Dec. 6-8.

Stoddard, E.R. 1978: "Functional Alternatives to Bi-National Border Development Models: The Case of the U.S.- Mexico Region", Paper presented to the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, San Francisco, September.

1982: "Local and Regional Incongruities in Bi-National Diplomacy: Policy for the U.S. - Mexico Border", *Policy Perspectives Journal* (Rutgers University), Vol. 2, No. 1, 111 - 136.

Thom, D.J. "The Niger-Nigeria Borderlands: A Politico-Geographical Analysis of Boundary Influence Upon the Hausa", (Ph.D. Thesis, Michigan State University, 1970).

Usman, B.Y.B. 1981: *The Transformation of Katsina*, ABU, Zaria Press.

## APPENDIX I

### NIGERIA'S 'GATEWAY' STATES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

STATES SERIAL NO	NIGERIA'S STATES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER	LGA SERIAL NO.	LGA NAMES	RELEVANT FOREIGN JURISDICTIONS
1.	Benue	1.	Kwande	CAMEROON
2.	Borno	2.	Nguru	NIGER (Department of Zinder)
		3.	Geldam	NIGER/CHAD
		4.	Kukawa	CHAD
		5.	Monguno	CHAD/CAMEROON
		6.	Ngala	CAMEROON
		7.	Bama	
		8.	Gwoza	
3.	Cross River	9.	Obudu	CAMEROON
		10.	Ikom	
		11.	Akamkpa	
		12.	Odukpani	
4.	Gongola	13.	Michica	
		14.	Mubi	
		15.	Fufore	CAMEROON
		16.	Ganye	
		17.	Sardauna	
		18.	Wukari	
5.	Kaduna	19.	Kastina	
		20.	Meni	NIGER (Departments of Maradi and Zinder)
		21.	Daura	
6.	Kano	22.	Dambata	NIGER (Department of Zinder)
		23.	Gumel	
7.	Kwara	24.	Borgu	BENIN (Nikki District in Borgou Province)
8.	Lagos	25.	Badagry	BENIN (Porto Novo District in Oueme Province)
9.	Ogun	26.	Egbado North	BENIN (Ketu and Ipobe District; Itakete Sokete District—all in Oueme Province)
		27.	Egbado South	
10.	Oyo	28.	Kajola (oke Iho)	BENIN (Sabe District of Zou Province)
		29.	Ifedapo (Saki)	
11.	Sokoto	30.	Koko	BENIN (Malanville District of Borgou Province)
		31.	Argungu	
		32.	Bagudo	
		33.	Gwadabawa	NIGER (Departments of Dosso and Tahoua)
		34.	Shinkafa	
		35.	Kuara Namode	



## APPENDIX II

### FUNCTIONS OF LGAs OF 1976 – 1979 REFORMS

EXCLUSIVE (TO LGAs)	CONCURRENT (LGAs and STATE GOVERNMENTS)
a) markets and motor vehicle parks;	a) health centres, maternity centres, dispensaries and health clinics, ambulance services, leprosy clinics and preventive health services;
b) sanitary inspection, sewerage, refuse and nightsoil disposal;	(b) meat inspection and abattoirs;
c) control of vermin;	(c) nursery, primary and adult-education;
d) slaughter houses and slaughter slabs;	(d) information and public enlightenment;
e) public conveniences;	(e) provision of scholarships and bursaries;
(f) cemeteries and burial grounds;	(f) provision of public libraries and reading rooms;
g) registration of births; deaths and marriages other than marriages under the Marriages Act;	(g) agriculture and animal health extension services and veterinary clinics;
h) provision of community and recreation Centres;	(h) rural and semi-urban water supply;
i) parks, gardens and open spaces;	(i) fire services;
j) grazing grounds;	(j) provision of roads (other than trunk roads), their lighting and drainage;
k) fuel plantations;	(k) support for arts and culture;
l) licensing, supervision and regulation of bake houses, eating houses and laundries;	(l) control of pollution;
m) licensing and regulation of bicycles, hand carts and other types of vehicle (other than vehicles which are mechanically propelled) and canoes;	(m) control of beggars, or prostitution and repatriation of destitutes;
n) control or keeping of animals;	(n) provision of homes for destitutes the infirm and orphans;
o) control of hearings, advertisements use of loud-speakers in or near public places and drumming;	(o) provision of public utilities including road and water transport;
p) control of land held under customary tenure;	(p) public housing programmes;
q) naming of roads and streets and numbering of plots and buildings;	(q) regulation and control of buildings;

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| r) control and collection of revenue from private forest estates;                      | (r) town and country planning;            |
| s) collection of vehicle parking charges;  | (s) operation of commercial undertakings; |
| t) collection of community tax, property and other rates and other designated revenue. | (t) control of traffic and parking;       |
|  | (u) piped sewerage systems.               |

**Sources:** The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1979 (Government Printer, Lagos) – Fourth Schedule.

**Note:** Most of the functions of Local Government so assigned by the Constitution are impossible of satisfactory fulfilment in border regions without the co-operation of equivalent regional and local authorities on the other side of our borders with neighbouring countries.



3740  
L  
36  
L25  
184

# ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES

By

A. I. ASIWAJU

U. I. ARCHIVE



LAGOS UNIVERSITY PRESS - 1984  
INAUGURAL LECTURE SERIES

