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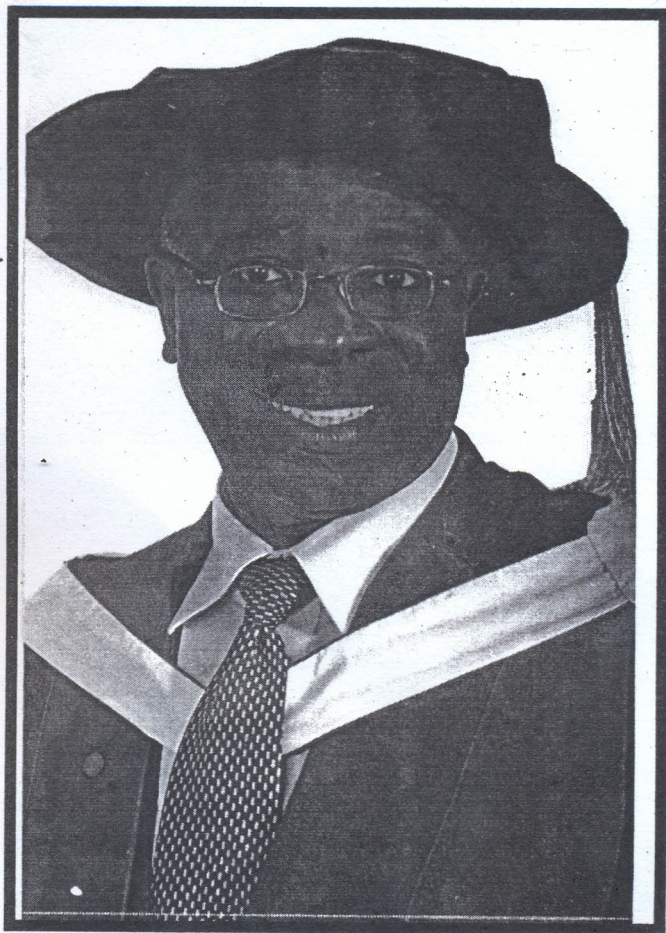
**NIGERIA, FRANCE AND THE
FRANCOPHONE STATES: THE JOY AND
ANGUISH OF A REGIONAL POWER**

By

Bamitale Omole
Professor of International Relations



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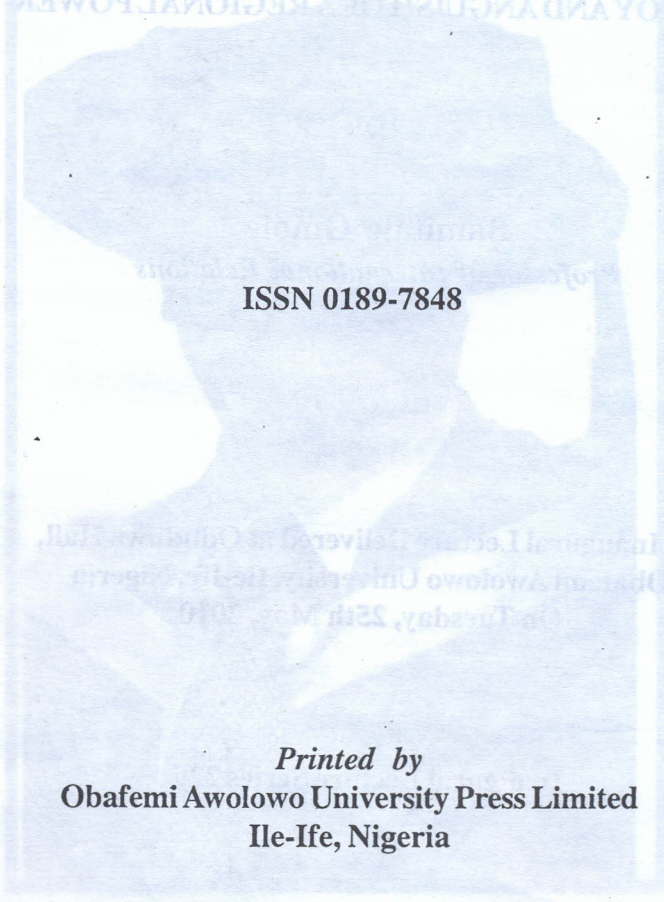
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“The Lord will mediate between the weak and the strong nations and will settle international disputes. They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer fight against nation, nor train for war anymore, and the weak shall say I am strong” ? Isaiah 24; Joel 310 (New Living Translation).

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it is with immense gratitude to God and a great privilege to stand before you today to deliver this 22nd Inaugural Lecture of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. This is the 4th from the Department of International Relations, since it was established as a Department about 35 years ago. The first Inaugural Lecture from the Department was on “Necessity and Freedom In Nigerian Foreign Policy” which was delivered in 1981 by my late teacher, mentor and the first Professor of International Relations in Black Africa, the late Professor Olajide Aluko who recruited me into the Department in 1983 while I was still doing my Ph.D at the University of Bordeaux, Bordeaux, France. Indeed of the 39 of us with a Masters degree who were short-listed all over the country in 1982 for the French government Ph.D Scholarship, only 2 of us were eventually selected and of these two, I was the only one that the late Professor Olajide Aluko agreed to write a final recommendation on for the scholarship. Also of these two, I was the only one that eventually completed my Ph.D in International Relations at the University of Bordeaux in France in 1986.

It is therefore, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, to this great man of uncommon intellect, uncanny erudition and an *avant garde* among his peers, that this inaugural lecture is dedicated.

INAUGURAL LECTURE: THE CONCEPT, THE PARADIGM AND ITS PURPOSE

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, knowing fully well that this august audience is both an academic and public audience, it is important I believe, that I dwell a little on the concept and purpose of an Inaugural Lecture in order to correct a lot of misconceptions about this important subject matter. If this is so, it follows *mutatis mutandis* that I should explicate and expatiate on the concept.

To some people, an inaugural lecture is perceived as an occasion of political nature, where the person that is giving the inaugural makes some highfalutin political remarks that have no relevance or anchored in his or her field of specialisation or of any fundamental or important social or political relevance.

Others like the former President Olusegun Obasanjo once opined that inaugural lectures are occasions for “winning and dining and a period of great social felicity” (Aluko, 1981). These reasons to my mind, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, are just a farrago of errors.

From where it originated, at the University of Oxford, England in 1623, when Digor Whear delivered his *Oratio Uaspicalis* in the *Schola Grammaticae*, inaugural lectures are for three main purposes and all are purely academic. The first is to afford the newly appointed Professor to talk about the “state of the discipline”. He may chart its progress, discuss its current health, its problems, may examine its intellectual characteristics, and justify its appearance in the academic curriculum. The second is to provide an opportunity for the Professor to present a piece of unpublished research upon which he has been working before his appointment or completed afterwards with his inaugural address in mind. It is in the nature of a public display of his credentials as a scholar vindicating his appointment before a cross section of the University. The third reason, is to afford the Professor an opportunity to make a public confession of the scheme of research which he proposes to follow while occupying the chair. It was with this in mind that the late iconic intellectual and political scientist of the first order, Billy J. Dudley, said that “inaugural had their origin in the demand

for a confessional". During the age of absolutism when education was for the rich and the privileged, the state not wanting to exalt a prospective heretic, regarded it as legitimate to demand of anyone about to be offered a Chair to profess what views he held of his discipline. In time of course, the confessional element gave way to critical, reflective outlook or reportage of some new advance in a discipline. Although, I am not a new Professor, having been promoted to the post some ten years ago, I waited till today before giving this inaugural lecture because I wanted to be convinced without any scintilla of doubt that in the area of my research, I have made some significant contributions to knowledge that is worthy of a public confession. After all, the great statesman and politician of redoubtable courage and intellect, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo, said in 1967 about Professors and their contributions to knowledge, that and I quote, "whether we are conscious of or acknowledge their roles in nation building or not, the fact remains stubborn and indestructible that Professors are the illuminating life of any society. As for me, and all right thinking men, they have answers to many challenges confronting our world today".

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I am not particularly sure that I have definitive answers to all the issues at hand, but I am sure that in my 27 years of research on Francophone-Anglophone politics and diplomacy, I have some conclusions that I think are worthy of public confession. My plan therefore is to situate this inaugural lecture in and between the three possibilities earlier discussed. Therefore, to interrogate this Inaugural Lecture, which is entitled "Nigeria, France and the Francophone States: The Joy and Anguish of a Regional Power", I propose to do three things. First, I will examine *grosso modo*, the concept of power not in the form of an abstraction, but in relation to and in the context of its nexus between Nigeria and the French-speaking states neighbours of West Africa of Benin Republic, Niger, Cameroon, Togo, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal and indeed, on one or two non-Francophone states of West Africa whose diplomatic foray impinge on the relationship between Nigeria and the Francophone states of West Africa. Secondly, Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I will like to examine Nigeria's claim as a regional power. Is the claim an illusion of grandeur or a Leviathan rhapsody? What really over the years

have been the joy and anguish of Nigeria in her diplomatic engagement and relations with the Francophone countries of West Africa? If truly Nigeria's action and inaction with the neighbouring states in the sub-region have rendered her diplomatically inconsequential, then what do we do with this Leviathan with clay legs?

Lastly, as a result of Nigeria's unending political morass, national discord, incipient indices of state failure, and general malfeasance in the sub-region, all of which have caused disillusionment on the side of the Francophone neighbours, the country has thus been subjected to open hostility, opprobrium and odium. It was this situation that made a leading politician in Benin Republic in 1989 to say, and I quote, "*Le Nigeria est notre voisin et notre aîné certes! Mais ce frère est trop coquine et très imprévisible. Il est préférable de cheminer sans lui, car c'est un enfant prodigue*". That is to say "Nigeria is our big neighbour and our big brother, but this brother is too rascally and unpredictable. It is better to carry on without him, because this one is a prodigal son". Given this unfolding scenario, I will therefore interrogate whether it is not time for Nigeria to purge herself from the illusion of grandeur as the "big brother" of the countries in the West African sub-region, as a result of the compelling but new and emerging resource and power change and configuration in the sub-region.

OF POWER, GOOD NEIGHBOURLINESS AND THE CONCEPT OF PROPINQUITY IN NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE FRANCOPHONE STATES

One of the most topical and indeed problematic issues in Nigeria's foreign relations with other countries in the global arena, has been her tumultuous, often times tenuous and permanently rancorous relations with the French-speaking states of West Africa. This is indeed understandable for some reasons. First, is the traditional and age long cultural rivalry between France and Britain that was transferred to their respective colonial holdings during the iniquitous partition of West Africa. Consequent upon this political and geographical aberration, Nigeria became located in the orbit of the English-speaking States while the Francophone States had

their lot with France. This linguistic schism and barrier have had consequences on their relations as it has engendered suspicion, mistrust, inclusiveness, and outright hostility between Nigeria and the Francophone states of West Africa. Secondly, Nigeria is more demographically preponderant than all the populations of the French speaking states of West Africa put together. For instance, while the population of Nigeria is about 154 million, Niger is 15 million, Chad 11 million, Republic of Benin 9 million, Cameroon 19 million, Togo 6 million, Côte d'Ivoire 21 million, and Senegal is 12.5 million, making a total of 93.5 million for the 7 countries (World Fact Book, 2010).

In the third instance, Nigeria is more naturally resource endowed than any of the French speaking countries. Nigeria has crude oil, bauxite, iron-ore, gold, tin, etc. The fourth reason is that Nigeria has a more formidable military strength in terms of number of men and military hardware than any of the Francophone states army. Fifthly, Nigeria's market for goods and products is bigger than all the markets of the Francophone states put together; and lastly which is the sixth reason, a Francophone political commentator in adducing a reason for the schism, mistrust and animated unbelief with which the Francophone States look at Nigeria said, "*Les Nigériens sont un peuple particulier si bien qu'en se demande la raison d'être de leur voisin du monde. La plupart sont bruyants avec un sens d'humour et la joie de vivre*" that is, "Nigerians are special people that you wonder all the time at their way of life. Most are boisterous, loud and they love to enjoy life". So in contextualising Nigeria's relations with France and the Francophone states, it is important to factor in these reasons, the sublime and the not too sublime, in any understanding of the perception of France and the Francophone states that posits that Nigeria throws about its power and weight for hegemonic purposes among her Francophone neighbours in the sub-region.

In talking about Power, G. Schwarzenberger in his book, *Power Politics* and Hans Morgenthau in *Politics Among Nations* say that Power is the capacity and capability to make others do your wish by threat or the use of sanctions in case of non-compliance and the capacity to offer reward in case of obedience. It is also the ability to resist such influence exerted

by other states upon it. So, a nation that barks regardless of its population and cannot back it up with action is treated with scorn and odium even by lesser powers. Power is at the centre of politics, whether at the national, regional, and international levels because politics is a means to attain power. This is why Thomas Hobbes LEVIATHAN underscores the nexus and inseparability of human life and power by stating that human beings engage in “a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death”. Indeed as a result of the allurements and addictive nature of power, it is therefore not surprising that Niccolo Machiavelli in his classic work *Prince* opined that power could be gained through a ruthless tactics with the abandonment of conventional morality.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor: Sir, regardless of whatever we may think about Niccolo Machiavelli's postulation, what is certain is that for a nation to say it is a regional power in comparison with its neighbours, that nation must possess the following, in good or very adequate proportion: population, quality of leadership, military capability, economic capability, resource endowment and good management of same, quality of diplomacy, quality of governance, industrial status, and quality and wellbeing of the population. From this, it is obvious that today, a nation cannot claim to be a regional power because it has a large but underfed population, runs a government reeking with corruption, larceny and impunity. A nation is not a regional power if it cannot appropriate its natural resources to generate constant electricity, portable water, educate her people, and guarantee the lives of its citizens. So it is obvious that it is only when a nation possesses the aforementioned elements quantitatively and qualitatively and deploy them to noble and positive uses that it can claim to be a power and could humourously say as Ajayi (2010) quoting Kolawole (2007) said, “power is powerful and is so sweet”.

On the issue of Nigeria's relations with her Francophone neighbours, it has been made clear from experience and the fact of immutable geographical location of states, that no regional power can fulfil its aspirations without addressing its problems in its neighbourhood. It follows *ipso facto* that no matter how frustrating, there is no alternative diplomacy available to an aspiring regional power other than a substantive and

constructive engagement of its neighbours (Adesola, 2008). Although good neighbourliness is somehow related to but is certainly much broader than the Good Neighbour Policy, which, beginning from 1933, became the new basis for United States-Latin American relations. Complementary to the Monroe Doctrine which treated the Western hemisphere as the exclusive preserve of the United States, the Good Neighbour policy embodied the idea that United States-Latin American relations should be conducted on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual cooperation (Nwokedi, 1985). It has to be said also that between Nigeria and the Francophone states, good neighbourliness is anchored primarily but not exclusively on the fact of territorial contiguity and more often than not, on socio-cultural similarities which transcend international boundaries. Having discussed the fundamental elements that over the years have underscored and underpinned Nigeria-Francophone relations in the West-African sub-region, I will now turn to discuss the specificities of my research endeavour, the state of it in the context of my contribution to Nigeria-Francophone *entente* and *mesentente* and in which direction I envisage to tilt my research agenda in the area of Anglophone-Francophone regionalism in the years ahead.

NIGERIA IN THE CONTEXT OF FRANCE AND FRANCOPHONE WEST AFRICAN RELATION: BETWEEN CONFRONTATION, CONVERGENCE, AND CREATIVE AMBIGUITY

The ubiquitous and total intrusiveness that over the years have marked France's relations with her Francophone States of West Africa since the colonial epoch have consistently posed a security threat to Nigeria's power aspiration in the West African sub-region. This situation has over the years led to a sort of regional rivalry and hostility between France and Nigeria, because France believes that the Francophone states of West Africa is a *domaine reserve* which other countries must steer clear (Omole, 2006). This attitude on the part of France has made her to be nicknamed "*le gendarme d'Afrique Francophone*" that is, the policeman of Francophone Africa. This strategic foreign policy option on the part of France to the Francophone states should not be surprising for some reasons. In the first instance since 1960, France has been virtually in

total control of the monetary policies of the states, especially in the area of money supply, issuance and circulation of the Francophone states currency CFA, her financial regulations, its banking activities, and its budgetary and economic policies. This control is done through the Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (BCEAO), i.e., Central Bank of West Africa for the Francophone States. Secondly, since independence, France's military presence and defence agreements with the French-speaking states of West Africa is unequalled by any other former colonial power. Britain does not have anything similar with its former colonies neither does Spain or Portugal. Indeed since 1960, France maintained 8 defence agreements and 24 military cooperation and technical assistance with her former African States. As at 2006, France still had a significant military presence with more than 9,000 troops deployed in states like Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Niger, and Benin, all in the guise of providing technical assistance which could mean anything! To this should also be added the fact that France not only maintains about 1,000 military advisers in the Presidency of many Francophone African states, it also has military bases in many of these states. In its very intrusive but well laid out strategic option for intervention in Africa, France in 1983 during the Presidency of the late French President, François Mitterand, established the Force d'Action Rapide (FAR) or Rapid Deployment Force made up of 5 units of about 47,000 men from the Air force, Navy and the Military that is capable of intervening rapidly at short notice almost anywhere in Africa from its bases in France. The FAR is composed of 4th Airmobile Division, 6th Light Tank Division, 11th Parachute Division, 9th Marine Infantry Division and the 27th Alpine Division and is made up of mainly real, well-trained, and tested professionals who can intervene in any Francophone African country with lethal precision and rapidity. So, often times when Nigeria has confrontation with Cameroon and it appears that the Nigerian government is slow or unsure of what to do in spite of the fact that public opinion in Nigeria wanted the government to declare extensive war on Cameroon, it is because the Federal government is aware that it will not only be engaging Cameroon in a military confrontation but also France, with whom Cameroon has a defence and military agreement. To validate this, between 1963 and 2007, the network of military and defence agreement between France,

Francophone West African States and some other French-speaking African States, has enabled France to intervene militarily and ruthlessly about 40 times in Africa, either to support incumbent but unpopular regimes that were faced with imminent overthrow by a popular coup d'état by the army, or popular uprising by the citizens, or to evacuate French nationals in periods of civil unrest, or simply to impose her will on regimes in Francophone Africa. It is therefore this extensive oftentimes intrusive and hegemonic relations that have made France to regard Francophone Africa as her traditional sphere of influence which is considered off limits to other foreign powers, whether friendly ones like the United States, England or Germany or those states which before the end of the Cold War were held in permanent suspicion like Libya or the former Soviet Union (Omole, 2007).

Mr. Vice Chancellor Sir, ladies and gentlemen, if France's relations with the Francophone states of West Africa have been very cordial, close and animated, although asymmetrical, for the reasons stated above, the reverse has been the case with Nigeria. Traditionally, bilateral relations between France and Nigeria have always oscillated between benign neglect, unfeigned concern, and latent hostility. This was the situation until the period after the end of the Nigerian Civil War in 1970. Diplomatic relations between the two have never been as cordial as in the nature of the relations between France and Senegal, or the United States and Britain for example. In my work titled "Bilateral Relations Between Senegal and Nigeria Cooperation and Conflict: 1960-1980" (Omole, 1987), which was published in the international journal *Geneve-Afrique* in Switzerland, and which is regarded as one of the authoritative sources on Franco-African relations, I argued in the paper as follows.

First, the inheritance after independence of the hegemonic rivalry between France and Britain naturally translated into a relation that was characterized by confrontation, contestation and mutual hostility between Nigeria and France immediately after Nigeria's independence. For example, on January 5, 1961, just three months after her independence, Nigeria became the only African nation that broke diplomatic relations with France

over France's explosion of three atomic bombs in Reggan-Algeria in the Sahara desert (Omole, 1996). The Nigerian government's reaction was to first close down the French Embassy in Lagos and eventually expelled the then French Ambassador, Mr. Raymond Offroy and other 9 French diplomats from Nigeria. In fact, the Nigerian government gave them 48 hour ultimatum to pack and move out of Nigeria. Additionally, French aircrafts and ships were denied landing and berthing rights from all Nigeria air fields and seaports and Air France officials also had to hurriedly leave the country.

It must be said however that because the foundation and hallmark of diplomacy is anchored on *quid pro quo*, the then French President, late General Charles de Gaulle, waited for a good opportunity to have his revenge and hit back at Nigeria, a country that he feigned not to locate on a world map! The opportunity came first in 1966 when France successfully blocked Nigeria's application for admission as an associate Member during initial negotiations into the then European Economic Community (EEC), now European Union (EU). The open hostility and era of belligerence and confrontation between first Nigeria and France, and some of the Francophone States, came to a peak at the outbreak of the Nigerian Civil War in 1967 when the then French government under the late President Charles de Gaulle, not only supported, but adopted an openly pro-Biafran policy, and also canvassed for Biafran support and encouraged other Francophone States of West Africa like Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, Benin, Gabon, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Togo, to openly declare support for the secessionist Biafran regime. It should be said that the French government attitude that canvassed international support for Biafra was a payback for the humiliation inflicted upon France by Nigeria and secondly, it was a calculated geo-strategic policy by France that aimed at dismembering and partitioning Nigeria into smaller units as it was believed by the French government and its foreign policy makers at *Quai d'Ossaiy* (French Ministry of Foreign Affairs), that a united and oversized Nigeria constituted a threat to other neighbouring Francophone neighbours in the sub-region because of Nigeria's large population and enormous wealth (Martin, 1995). Given the dynamism that usually underscores interstate

relations, diplomatic relations was eventually re-established between the two countries early in 1966. In spite of France's hostile and diplomatic *faux pas* towards Nigeria during the Civil War, by 1971 which coincided with the advent of the oil boom and general economic prosperity in Nigeria, France because of her own larger economic interests not only suddenly forgot her humiliation, but was now able to locate Nigeria on the world map as she became a major player in the new economic boom in Nigeria! The sheer number of French companies like the Tyre manufacturers Michelin, car makers like Peugeot Societe Anonyme (PSA) of which the subsidiary in Nigeria is Peugeot Automobile of Nigeria (PAN), which came into existence in December 1972, Société Commerciale de L'Ouest Africaine (SCOA), Compagnie Francaise de l'Afrique Occidentale (CFAO), United Bank for Africa (UBA) which is the Nigerian branch of Banque Nationale de Paris, Credite Lyonnais Nigeria Ltd., all in the banking sector; Elf Aquitaine, Dumez and Fougerolle were all getting government contracts and doing profitably well in the Nigerian economy.

Given the fact that many French companies were making enormous profits from various contracts from the Nigerian government, the expectation was that her politics with the Nigerian government would be correct and cordial. This however was not the case. For instance, when in 1971, the French government got wind of the fact that Nigeria and Togo were planning to form the nucleus of an economic union now called Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), comprising both the English and French-speaking States in the sub-region, instead of supporting this initiative, the French government secretly goaded in bad faith, Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire to immediately start the establishment of a purely French speaking economic union called Communauté Economique d'Afrique de L'Ouest (CEAO), which is seen as a rival to the Nigerian ECOWAS. It has to be said that up till today, ECOWAS has not been able to make appreciable progress on major issues, given the long years of its establishment as a result of the existence of the French CEAO which has been very dysfunctional to the growth of ECOWAS. The CEAO French-speaking States most often take bloc decisions against the

Anglophone States in ECOWAS, and most of the problems that ECOMOG encountered in its formation and peacekeeping operations were as a result of the reluctance of the Francophone States with the quiet support of France to subordinate their different commands to an overall Nigerian authority and their failure to pay their voluntary contribution to the upkeep of ECOMOG (Fawole, 2004).

Although today, Nigeria relations with France could be described as correct if not effusively cordial, the shadow of France in the overall diplomatic, economic, and political affairs of these French-speaking neighbours of Nigeria has continued to hang like a sword of Damocles and has invariably cast a pall of shadow and unease in Nigeria's relations with her Francophone neighbours.

NIGERIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURING FRANCOPHONE STATES: OF BROKEN MYTH, MUTED JOY AND UNENDING ANGUISH

Until the outbreak of the Civil War when the former President of Benin Republic, Dr. Emile Zinsou, allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross and some other relief agencies to use Cotonou for the airlift of relief supplies to the secessionists, which led to the breaking of the Federal blockade against Biafra, the common wisdom was to regard Nigeria as being surrounded by friendly neighbours. This was for some reasons. First is the ethno-linguistic factor, that translates into the sharing by Nigeria of a lot of affinities with the population on her four borders. Second, is Nigeria's population that is bigger than all the neighbours combined. The psychological effects of this had never been in doubt. Indeed, it has always made Nigeria's neighbours to defer to her on many sub-regional issues. Third, is the economic and financial position of Nigeria, which is more preponderant than those of her neighbours, and the military factor, which obviously places Nigeria at a superior level vis-à-vis any of her neighbouring armies in terms of military hardware, number of soldiers in uniform, etc.

However, given the de-stabilising roles that Benin Republic played against Nigeria during the Civil War, Nigeria has since woken up from her illusions and has come to perceive relations with her neighbours from the perspective of *real politik* which has made the relationship to be determined by permanent interests, and no more on some mythical brotherly relations. It was this new thinking in Nigeria foreign policy circles that in 1984, the former Nigeria External Affairs Minister, Professor Gambari, lamented that "it would appear that for too long, we may have over estimated the love between Nigeria and her neighbours" (Gambari, 1984).

Relations between Nigeria and Benin Republic, with the exception of the tenure of office of former President Emile Zinsou during the Civil War, has always been cordial. This is because the Yoruba populations on both sides of the border have always shared many things in common like language, custom and trans-border smuggling or parallel trade, called "Fayawo," in both Benin Republic and Nigeria's borders. Indeed at different times in their history, some political parties in Benin and Nigeria have at different times called for the merger of their country with Nigeria. This was the case when the Action Group in Yoruba land, in 1960, called for a merger with the Yorubas in Benin Republic, and when in March 1970, Mr. N. Apithy, Beninois President from 1965 to 1966, called for a merger with Nigeria in a federal type of political union during an election campaign. Thus, as a result of positive historical antecedent, and the seemingly innocuous posture of Benin in her relations with Nigeria, political authorities in the latter country have always taken relations with Benin for granted.

However, the diabolical and destabilising act of Benin Republic against Nigeria, in allowing Cotonou to be used as airlift point for the sending of supposed relief materials to the rebels during the Civil War, was to make policy makers and military strategists in Nigeria to include Benin Republic, along with Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, on "the triangle of survival", in which policy makers believe more attention should be concentrated (Akinrinade, 1988). Benin Republic's attitude during the war showed the strategic importance of contiguous neighbours as they could pose and cause incalculable security damage to Nigeria. Indeed, if

Benin authorities had continued to allow Cotonou to be used as airport where materials and *materiels* were transported to the Biafran enclave and if Cameroon, Chad and Niger were to have followed Benin, and not Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire as it turned out, the Biafrans would have triumphed during the war.

However, it should be emphasised that since 1970, relations between Nigeria and Benin had returned to normal, except for brief periods in 1983 and 1985, when Nigeria expelled illegal aliens of which Beninois nationals formed a major percentage. At a more official level, governments in the two countries since 1979 have been collaborating. For example, the Nigerian government floated a Cement company at Onigholo in Benin Republic. Again in 1976, a cooperation agreement between the two countries saw to the construction of the 44-kilometre Expressway linking Cotonou and Lagos through Badagry. The cost of this construction was also borne by the Nigerian government. The two countries also have a defence, air and sea services agreement, which was signed in 1978 which provided for the training of Beninois military personnel in Nigeria. Also in April 1989, authorities in Benin and Nigeria joined hands together and established ECOBANK with the headquarters in Benin Republic. When in March 1989 the government of Benin became beleaguered as a result of a generalised workers' strike that paralysed the country due to the failure of the Benin Republic authorities to pay workers' salaries for months, it was the Nigerian government that bailed it out by not only paying the workers' salaries, she also donated 12,000 tonnes of petroleum products to the Beninois government as assistance. All of these, the government of Nigeria did with joy because she sees herself as a big brother to the smaller neighbouring countries.

Although Nigeria still monitors with deep interest events in Benin for security reasons, the country cannot today be regarded as anti-Nigeria. For example, despite its defence pact with France, the Beninois government under former Presidents Kerekou, Soglo and Boni Yayi over the years, have de-emphasised the import of the defence pact, probably in deference to sensibilities in Nigeria. Although in recent times, Benin Republic has not

caused major security concerns for the Nigerian authorities, it has however caused a lot of diplomatic security and policy anguish for the Nigerian government as a result of the incessant and fatal banditry, snatching of cars, armed robbery cases and thriving cases of trafficking in women and children across the border by Beninois citizens across the border to Nigeria. In August 2003 for example, it was reported for instance that Beninois and security agents of the Republic of Benin at Seme Border prevented a Nigerian high ranking Security Official, Mr. Sunday Bada led Nigeria-Benin Anti-Crime Joint Border patrol from arresting suspected armed robbers of Benin origin in the area because, according to the Benin security agents, the portion of the borderland where the robbers were, which is an area situated between the ECOWAS building that serves as office accommodation for the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), Seme Command, and the Nigeria-Benin anti-crime joint border patrol, are occupied by citizens of both countries (Asia Africa Intelligence Wire, 2003). The Nigerian official had to warn the Beninois counterpart of dire consequences and barely a week after, the Federal government of Nigeria announced the closure of all borders linking it with Republic of Benin. In spite of all these policy anguish and diplomatic hiatus, Benin Republic it should be emphasised, is the Francophone neighbour that poses the least threat to Nigeria's stability and security and her successive Presidents Soglo and Yayi Boni have always prioritised the maintenance of good relations with Nigeria.

Of all Francophone neighbours, Nigeria's relations with Cameroon have been the most difficult, tortuous, and conflictual. This arises partly out of the difficulties in manning the about 1030 kilometers border that separates them, and also as a result of the dual claim of both countries on some disputed towns and villages along the borders of the two countries, most especially, certain oil-rich areas in the Rio del Rey region, where 90% of Cameroon's oil depot is located.

Unlike Côte d'Ivoire or Senegal, Cameroon cannot be described as a major French enclave, despite Cameroon's defence pact with France. Indeed, the former President, Ahmadu Ahidjo, in his 24 years rule, tried

to ease Cameroon gradually out of the French influence and in his later years, he re-enforced the bilingual nature of Cameroon and opened the country to Chinese, German, USA and Brazilian influence. In fact, it has been suggested that it was because the French authorities considered the move strategically dangerous and inimical to their own strategic interests that they plotted the overthrow of President Ahidjo in 1982 on health grounds by bringing him to France and ensuring that he never returned to Yaoundé alive! It was no coincidence that the man that succeeded him, President Paul Biya not only reversed many of his predecessor's bi-lingual policies, he also tilted Cameroon into the French orbit.

Over the years, Nigeria's relations with Cameroon have always been uneasy, difficult and tense because the latter sees Nigeria as a threat. Hence, Yaoundé is always wary of entering into any multilateral sub-regional agreement where Nigeria is present (Ede, 1986). However, there are a few cooperation agreements between the two nations, especially on removal of visa, customs, extradition, and scientific cooperation. In spite of these agreements, Cameroon has been the most belligerent and hostile to Nigeria among the Francophone neighbours as it has engaged frequently in very hostile policies towards Nigeria. For instance, in spite of pleas from Nigeria, the Cameroonian authorities went ahead and constructed the Lagdo Dam on the up-stream of River Benue which caused serious havoc to fishing, livestock and agricultural activities in Gongola State. And in 1981, in a border incident, Cameroon not only took over a few Nigerian villages, but also killed five members of Nigerian naval patrol team. Nigerian public opinion was in favour of a war against Cameroon and the Federal Government would have indeed gone to war if not for the fact that the French started airlifting various military supplies like a naval vessel called "Bakassi" (named after the zone in dispute), which was said to be equipped with all the latest war technology, including exotic missiles nicknamed "Kiss and Die" and of which France was ready to deploy to help Cameroon. Again in May 1987, Cameroonian gendarmes not only invaded sixteen Nigerian villages near Lake Chad and replaced the Nigerian flag with that of Cameroon. More explosive and combusive however was the face-off between Nigeria and Cameroon on the Bakassi Peninsula in 1994 when

Cameroon dragged Nigeria to the World Court over the ownership of the oil-rich Peninsula. The Court in its ruling on October 10, 2002 awarded ownership of the Bakassi Peninsula to Cameroon. Predictably, the verdict was rejected by the Federal Government who promised to defend Nigeria's territorial integrity and the rights of the Nigerians in the disputed area. The government even went as far as saying that "on no account will Nigeria abandon her people and their interests" and that "it is not a matter of oil or natural resources on land or on coastal waters, it is a matter of the welfare and well being of her people on their land" (Fawole, 2004). Presently, there are no urgent security issues between Nigeria and Cameroon, but she is a neighbour that Nigeria cannot afford to go to sleep with her two eyes closed.

The relationship between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger has traditionally been cordial, close and friendly. This was squarely demonstrated during the Nigerian Civil War as Niger gave total and unequivocal support to the Nigerian government. Two major reasons are responsible for this. First, is the ethno-cultural factor and second is the commercial activities that go on unofficially among the population at the border towns and the official transactions between the two governments. There is just a thin line that separates the Hausas of Southern Niger from their kith and kin in Sokoto, Kano, and Kaduna States of Northern Nigeria. As a result of this, populations on both sides of the border intermingle and trade together and disregard any artificial international boundaries, as the sitting room of a house in Niger could be in what is regarded as a Nigerian territory, while the bedroom of the same house could be located in the portion that is regarded as belonging to Niger Republic, as we have among the surrounding villages on the Benin-Nigerian border. Indeed, it is also speculated that some top Nigerian armed forces officers are from Niger, as there are also some high-ranking Nigerien nationals in Nigerian armed forces. Given the fluidity of the institutions in Nigeria, this is very possible (Omole, 1998). It has to be emphasised that of all the Francophone neighbours of Nigeria, it was only the late President of Niger, Ahmadu Diori and the late President of Burkina Faso, President Sangoule Lamizana, that consistently condemned at all of the Francophone meetings of Conseil

de L'Entent, the support given by France and the President of Côte d'Ivoire, the late President Houphouët Boigny, to the Biafran during the Nigerian Civil War (Bach, 1993). The then President of Niger, Ahmadu Diori, even said that given how extensive Niger depends on Nigeria for her economic survival, he could not support Biafra, because according to him, "Quand le Nigeria etermue, le Niger fait plus qu'attraper la grippe, il se trouve déjà à l'hôpital". That is, when Nigeria sneezes, Niger not only catches cold, it is already on admission in the hospital.

In order to improve relations, the two countries have over the years signed various cooperation agreements and Nigeria has joy fully as a big brother, implemented and assisted Niger out of troubling and challenging circumstances. For instance in 1972, a pact was signed which allowed Nigeria to supply about 30,000 kilowatts of electricity annually to Niger from Nigeria's Kanji Dam, this is despite the fact that Nigeria has not been able to satisfy her own local needs of electricity supply! Again in 1974, Nigeria donated to Niger relief materials worth millions of Naira when the country was ravaged by a serious drought. This should be added to the educational accord between the two countries where many students of Niger origin are students in many Nigerian universities like Obafemi Awolowo University and Polytechnics, pursuing different undergraduate and graduate degrees. In spite of all these assistance that Nigeria gave to Niger with joy, Niger has on some occasions carried out some aggressive and hostile policies towards Nigeria that has caused the latter a lot of anguish. For example, in 1977, Niger like Cameroon, constructed through French assistance, two dams on River Lamido and Maggiya, on Lake Kalmalo. As a result of these constructions, irrigation projects along River Kamano in Sokoto State were disrupted and this has often led to food shortages and famine in this area. In solidarity with other Francophone countries, Niger has always in the Niger River Commission, opposed Nigeria on many issues, and on some occasions in both United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU), Niger put forward her own candidates for vacant important international posts in areas where Nigeria herself showed interest and in spite of Nigeria's supplication. The major diplomatic nightmare that Nigeria has with Niger is the incessant political instability in

the latter, which has made any diplomatic policy formulation on Niger unprofitable. From 1960 when it became independent to 1991, Niger has experienced single party and military rule until when General Ali Saibou was forced in 1993 to allow multi-party elections and the ushering in of a democratic government. Political infighting brought the government down in 1996 by a coup d'état staged by Colonel Ibrahim Baré Mainassara and by 1999, Mainassara was himself killed in a coup by young army officers. Consequently, Mamadou Tandja became President of the country until February 2010 when he himself was deposed by yet another military putsch. The inability of the Nigerian government to formulate any enduring policy towards Niger has led to a policy of suspended diplomatic animation which hopes that the worst will not happen in Niger that can turn into a refugee nightmare for the Nigerian authorities.

As a result of the unending internal wars in Chad, the country has over the years, become a source of security concern to authorities in Nigeria; so political relations with Chad are difficult. This is because the two share common borders and thousands of refugees of war always spill over the borders into Nigeria; and this evidently constitute material and security problems to the authorities in Nigeria. It is therefore to prevent this that partly explains why in March and April 1979, during the Kano I – II Peace Talks, Nigeria mediated directly in the war in Chad. To this should be added the fact that Nigeria wanted to prevent the externalization of the conflicts, as France and Libya participated on both sides of the war. This explained why Nigeria also, through the auspices of the OAU, sent a peacekeeping contingent to Chad in 1979.

It appears Nigeria major diplomatic motive in Chad is the search for peace and stability in Nigeria. This was even more urgent when it was discovered in the religious riots of 1984, that many of the religion extremists who waged battles with Nigerian security forces were from Chad. Indeed, when the Nigeria government opened on March 1, 1986 her land borders, which she had closed since April 1984, the one with Chad was not reopened for security reasons. The main problem with Chad is that it is a nation in a permanent state of political turmoil, unrest, and uncertainty. The internal crisis in Chad translates usually to border problems with Nigeria

and as such, relations with Chad is not close, but constantly under watch and close monitoring.

Nigeria's relations with Equatorial Guinea have not always been cordial. Although a former tiny Spanish Island off the Bright of Benin, which Nigeria could overrun (without external military support to Equatorial Guinea) in a matter of hours, the country has constituted, over the years, a major threat and thorn in Nigeria's security concerns.

It should be remembered that during the Nigerian Civil War, Equatorial Guinea's government not only supported the Biafrans, Sao Tome, one of the country's Islands, was used as a staging post by gun running aircrafts that supplied arms and ammunition to Biafra. However, Equatorial Guinea is a threat to Nigeria's security in three major areas. One is the incessant maltreatment, expulsion and killing of Nigerian workers in cocoa plantations in Equatorial Guinea. Second source of threat is the recent entry of Equatorial Guinea into the French orbit, an event that has now completed the encirclement of Nigeria on all sides by French-speaking countries. In 1985, Equatorial Guinea formally adopted the CFA as her official currency and became a member of the UDEAC. The security threat posed by Equatorial Guinea is that, in the case of an eventual showdown between Nigeria and France, it is evident that France would count on airport facilities not only in Gabon, but now in Malabo.

The most serious of the threats posed to Nigeria's security with all the untoward consequences for Nigeria, was Malabo's flirtation with South Africa during the apartheid era which was against a major pillar of Nigeria's foreign policy in Africa. She not only received financial assistance and aid running into millions of dollars from South Africa, Malabo also gave South Africa military unlimited access to her airfields.

This development constituted a concern to the federal authorities in Lagos, especially as a result of Nigeria's enmity with the then apartheid South Africa. This has implications for foreign policy formulation in Nigeria. One, South Africa, which is the most militarily powerful country in Africa, can as a result of her foothold in Malabo and her superior airforce capacity, cause havoc to important security establishments in Nigeria, like oil

installations in Calabar, Port Harcourt, etc., which are within striking and jamming distance from Malabo. This indeed was the strategic reason why South Africa made an inroad into Equatorial Guinea, as Nigeria was regarded and acted as a Frontline State at this period. During the struggle to economically emasculate the then apartheid regime in South Africa as a result of her obnoxious policy, it was Malabo that was used as a decoy to buy Nigerian crude oil for onward shipment to South Africa. Since 1989 however, the Nigerian government embarked upon the use of economic diplomacy by granting economic and financial assistance to Equatorial Guinea. Both Nigeria and Equatorial Guinea governments have also entered into a security cooperation agreement which in 2007, ensured that the President of Equatorial Guinea was restored back into office within a few days after his being ousted by a coup d'état by dissident forces in Malabo, by the threat of military intervention from the Obasanjo's regime.

Presently, relations with Equatorial Guinea are cordial and many Nigerian companies are very active in the tourism, telecoms, construction, oil and gas industries. A good example of this since 2008 are the activities of the international businessman, Mr. Jimoh Ibrahim, whose oil and gas company is a major player in the prospecting for crude oil in Equatorial Guinea.

Having attempted to shift the myth from the realities in Nigeria's relations with her Francophone neighbours, I will now turn to address the issue of whether it is not time for Nigeria, the big Leviathan in the region, to wake up from her illusion and re-align her foreign policy with the Francophone States with the present realities given often times the ingratitude and hostilities of these countries towards her.

THE LEVIATHAN ILLUSION: UNBUNDLING NIGERIA FROM ITS ILLUSION OF GRANDEUR IN ITS RELATIONS WITH THE FRANCOPHONE STATES OF WEST AFRICA

A fundamental problem with Nigeria's foreign policy making towards her Francophone neighbours, is the penchant of Nigeria's foreign policy makers to revel in the past grandeur of illusion, despite changing economic and

political indices to the contrary. First, all the Francophone neighbours do not appreciate Nigeria's brotherly assistance towards them and Nigeria's foreign policy makers should not be deceived by the platitude of gratitudes verbalisation to the contrary by these countries. After all, one would have thought that the assistance rendered to Niger by the Nigerian government would make her to be sympathetic to Nigeria's positions at the United Nations and African Union. The politics of solidarisation by the CEAO countries against Nigeria in ECOWAS does not only diminish Nigeria, it has also impeded the rapid growth of ECOWAS in fulfilling its mandate. When ECOMOG was to be formed, some Francophone member states like Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Mali were not only very reluctant in being part of it by refusing to join and when they eventually and reluctantly did, they exploited Nigeria's perceived hegemony to serve their self-serving interests by supporting the rebels in the Liberian crisis. This disunity between the Anglophone and Francophone states demonstrates the extent to which the linguistic dichotomy in West Africa has divided the sub-region, a dichotomy that has led to internal and external constraints that hinder cooperation among ECOWAS members in an age when regionalisation is seen as a rapid way to economic growth and development in other parts of the world.

The time has come for Nigerian leaders to stop deceiving themselves about their relations with the Francophone States. In 2000, President Abdullahi Wade of Senegal stated that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) without Nigeria was preferable and this view is secretly and openly shared by many Francophone elites. The recent unfortunate handling of the ill health of the late President Musa Yar'adua has again re-opened the debate about whether West Africa would, indeed, not be better off without Nigeria. The annual summit of the Authority of ECOWAS could not hold in 2009 and had to be postponed twice in 2010 because of the terminal illness of the late President Musa Yar'adua. Until it was resolved by death, Nigeria's constitutional crisis was like a dark cloud that overshadowed recent gains in democracy, regional economic recovery, security, and it really made Nigeria a laughing stock and an effete, especially in the comity of nations.

In the past, the Francophone West African Monetary Union called the Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest-Africaine (UEMOA) the CFA Franc zone states reluctantly lived with the dilemma of whether to abandon ECOWAS or to stay for the attraction of a close formal and informal economic cooperation with Nigeria. With about 154 million inhabitants and its oil and military power, Nigeria is in theory, as strong as the other fifteen ECOWAS member countries put together. Nigeria could also count on Ghana, a fellow Anglophone partner, and the two economies accounted for 60 per cent of the sub-regional Gross Domestic Product, but Nigerian authorities are not harnessing these potentials in her relations with her neighbours. Again, the hostility of France to Nigeria has ebbed, as France's core strategic attention is now more to the European Union where she is a big player, and the former Eastern European countries. Nigeria has not also leverage on this new emerging opportunities and realities. Even Nigeria's Anglophone friend, Ghana, contemplated early in 2002 that she might join the CFA and abandon Nigeria in ECOWAS. It was the avuncular nature, the native but effective African diplomacy of President Obasanjo that stopped the move in 2003.

Granted that Nigeria-led military interventions ended the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, by 2000 however, its regional power had seriously eroded. Its "oil diplomacy" and "big brother" role of the 1970s now paled in significance to the "bad neighbourhood effect" Nigeria has on other States in West Africa. The stench of its massive corruption, political instability, and its often highly educated criminal and drug-trafficking networks inundating its neighbours, is even more noxious than the stench of death in the region wars. This was why seasoned observers were therefore not surprised by President Wade's comments in May 2000. The real terrifying nightmare for our neighbours on the road to prosperity and stability is Nigeria's tendency to predict disaster and head for the precipice, only to pull back more battered than ever. This was why on the eve of Nigeria's 2007 election, a perplexed Beninois Minister pleaded "Please, beg those Nigerians for all our sakes to stay cool and calm. We don't want a disaster that will damage us too". A politically and economically failed and corrupt nation cannot provide legitimate leadership at home or abroad.

The great irony of this Mr. Vice-Chancellor, is that Nigeria's confused and rapacious political elites are probably unaware of on-going shifts in regional alliances, power re-alignment, and new *entente* that could soon sideline Nigeria. When the United States President, Barack Obama, visited West Africa, it was to Ghana and Senegal that he headed and the Leviathan called Nigeria was sidelined and excluded. Today, what decides whether a country could be regarded as a regional power or be respected as a leader in its sub-region is now the rule of law, the quality of governance, security of life, respect of human rights and the quality of life of the citizens. It is no more population, the size of territory, oil, the rule of impunity, unbridled corruption, or illiberalities. After all, what is the population and size of Israel that has taken on every Arab country militarily since 1948? When President Obama was asked why he chose Ghana and Senegal, he retorted by saying, "Well, part of it is lifting up successful models, and so, by travelling to Ghana, we hope to highlight the effective governance that they have in place. I don't think that we can expect that every country is going to undergo these transitions in the same way, at the same time, but we have seen progress in democracy and transparency and rule of law, in the protection of property rights, in anti-corruption efforts...And I think there is a direct correlation between governance and prosperity. Countries that are governed well, that are stable, where the leadership recognises that they are accountable to the people, and that institutions are stronger than any one person, have a track record of producing results for the people, and we want to highlight that".

A major problem with Nigeria is that she has never seriously translated into great priority, her relationship with the Francophone states. For example, the recent near collapse of Nigeria's banking system due to regulatory failure and obscene corruption, has further dampened the enthusiasm for the West African Monetary Zone, which the Francophone countries reluctantly agreed to join in 2000. The 2004 debut of its currency, the ECO, has been shifted for the umpteenth time to 2014 majorly because of the perennial instability of Nigeria's financial economic policies and its opaque and oftentimes outrightly corrupt and savage macroeconomic policies. According to Afeikhena (2005) in a paper titled *Institutional Framework and Process of Trade Policy Making in Africa: The Case*

of Nigeria, he said "trade policy formulation and implementation in Nigeria, even though conditioned by the global context, is dominated by governmental and intergovernmental agencies whose responsibilities overlap and between which coordination is deficient. There is no identifiable source or structure of research and analytical support for trade policy making in Nigeria". This situation has not only exasperated our neighbouring French-speaking states, it has also made many Nigerian investors to move to these Francophone states as refugees from infrastructural collapse, suffocating and arbitrary company taxation, corruption and generalised insecurity in their homeland. Major companies like Dunlop, Michelin, Cadbury, and OVATION are all in Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, and Ghana. Indeed, it is for these economic dysfunction and political instability in Nigeria that the President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, said ECOWAS without Nigeria will be better off. It is also partly for these reasons that the Francophone West African Monetary Union, called Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine (UEMOA) the CFA Franc zone, are in a dilemma of whether to abandon ECOWAS for Nigeria and totally face squarely its Francophone homologue Communauté Economique d'Afrique de L'Ouest (CEAO) or have an informal economic cooperation with Nigeria.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the truth if it must be told, no matter how provocative and unpopular, is that a stable Nigeria may no longer be necessary for stability and economic rejuvenation in the sub-region. I am saying this for two main reasons. One, except for Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea, most of the region is more stable and more economically prosperous than Nigeria. For example, the per capital income in Nigeria as at 2009 was \$1,400; Benin \$1,500; Chad \$1,600; Cameroon \$2,300; Togo \$900; Côte d'Ivoire \$1,700; and Senegal \$1,600. So, apart from Niger, which is one of the poorest countries in the world ranking near last on the United Nations Development Fund index of human development, Nigeria is not better in terms of PCI than any of her neighbours. Secondly, one major resource that Nigeria flaunts about and that gives her the illusion of a big brother and regional power, is her oil. Unfortunately for her today, almost every West African country has now struck oil. Cameroon is an oil-

producing country; Ghana has struck oil; Côte d'Ivoire has struck oil; Togo has and Benin is frantically searching all the coastline from Badagry to Cotonou for oil in commercial quantity. In fact, last month April, 2010, a Beninois politician when told that Lagos State government has now found oil in commercial quantity around Badagry coastline axis, jubilated and said he was certain Benin Republic in the next few years will strike oil in commercial quantity because according to him, "the God of oil in Badagry is the God of oil in Cotonou". Not only this, Senegal is scheduled to commence oil-exporting in a few years and the Senegalese Oil Minister said in his recent visit to Nigeria in 2009 that it was the late President Yar'adua that gave all the assistance to Senegal to build their own refineries, which today are working in full capacity! As at today, Nigeria still imports refined oil, as most of her refineries are not working! Finally, most of these hitherto non-oil producing countries have more oil refining and energy-generating capabilities than Nigeria. So, why should Nigeria continue to revel in the illusion of being a regional power? Again, which regional conflict has Nigeria, in spite of her big brother claim, single-handedly resolved and left with an imprimatur of PAX NIGERIANA? None. If anything, the Liberian and Sierra-Leon conflicts, which Nigeria claims as a show case of successful regional military and material intervention, was not only conducted under the auspices of ECOMOG but at an unimaginable human and material cost to Nigeria. Up till today, the Nigerian government has not told the nation how many Nigerian soldiers were killed in the savage and gruesome adventure and how many millions of dollars were wasted. Indeed, in the on-going conflict in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria in its delusion of grandeur, attempted a one-nation mediation during the outbreak of the Côte d'Ivoire crisis. Nigeria offered 3 Alpha military jets to Cote d'Ivoire, but they were not only rejected by Laurent Gbagbo, the Côte d'Ivoire President, the jets also had to return back to Nigeria in shame. So, where lies the reason for this orchestrated and trenchant claim by Nigeria of being a regional power? Today in the sub-region, the Francophone states are more united, cohesive and result-oriented in the CEAO than Nigeria that claims to be their big brother. This is why in the sub-region presently, there is a quiet but powerful strategic, economic and diplomatic move to ignore Nigeria as a "big brother" but patronise her big market for all its

benefits. When in April 2010, Nigeria and Sierra Leone agreed to establish a joint economic commission, questions were being raised whether this is a nucleus of a new Anglophone economic arrangement in the sub-region and whether it is a realisation on the part of Nigeria that it is time for her to re-think her diplomatic strategy in West Africa. What is certain is that regardless of the motive that led Nigeria to this new envisaged arrangement with Sierra-Leone, it is clear that the time has come for her to have a paradigm shift and a new strategic calculation in her relations with neighbours in the sub-region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, knowing fully well that the platform offered by an Inaugural Lecture is a veritable opportunity to make recommendations in view of one's research, I will therefore make the following recommendations.

Firstly, the University should as a matter of urgency, establish a Centre for Francophone Studies. It will be the first in Nigeria and it will be a centre dedicated solely to the purpose of conducting research and collection of documentation purely on the neighbouring Francophone States. It would be a multidisciplinary centre housing sociologists, historians, geographers, international relations scholars, and economists, etc, who are interested in the dynamics of Francophone politics with a view to harnessing their findings to help the Nigerian government in developing and formulating appropriate diplomacy towards these countries. Whether ECOWAS collapses or not and whether Nigeria looks for new alliances or not, our neighbours are our neighbours, we cannot change this, therefore we must understand their politics, their nuances, their mores, their dynamism and their *leit motif* for every action. This centre I must emphasise, is not for the study of French language as we have in the Department of Modern European Languages, here at Obafemi Awolowo University or the French Village in Badagry. It will also be different from the activities of the Institute of French Research in Africa (IFRA) at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan owned by the French government and pursuing a purely French agenda on African issues.

Secondly, Nigeria Foreign policy makers towards the neighbouring Francophone states must from now realise that Nigeria is regarded as a big nuisance by her Francophone neighbours in the sub-region. As a result of this, Nigeria policy makers should start thinking of forming a new organisation with the English-speaking states in the sub-region, while still a member of ECOWAS. After all, the French-speaking states have their CEAO, why not Nigeria, the Gambia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Ghana, their own assemblage all in ECOWAS.

Thirdly, the study of French should be made compulsory for all secondary school students in Nigeria and compulsory for all students of International Relations in all Nigerian Universities. It is part of strategic advantage if you understand the language of your enemy in time of peace and in time of war. Nigeria is surrounded by Francophone states, who if not enemies, are at best just tolerating Nigeria because of the economic benefits they derive from her in the region. In these Francophone States, English is made compulsory in their secondary schools and it is this that explains why most Francophone speak some English. It is disheartening to note that Nigeria is probably the only country in the world where some Foreign Service officers are sent to their host countries whose language they don't have a working knowledge of. I have had on some occasions in my many visits to some Francophone states, turned myself into a bilingual translator for some of our Embassy Officials, who could not on important public occasions, speak or understand a word of French! We can only imagine the quality of representation and information gathering to the home mission from these Embassies.

Fourthly, the Nigerian government should stop appointing failed and uneducated politicians to Ambassadorial positions as compensation for their support and financial donation to the ruling party. A man that has failed at home, how could he be made the conscience of a nation abroad! In developed nations and serious African countries, it is only tested and seasoned technocrats, academics, and redoubtable politicians of stature and intellect that represent their countries abroad, not inconsequential political jejune of no value.

Fifty, the percentage of career foreign service officers that are appointed as Ambassadors should be 80% while 20% is reserved for the politicians. Diplomatic representation is a fine, exquisite and dainty profession that is traditionally meant for the cultured, the polished, the urbane and well groomed plenipotentiary.

Sixty, a state of Emergency should be declared in the management of the nation's foreign affairs, not only to the Francophone states, but to other sub-regions of the world. This is to re-appraise, re-strategize, re-structure, and revamp the whole Nigerian foreign policy framework. For instance in 2009, the Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, under the former Minister, Chief Ojo Madueke was alledged to have spent a whooping sum of N2.6 billion on international travels alone, with nothing to show for it, either within the sub-region or at the international arena. Presently, Nigeria is probably the only country with the exception of the very poor African and Caribbean nations, where landlords of houses rented by Nigeria foreign services officials are disgraced and threatened with eviction notices because of the failure of the Nigerian government to remit the necessary budgetary allocation to these foreign missions! So bad, parlous, and decrepit is the state of some of our foreign missions, that in 2009, the Nigerian House in New York, USA, which should be the window to the world, was declared unfit for human habitation and marked for demolition by the New York State Authority because of the state of disrepair and dilapidation!

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the three main functions of an academic are Teaching, Research and Service to the community. In the first area, I have taught and supervised many Masters and Ph.D thesis and projects of many generations of students, who today are Ambassadors, High Commissioners, and high-ranking foreign service officers at our foreign missions. Some of my products have also gone on in life to become Media Executives, Generals in the Army, Lecturers and Professors in different Universities, home and abroad. Some indeed today are at the commanding heights of the nation's Banking and Advertising industries. Some of them are here today.

My research exploits of which today's topic is a summation have constituted the main subject matter of this lecture. Over the years, I have co-authored a book and published many articles in renowned international and local journals, and I am still publishing. My research endeavour has won me international grants, scholarships and fellowships that have taken me virtually to all continents of the world, to Asia, to Europe, to the USA, to Russia, to many African nations, to India sub-continent, to the Pacific, and to South Korea among others. As a result of my research exploits on Francophone international politics, I was the only Nigerian in 2002 that served as a Political Consultant (Consultant Politologue) to La Commission Independante Sur L'Afrique et les Enjeux du 3eme Millenaire (United Nations Independent Commission on Africa and the Challenges of the Third Millennium), under the Chairmanship of the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan. This Commission I must say, had international figures like Professor Albert Tevoédje, former Minister of National Planning, Economic Reconstruction and Employment Promotion in Benin Republic, who was the General Rapporteur of the Independent Commission and Professor Wole Soyinka, Professor Ali Masuri, Professor Akin Mabogunje and the current Liberian President, Mrs. Ellen Sirleaf, as members among others. I have in the course of my research also won the Ford Foundation New York grants on Democratisation and the Media.

Presently, I am coordinating on the Nigerian end, a new partnership between Kings College London, Makerere University Uganda, and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, that envisages a new M.A. program in Security and Development, where selected scholars will train in the UK and Africa for 6 months each.

In the area of administration and service, I have served as Head of Department in addition to serving in various Committees at the Departmental, Faculty, and University levels. I have served as Dean, Faculty of Administration, and I have also served for two terms on the highest decision-making body of this University - the University Governing Council - with commendation from the University. I have indeed, in collaboration with a few other colleagues, wrote proposals that won for

the University, millions of Dollars worth of grants from the Carnegie Foundation and the World Bank Step B Project. Outside the University, I have served on many occasions as Chairman and member of National University Commission (NUC) Accreditation Programmes to some Nigerian Universities. As part of my academic services outside the University, I have had the privilege to be among the few Nigerian academics that have taught and trained many foreign service officers from different African countries at the Nigerian Foreign Service Academy. In 2009, I served as the Chairman of the Ondo State Government Visitation Panel to Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba Akoko. It is the report of this panel that is being used today as the road map and template in the endeavour to re-position the University for the 21st century.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, from the totality of my contributions in these designated functions of a teacher, researcher and service, I think I have paid my dues.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I am aware that by tradition, acknowledgement is not allowed in the Inaugural Lectures of this University. However, I am a scholar of International Relations and I am trained to know that in life, everything is dynamic, so I will not want Sir, to be a slave to tradition, because it will be immoral for me to claim all the credits for the modest contributions that I might have been able to make. Over the years, this wonderful and peerless place, Obafemi Awolowo University, has served as a platform for my academic expression and today it is with all sense of fulfilment in my career that I am thanking God that He brought me here to achieve my academic purpose in life and I know that He has not yet finished with me.

I have also been blessed with several students, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels who over the years, have been co-travellers in my journey so far, and whose classes have constituted the veritable laboratory where my theories and ideas on Francophone International Relations are combusted, contested, and refined. The love of my darling wife and the understanding of my children have been

invaluable. And to all my siblings and friends I am grateful. Above all, I owe everything to my Lord Jesus Christ who “Brought me out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay and set my feet upon the rock, and established my goings” (Psalm 40: 2). Unto Him alone be the glory and honour. Amen.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for your great attention.

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