



**Hausaland; A Nation in Nations: The
Hausanization of Nigeria-Niger Republic
Diplomatic Relations**

Social Sciences Research

Nnamdi Azikiwe
University, Awka Nigeria

Mohammed Dagozo Umate, PhD¹ & Aminu Idris, PhD²

¹Département d'Histoire, Université Abdou Moumouni de Niamey Niamey, Niger Republic.

Email: modzate2@gmail.com

²Department of Political Science, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences Federal University Gusau, Zamfara State Nigeria.

Email: idualameen@yahoo.com

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6442-2259>

Abstract

The borderlines separating Niger Republic and Nigeria were artificially delineated by the European colonialists during the Berlin conference of 1884-85. Before the invention of the border, the Hausas in present-day Nigeria and the Niger Republic shared the same territory, lineage, religion, among others. However, the invention of border divided a group that was hitherto a single nation into two nations. However, despite the division, Hausa language remained an important diplomatic instrument that shapes and reshapes the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and the Niger Republic. The *Hausanization* of the diplomatic relations between the two countries emanates from the pre-colonial political institutions, cultural affinities and the domination of Nigeria's political landscape by the Northern Nigerian political elites. Methodologically, this article relies on secondary and primary sources to collect data from diplomats, serving and retired military and para-military, civil servants among others. Thematic method using a descriptive coding system was adopted in the analysis of data generated from

the in-depth interview. This study argues that Niger's role during the Nigerian civil war, and the formation of the Nigeria Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) were parts of the manifestation and institutionalization of Hausa as a major diplomatic instrument that governs the relations between Niger Republic and Nigeria. The major finding of the article reveals that, while the Northern Nigerians and Nigeriens perceived the Nigeria-Niger border as mere artificial lines that have no relevance, the *Hausanization* of diplomatic relations between the two countries has deepen the division between the Northern and Southern Nigeria.

Keywords: *Decentralisation, diplomacy, Hausa, Hausa land, Hausanization*

Introduction

Before the invention of the Nigeria-Niger Republic border by the Western colonialists, present-day Nigeria and Niger were not just the same nation but derived their respective names from the River Niger that runs through their territories (Osimen, Anegbode, John, Akande, Clement, Oyewole & Oyindamola, 2017; Idris & Tutumlu, 2021). Historically, the Hausas in the Republic of Niger and Nigeria were carved out from the pre-colonial States of Central Sudan such as Kanem Bornu, Kasar Hausa, Zarmantaray, and Agadez (Okunade, 2017). The Kasar Hausa (Hausa land) which extends from the edge of Sahara to the highlands of Jos, in North-central Nigeria is the most important pre-colonial political institution in terms of landmass and population (Okunade, 2017). The pre-colonial political dominance of the Fulani Jihadists and the peaceful cohabitation between the Fulani and Hausa population, gave a mixture of the two ethnic groups into what is known today as Hausa/Fulani (Hoffmann & Melly, 2015). In the context of this article, the blend of Hausa/Fulani is referred to as Hausa.

The administration and the delineation of the colony of Nigeria after its amalgamation in 1914 gave the Northern part of the country a huge landmass as well as a population which becomes its political asset, especially under the democratic regimes. The cultural

affinity in areas such as language, religion, and occupational between the Hausas in Nigeria and the Niger Republic has further cemented their relationship despite the existence of an international boundary that divided the two nations. The Hausa population in both Nigeria and Niger perceived the international boundary as an artificial creation that is aimed at weakening their population, economy and strength. Hence, the feeling of *Hausaness* supersedes that of Nigerian or Nigerien nationalism (Sambo, Damaturu, Sule, Deribe & Ahmed, 2020).

The Biafra war, 1967-1970, affirmed the hegemony of the North over the rest of the Nigerian nation. Most of the Presidents and Heads of State were Hausas and veterans of the civil war. The participation of the Niger Republic in the Nigerian civil war alongside the Federal Government became a turning point in the Niger-Nigeria diplomatic relations. Immediately after the civil war, the Nigeria-Niger Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) was set up as a bilateral diplomatic institution to strengthened the relations between Niger and Nigeria. Ever since, the Hausa nationhood has become one of the most important diplomatic instruments that bind the two countries together (Nasiru, 2015).

Under the new diplomatic arrangement, Nigeria and the Republic of Niger pursue joint project in areas such as security, roads, railway, and electricity among others to improve the living standard of their citizens. However, most of the projects are financed by Nigerian government. For instance, in the year 2021, the Nigerian government awarded a contract of \$1.96 billion to the Russian construction firm to build a railway line from Kano-Nigeria to the Maradi-Niger Republic as part of measures to facilitate trans-border trade and relations between the two countries. On completion, the project is expected to ease trans-border trade between the two countries (Ayodeji, 2021). However, the *Hausanization* of the diplomatic relations between the two nation-states

generates disagreements and tension between the Northern and Southern Nigeria's political elites. The supposedly joint project undertaken by Nigeria is perceived by Southerners as misplacement of priorities and the project have no relevance to Nigerians.

What does the literature say about Hausa land as a nation within the nation-states of the Niger Republic and Nigeria?

In the context of this article, Hausa land refers to the geographic space, nowadays, in the postcolonial states of Niger and Nigeria. The space cohabitates the Hausa, Zabermawa (Zarma), Asbenawa (Tuareg), and the Gurmanche. Hausa land shares borders with the Sahara Desert and bordering zone of the Gulf of Guinea in the South. It is delineated by the River Niger Basin at the West and the Lake Chad basin at the East (Mahamane, 1998). Smith notes with the precision that Hausa territory extends from the Azbenin Niger Republic towards the South to the North-central Plateau of Jos, up to Kaduna River in the West. It continues North-Western direction to Gulbin Kebbi Valley and the Azbenin North (Ajayu, 1976).

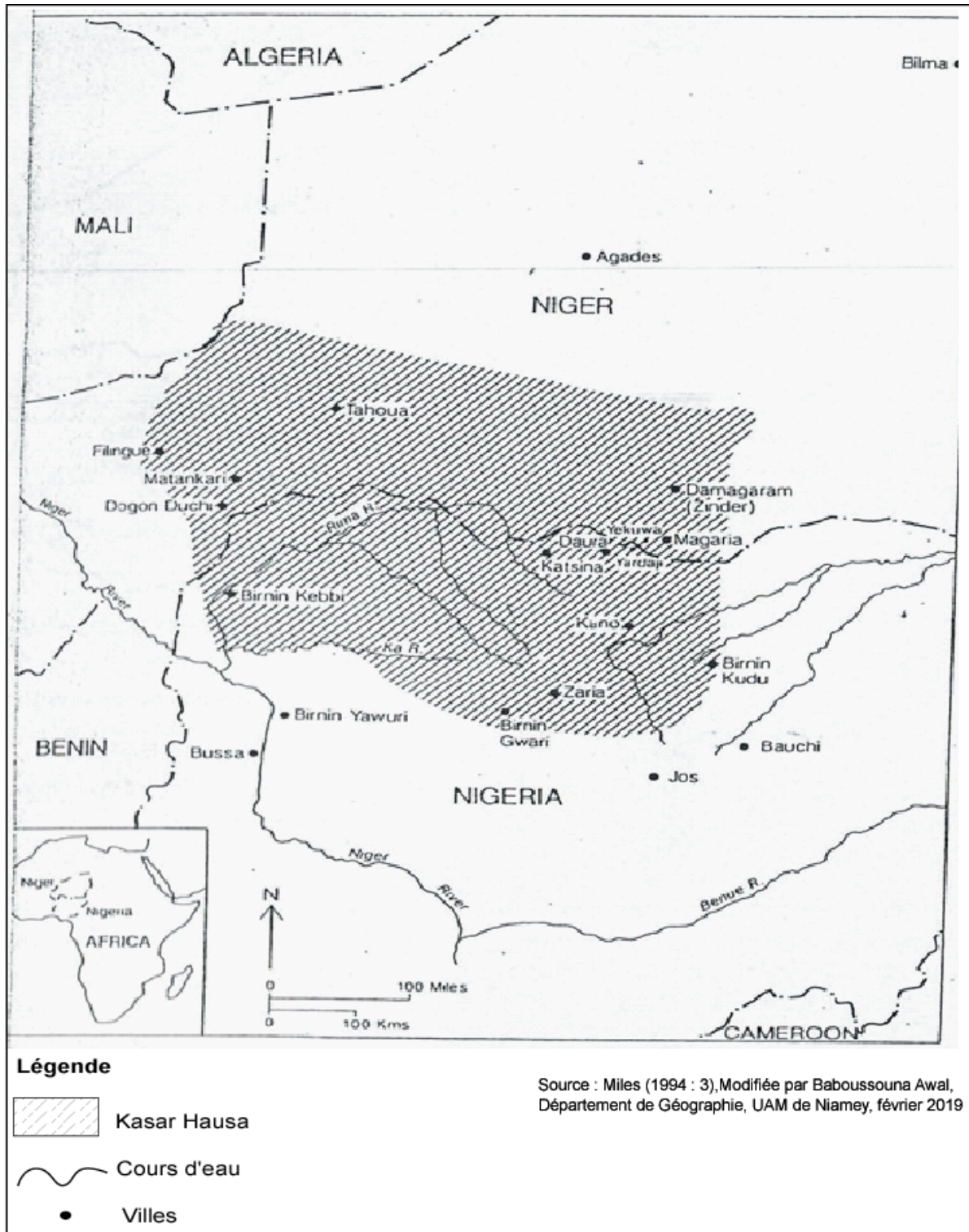


Figure 1: The map of Hausa land indicating Hausa as a nation in Nigeria and Niger Republic. Source: Miles (1994:3)

Hausa land has been known for movements of a multitude of ethnic groups resulting in a melting pot of diverse ethnic nationalities. Thus, Hausa becomes mashing of peoples from different origins (Anene, 1970). Many ethnic groups constitute the Hausawa particularly Sahara nomads, Nilo-Sudanic groups, and migrants associated with the Bayajidda legend (Anene, 1970). The association of Hausa to an Arab migrant cannot constitute the origin of this group of Central Sudan population. *Hausawa* existed even before the arrival of Bayajidda to Daura, hence, the legend asserting that Hausa descended from an Arab migrant is a pure fabrication. The hypothesis of *Hausa-Bakwai and Banza-Bakwai* (legitimate and illegitimate Hausa states) is contradicting itself. If the Hausa Bakwai - Daura (Gazaura), Kano (Bagauda), Gobir (Duma), Rano (Zamagari), Zaria (Gunguma), Katsina (Kumaiyu) and Biram (Garus-Gabas) – are all descents of Princes, the BanzaBakwai are not all male children. The Kabbawafor examples are descendants from Hausa's mother, an indigene of Katsina, and a father from the Songhay ethnic group (Anene, 1970). In Sudan, Central Africa, and particularly in Kasar Hausa families are patriarchal.

The *Sarauta* (emirate) of Kebbi, is closer to the defunct Songhay empire than Daura itself. Rulers of Kebbi, for at least a century, were closely associated with the Askia of Songhay than the *Sarakuna* (Emirs) of Kasar Hausa. Kanta himself was an army general who gave victory to Songhay Empire over the Aiiir (Anene, 1970). The Duma of the Gobir dynasty rejects its descendants from Bawo. Geographically, Gobir in the eighteenth century is closer to Azben than to other Kasar Hausa territories. The Kasar Hausa was once colonized by Fulani before coming into contact with Europeans in the Nineteen Century. Fulani ethnic group migrated from River Senegal Basin Eastwards in between thirteen and fourteen centuries. They were well established in Central Sudan in the Eighteen Century. The Torobe group, to which Usman Bin Fodio belonged,

settled down in the Gobir. The jihad of Dan Fodio in 1804 changed the socio-political shape of the Kasar Hausa (Anene, 1970).

The Hausa emirs were conquered and replaced by the invaders during the 1804 jihad even though emirs of Gobir, Katsina, and Kebbi resisted the Fulani conquest (Miles, 1994). The Gobirawa established a new Capital at Tsibiri, the Katsinawa established Maradi, the Daurawa settled in Zango and the Kebbawa entered in alliance with the Zabermawa and choose Argungu as their new political headquarters (Miles, 1994; Miles, 2005). The revolted leaders maintained their position while engaging in perpetual confrontations with Sokoto and later, Sokoto under sultan Bello and Gwandu under Abdullahi till the arrival of the colonizers (Anene, 1970).

The Tuareg constitutes an important part of the Hausa land population, got in touch with the Hausawa through the Trans-Sahara trade. They kept good relations with the Fulani during the Jihad period and SarkinAsben got into an alliance with the Sultan of Sokoto (Anene, 1970). The Hausa language is not only an official language of Hausa land but also a language of commerce because of its dynamism (Interview with a respected first-class traditional ruler, Sokoto, Nigeria. September 2020). Other local languages such as Tamashek (Asben), Zarma (Zarmaganda), and Kanuri (Bornu) are also spoken in some parts of Hausa land. The Hausa culture has become an important element of integration of Tuareg, Fulani, Zarma, and Kanuri from Niger and Nigerian space (Alio, 1997). The Hausa civilization also constitutes an influential tool in the Nigeria-Niger relations and consequently influences the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger Republic (Interview with a senior academics and diplomat, Niamey, Niger Republic. July 2020).

According to statistics, as of 2017, Niger Republic has 20.4 million inhabitants and 4 % of population growth while Nigeria has 182.2 million with a 2.7% in population increase (Institut National des Statistiques du Niger, le 2020).The Northern part of Nigeria has a mosaic of minority ethnic groups, 12% of the total minority ethnic groups of Nigeria are found in the North. However, the Hausa/Fulani are the two major ethnic groups dominating the Northern Population with 29% and the 4% Kanuri population (Kwaja, 2011). The Niger Republic is among the African countries with few ethnic groups. The classification of ethnic groups is still a subject for discussion in the country. For example, in the Diffa Region ethnic group such as Buduma, Manga or Dagra do not see themselves as Kanuri. However, seven groups can be retained, Arab 0.4 % of the Niger total population, Zarma-Songhai 21%, Hausa 55.4%, Gurmanche 0,4%, Kanuri group 5.1%, Fulani 8.5%, Tuareg (Azben) 9.3%, other minority ethnic groups 0.1% (RGPH 2001/INS Niger, Niamey, 2020).

From the above description of Hausa land, in the Niger Republic, the constitution of the pre-colonial citizens is Hausa 55.4%, the Fulani 8.5%, and the Tuareg (Azben) 9.3%. Put together, the *Hausawa*, as represented by the three groups above constitute 73.2% or 14.9 million of Niger population as of 2017. Often, Niger faced a dilemma of either allying with their former colonial masters (France) or Nigeria. In many instances, Niger authorities prefer going with the latter. For instance, during the Nigerian civil war, the pressure by French Government could not stop President DiioriHamani from supporting the Federal Government of Nigeria to defeat the Biafra agitators despite an appeal by France that Niger should support and recognize the Republic of Biafra(Baulin, 1986). Consequently, the Northern Nigeria and Nigeriens authorities consider the two countries as the same and the Hausa factor continues to influence

Nigeria and Niger policies towards each other as well as diplomatic relations between them. However, the extant literature is not certain whether or not the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger Republic is influence by Hausa factor. Thus, the article interrogates the *Hausanization* of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger and how it deepens the division between the Northern and Southern Nigeria.

Methodology

This article mainly relies on qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews with 30 key informants from career and non-career diplomats, serving and retired military as well as paramilitary personnel from Nigeria and the Republic of Niger. Data was also collected from prominent academics, politicians and residents, and leaders of the border communities across Nigerian and Nigerien universities. The responders were purposively selected based on their specific position, designation, and knowledge of Nigeria-Niger history and diplomatic relations. The in-depth interviews were conducted simultaneously in both Nigeria and Niger Republic. In Nigeria, the Interviews were conducted in Northern Nigerian states such as Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Jigawa, Kebbi, and Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. In the Niger Republic, interviews took place in Dossou, Maradi, Niamey, and Tahoua Departments. The interviews commenced in December 2015 and last through November 2020. To enrich the data, secondary sources such as textbooks, academic journals, periodicals, newspapers, and special reports on Nigeria and Niger's diplomatic relations were used to acquire essential information. The data generated from the in-depth interview were analyzed thematically using a descriptive approach to generate codes, themes, and sub-themes. The respondents' affiliations, expertise, dates, and place of the interview were supplied for clarity while their names were anonymized for ethical concerns.

The *Hausanization* of the diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger: The Niger's participation in the Nigerian civil war

The post-independence Northern Nigerian political leaders and the Niger Republic coincidentally emerged from the pre-colonial Hausaland. Ahmadu Bello the Premier of the Northern region and Abubakar Tafawa Bewawa, the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria are from Hausa/Fulani extraction (Interview with a former Nigerian Ambassador to Niger, Sokoto, Nigeria, May 2020). In Niger, President Diori Hamani, even though, from Zarma ethnic group recognized the influence of Hausa in the political life and relations between Nigeria and the Niger Republic. President Diori took into account the survival of the Niger Republic which lies squarely in the unity and peace of Nigeria, thus aligned with Nigeria during the Biafra war (Interview with a former Nigerien ambassador to Nigeria, Diffa Department, Niger Republic. June 2020).

In post-colonial Africa, most of the intra/inter-state conflicts are linked to the colonization, balkanization and forceful amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups by the European powers (Idowu, 2014). The Biafra war draws its origins from the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria by the British colonialists. The forceful amalgamation of Southern and Northern Nigeria by the British in 1914 unified the two distinct cultures and civilization to form what is known as Nigeria today (Iliya, 1989). This forceful amalgamation sowed the seed of distrust among Southern and Northern Nigeria before and after the independence of the country. The amalgamation would have succeeded had it been the people were having common cultural, social, and religious affinities or have voluntarily agreed to live together (Madiebo, 1980).

The Indirect rule system adopted by the Britain colonialists in the North helped in preserving Northern Nigeria's pre-colonial political institutions and made it more

politically organized and stable. The presence of Southerners, particularly the Igbos in the areas qualified as *Sabon-Gari*, *Bariki*, or *Mararaba*, did not favor the integration of the Southern population residing in Northern Nigeria (Momoh, 2000).

The Political Crisis in the South-western region led to the decamping of Sir Samuel Ladoke Akintola of Action Group (AG). Later, Akintola formed the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP). An Alliance with the *Northern People's Congress* (NPC) gave birth to the Nigerian National Alliance (NNA). Chief Obafemi Awolowo (AG) formed a coalition with the National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which produced the United Progressive Grand Alliance (UPGA). In the regional elections of October 1965, NNDP won with 75.9% of the casted votes. UPGA partisans rejected the results and promised to transform the Western Region into "another Congo". (Aneke, 2007). In November 1965 and January 1966, the Western region witnessed rioting and arrests of AG leaders.

The Federal Government was accused of inaction in resolving the lingering insecurity in the country. This led to the military incursion into Nigeria's politics. Consequently, a military coup took place on January 15th 1966. Most of the victims were from the North while the majority of coup plotters were Igbos. A counter-coup *d'etat*, was organized by Northerners on July 29th 1966 with the majority of victims as Igbo's. the coup produced Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon, as the new Head of State. However, the military Governor, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu rejected Gowon's Presidency on the basis that he was not the highest-ranking officer to command the country's military (Interview with a retired Nigerian Army General, Nigeria. August 2018).

Negotiations at the national and international levels led to the signing of the *Treaty of Aburi* in Ghana. However, this Treaty could not bring the desired peace in the country as Ojukwu declared the secession of the Eastern Region on May 30th, 1967 to form a de facto "*Republic of Biafra*". During the Independence Day celebration of Biafra, the Federal Government gave an ultimatum to Ojukwu to withdraw his declaration or be ready to contain the Nigerian military might. On July 5th, 1967, the Federal Government of Nigeria launched a Police Action against Biafra. The military operations against the Biafran rebels consequently turned into a civil war that lasted for 30 months (1967-1970). Consequently, there was a mass killing, bloodshed and migration of predominantly Igbos from the North to the South-east region (Arase, 2018).

The Role of the Niger Republic in Nigerian Civil War

The Niger Republic and Northern Nigeria, particularly the North-East and North-West possess homogenous population in areas such as religion, language and occupation. Furthermore, the border separating the two countries is not only porous but poorly manned by both Nigeria and the Niger Republic. The majority of the residents of the borderland between Nigeria and the Niger Republic covering approximately 1,500km claim "dual nationality" and often possess dual identity papers from both sides of the border. As part of propaganda, the Northern Nigerian leaders gave the Nigerian civil war an ethnic coloration and interpreted it as a tribal war between Northern Nigeria's Hausa/Fulani and Igbos. This coloration has influenced the decision of Niger authorities and encouraged the citizens of Niger to participate actively in the war in favor of the Northern Nigerian (Interview with one of the first Republican Nigerian politician, Abuja, Nigeria. June 2018). Niger citizens participating in the war are of two categories; the seasonal migrants popularly known as *Yan Cirani* who are engaged in unskilled

labour and those crossing the border from Niger to join the Nigerian Army (Interview with a retired major with the Nigerian Army, Kaduna, Nigeria. December 2019). Furthermore, there were members of the Niger Armed forces who formally joined the Nigerian army (Interview with a former Nigerian Ambassador to Niger, Sokoto, Nigeria. January 2020). In one of his interviews, President Olusegun Obasanjo recalled having Ayu Maradi as his colleague during his enrolment in 1959 though Mr Maradi is from the Niger Republic but enlisted as a Nigerian citizen (Interview with General Olusegun Obasanjo retired. April 2014, cited by (Umate 2020)).

The majority of the Nigeriens who travelled to Nigeria to fight were motivated by cultural affinity and ethno-religious sentiments strengthened by the campaigns sponsored by the Nigeria and Niger governments, under the auspices that "*Nigeria da Niger dai-daisuke, Abundayatabahanci idanuwaru wasuke*" (Nigeria and Niger are two sides of the same coin, whatever happens to one will have a spill-over effect on the other) (Interview with a senior Nigerien academic at Maryam Abacha University Maradi, Niger, March 2018). Moreover, the historical antecedents of good neighbourliness between Northern Nigeria and neighbouring Departments of Zinder and Maradi greatly facilitate cross-border relations between the two countries.

Similarly, collaborative efforts with the Departments of Zinder and Maradi in Niger and Katsina and Kebbi in Nigeria through bilateral and tripartite agreements in areas of mutual benefit such as infrastructures, promotion of trans-border trade, security, and combating environmental hazards, among others, have further cemented the relationship between the people of Northern Nigeria and Nigeriens (Lampsey, 2013). Before the colonialists partitioned the Hausa nation, there were long-standing historical and cultural linkages between the Katsina and Maradi border populations in areas such

as language, religion, and occupation. Thus, both Nigerians and the Nigeriens, particularly those residing on the border regions perceived the border as an artificial creation that is aimed at dividing and weakening their strength (Interview with a Nigerian traditional ruler, Jibia, Katsina State, Nigeria. June 2017).

Support from the Niger Authorities

As mentioned earlier, the pre-colonial political relations between the Nigeria-Niger Republic influenced the participation of the Nigerien authorities in the Nigerian civil war. The principle of non-interference of Organization of African Unity and the French Government and her allies (Gabon and Côte d'Ivoire) taking side with Biafrans could not stop the Niger's support to the Nigerian government. According to President Diori Hamani, Niger cannot afford to allow the balkanization of Nigeria because of the spill-over effect on Niger's security and economy. Therefore, for President Diori Hamani, while working for the unity and economy of the Niger Republic, we must ensure peace and stability of our neighbours (Baulin, 1986). Hence, the Nigerien authorities refused to recognize Biafra as requested by the French authorities (Baulin, 1986).

Arms transfer to the Federal Government of Nigeria

The Federal Government of Nigeria, being under an international embargo, had to seek a third party to acquire arms and ammunition to fight the Biafran secessionists. A delegation was sent by the Northern Region's Governor, Colonel Hassan Usman Katsina in July 1967 to seek help from President Diori Hamani of Niger. The delegation was made up of Ali Akilu, the Secretary to the Government, Emir of Daura (Mamman Bashar), and Colonel Addo Wali. Mamman Bashar worked under Sir Ahmadu Bello the *Sardauna* of Sokoto who was the then Premier of the Northern region. Mamman Bashar was a Minister and a middleman between Diori Hamani and the Premier of the

Northern region. After a meeting with the delegation, President Diori agreed that the Niger Republic will volunteer to acquire arms on behalf of Nigeria. Under the new arrangement, Niger authorities purchased arms and supply them to the Nigerian government (Interview with a senior retired Nigerian Police officer, Kano, Nigeria. April 2020). However, after the meeting Colonel Wali insisted that the committee could not return to Nigeria empty-handed as they have no weapons, the President Diori Hamani ordered that all the weapons in the armoury be given to the Nigerian delegation (Interview with President Diori's former aid Protocol, Niamey. July 2015).

Throughout the Nigerian civil war, Niger Republic bought arms for the Nigerian government. Captain Sani SounaSido, from the Niger Army, and Issa Chiroma were in charge of purchasing the arms at the *Fabrique Nationale D'armes de Guerre*, in Herstal of Liège, using the name of Mr. HamaniDiori, President of the Republic of Niger as the buyer. Small arms were brought to Niamey on cargo airplanes while heavy weapons were brought by sea to the Abidjan seaport, then to Ouagadougou before reaching their final destination. Niger Government also bought jet fighter, code name, "Tsunsu" for Nigeria. Nigerian pilots were trained in Niamey by the Belgian pilots who flew the planes to Niamey (Interview with President Diori's former aid, Niamey, Niger Republic. July 2015).

The Decentralization of Niger-Nigeria Diplomatic Relations: Arevival of the pre-colonial political institutions

After successfully fighting the Biafra war together, the two leaders, President Yakubu Gowon of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and President Hamani Diori decided to put in place a joint and permanent commission. On 3rd March 1971, the Niger-Nigeria Joint Commission for Cooperation (NNJCC) was established with its headquarters in

Niamey, Niger Republic. The Commission started its operations on the 23rd of December 1973. NNJCC is decentralized in 1988 to further integrate the people of Northern Nigeria and Niger Republic, post-colonial political institutions of Kanem-Bornu and Nigeria-Niger Republic Hausa land (Interview with a senior Nigerian civil servant/Diplomat, Sokoto, Nigeria. February 2018).

NNJCC's decentralization led to the creation of numerous Local Bilateral Committees (LBCs) on water resources, infrastructure, security, health among others by Northern Nigeria's states and Departments in Niger (Abba, 2003). The majority of the citizens of the two countries are farmers. To avoid conflicts relating to the sharing of natural resources and construction of dams, the two countries engaged in dialogue for the realization of joint project. These include:

- Construction of the Jibia dam in Nigeria (Katsina State-Département de Maradi)
- Reduction in water level in the Lake Kalmalo, Nigeria (Sokoto State-Konni/Tahoua)
- Construction of dams on Maggia/Lamido, Niger (Maradi-Katsina State) and,
- Water sharing in the lower section of Komadougou/Yobe Basin, Nigeria/Niger (Diffa-Borno).

After the Councils of Ministers meetings, the following Local Bilateral Committees were set up in 1988:

- Katsina State - Département de Maradi
- Sokoto State - Département de Tahoua
- Kano State - Département de Zinder and
- Borno State - Département de Diffa.

After administrative reforms, LBCs turned into:

- Kebbi State - Dosso Region
- Sokoto State - Tahoua Region
- Katsina/Zamfara States - Maradi Region
- Kano/Jigawa States - Zinder Region, and
- Borno/Yobe States - Diffa Region.

Through LBCs, States on the international boundary between Nigeria and the Niger Republic continue to maintain bilateral relations under the supervision of the NNJCC Secretariat, similar to diplomatic missions with administrative and technical members drawn from:

- Governors from Nigerian border States and their Nigerian counterpart
- Heads of Nigeria-Niger Republic regional services and states ministries
- Heads of security services
- Traditional authorities (Emirs, Heads of Canton, and so on.)
- National Boundary Commission
- Ministries of foreign affairs and technical ministries and
- NNJCC secretariat

The LBCS activities are categorized as: the resolution of border disputes, energy, environment, health, education, agriculture, security, human trafficking, water resources, economic zones (roads, rail, and navigation), and telecommunication services (Bafarawa, 2003).

In carrying their activities through LBCs, it was agreed that authorities can simultaneously carry joint project such as vaccination campaigns to eradicate killer

diseases. Security forces are drawn from both sides and jointly patrol the borders against trans-border crimes. Numerous economic corridors are either completed or under construction along the border regions and many are being planned for. These include; Kano-Katsina – Maradi, Zinder-Jigawa - Daura-Kano, Sokoto-Kebbi– Tahoua, and Diffa-Borno – Yobe roads. The railways include ; Kano-Magaria– Zinder, Lagos - Jibia – Maradi, and Kaura Namoda - Sokoto - Illela – Konni (Interview with a Nigerian career civil servant, Abuja, Nigeria. June 2018). Recently, the Nigerian government awarded a contract of \$1.96 billion to the Russian construction firm to build a railway line from Kano-Nigeria to the Maradi-Niger Republic as part of measures to facilitate formal trans-border trade and curtail informal trans-border trade between the two countries. On completion, the project is expected to ease trans-border trade between the two countries and reduce the illegal movement of people through the illegal routes (Ayodeji, 2021).

The creation of NNJCC and its decentralization, in particular, is challenging the internal cohesion of both countries. In Nigeria, the Southern region dominantly Christian population perceived NNJCC as a *Hausa/Fulani* business (Interview with a senior academic in a local University, Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. March 2018). This assumption is backed up by the activities of the commission with the states sharing international boundaries with the Niger Republic. The same sentiment is being shared by some citizens of the Niger Republic, especially those from Tillaberi and the Dosso Regions. Contrary to other BLCs, “Kebbi State-Dosso Region” up to today did not engage in any tangible projects. Tillaberi Region considers the NNJCC as a *Hausawa* affair only (Interview with the Head of General Administration NNJC Secretariat, Niamey, Niger Republic 2018).

Nigerian nationalism and its implications on the Niger Republic

The Federal Government of Nigeria engaged in reforms immediately after the democratically elected President Shehu Shagari was overthrown by the military in 1983. Under the leadership of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari, (1983 -1986), the Nigerian Foreign Policy was given a new orientation and direction. According to the then military Head of State, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria with its enormous natural resources has to stop depending on loans and international aid (Liman, 2016). Under the new foreign policy regime, Nigeria has to concentrate on its national interest before caring for other nations. The well-being of Nigerians was made a priority for Nigeria, then the West African sub-region, and then Africa (Dauda, 2006).

The protectionism policy of President Buhari: Closure of the National Borders

The spill-over effect of insecurity left by the *Maitatsine* uprising in 1983 and the economic crisis caused by bad governance were among the reasons cited by the military to over throw of democratic government of President Shehu Shagari. The closing of Nigeria's borderlands was part of the protectionist measure taken by the military Government of Major General Muhammadu Buhari retired. The protectionist policy is an economic doctrine that prescribes, to detriment of the foreign competition, a set of measures in favor of the national economy (Daloz, 2011). Nigeria being the economic power in West Africa has 2/3 of the populations of West Africa put together. In carrying out the economic reforms, President Buhari's Regime began by closing the borderlands on April 23, 1984. Two days later, monetary reform was introduced. The different Naira notes have their colors changed and, a period of 10 days (April 25 – May 6, 1984) was given to swap the old notes with the new ones. The closure of borders and substitution of the old banknotes with new ones were intended to stop the economic sabotage against Nigeria (Dauda, 2006).

Nigeria heavily subsidizes her importation through the currency exchange, Dollar-Naira policy. Majority of the basic needs of West African as well as Central African countries get their supplies from Nigeria. By stopping the re-exportation of goods from Nigeria, the military Government is saving money spent on foreign-exchange policy. The currency reform was aimed at rendering the money stolen by government officials and politicians useless. Neighboring countries were affected by the Buhari reforms, especially the Niger Republic which is a landlocked state (Asiwaju & Nugent, 2011).

Populations of *KanemBornu* and Hausa from the Niger Republic engaged in many businesses in Northern Nigerian commercial centers of Maiduguri and Kano States among others. With the borders closed and consequently supplies to Nigerien markets were cut-off. The local population starved for lack of food supply. Famine, popularly known as *Yar Buhari*, ravaged the Niger Republic and the people of Niger accused President Buhari of killing his Hausa/Fulani brothers in Niger Republic (Interview with a career Nigerien diplomat, Niamey, Niger. June 2019). The Nigerian President Major General Muhammadu Buhari defended his policy by saying that, being *Dan Daura*, (from Daura), he could never harm Niger. Even after leaving office President Buhari argues that he only acted in Nigeria's national interest. Moreover, the Government of Nigeria as at then could not afford to help Niger (Liman, 2016). Niger Government turned to the Benin Republic for the supply of goods and other essentials. At bilateral level, Benin and Niger founded *Organisation Commune Dahomey-Niger* in 1959 and *Organisation Commune Benin-Niger* in 1975. These institutions were aimed at facilitating trade between the two countries. Using the two institutions, Niger goods at their arrival at the Cotonou Seaport of are directly transported to Niger as transit goods. The end of the Buhari regime in 1985 ushered in a new phase in the Niger-Nigeria political and diplomatic relations.

However, his emergence as civilian president in 2015, President Muhammadu Buhari continued with his policy of protectionism by shutting down all the Nigerian land borders in 2019. According to Nigerian authorities, the government acted based on a security report that described the Nigerian land borders as the hub of trans-border criminality in West Africa. Consequently, the government having been convinced by the Nigerian security forces that the internal security challenges are associated with the influx of illegal immigrants and trans-border arms from the neighbouring countries particularly on the Nigeria-Niger Republic frontier announced the total closure of all the land borders in August 2019 (Wahab, 2019). The border closure according to the Nigerian authorities was a deliberate measure to address the Nigeria's security challenges. The goal of the policy was to deploy available human and material resources to effectively secure Nigeria's ungoverned border spaces (Interview with a senior Nigerian Immigration officer, Abuja, Nigeria, June 2020).

However, only a few months after the border closure, the Nigerian government raised doubts about the probability of a successful outcome (Nigerian Tribune, Nigeria, December 17, 2019). This is because, despite the border closure, illegal immigrants, trans-border bandits, smugglers, guns, and drugs traffickers remained adamant by avoiding security checkpoints and crossing the border at any cost. The number of arrests made by Nigerian border security personnel during the border drill exercise has demonstrated the inefficiency of the policy. For instance, contrabands such as rice, petroleum products, and firearms, valued at around \$6.5 billion were intercepted by Nigerian border security officials in just three months after the border was closed. In addition, 203 illegal immigrants and eight transnational arms traffickers were apprehended at different border posts (Wahab, 2019). On December 16, 2020, Nigeria

reluctantly reopened of its land borders and business continues as usual(Salome, 2019).This suggests that rather than closing its borders, Nigeria should have invested more in improved border security, combat corruption among border officials, and change economic policies that encourage smuggling as well as the development and upliftment of border communities who rely on smuggling for a living.

Conclusion

Historically, the nation-states of the Niger Republic and Nigeria share similar heritage, cultural affinities, and ancestors. The Hausa's who hitherto lived together as a single nation was divided between Nigeria and the Niger Republic by an international boundary drawn by the Western colonialists. However, despite the delineation of the boundary between the two modern States, the Hausas in Nigeria and the Niger Republic perceived themselves as one nation. The Hausa language not only influences the conduct of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Niger but rendered the boundary between the two sovereign states as a mere "physical hard-line" that has no relevance. Thus, the Nigeria-Niger Republic Hausa and their traditional institutions metamorphosed into one nation despite the existence of an international boundary. Furthermore, the North, being closer to the Niger Republic, the leadership of Northern Nigeria and the Republic of Niger considered themselves as one side of the same coin.

The Niger Republic was drawn into the Nigerian civil war because of the ethnic coloration of the war which was interpreted as a war between the Northerners and Igbos. Despite the declaration of the war by the Federal Government of Nigeria as "no winner no vanquish" the Southern Nigeria, particularly, the South-East is uncomfortable with the *Hausanization* of relations between Nigeria and the Niger Republic. As part of the institutionalization of the Hausa as a diplomatic tool, the

embassy of the two countries put in place numerous joint/permanent commissions to facilitate their integration. The NNJCC was decentralized to enable the Nigerian border states enter into diplomatic relations with the Administrative Regions of the Niger Republic. Major General Muhamadu Buhari's protectionist policy in the middle of the 1980s and in 2015 as a democratically elected President of Nigeria temporarily infringes the Hausa factor in the diplomatic relations between the two nation-states.

During his military regime, Buhari kept the Nigerian borders closed forcing the Niger Republic to seek an alternative in the supply of goods and services. In 2019 Buhari revived his protectionist policy by shutting down Nigerian borders on the 20th of August as a strategy to effectively secure the Nigerian borders. Subsequently, after a series of meetings, dialogue, and negotiations, Nigeria declared a partial reopening of its land borders in December 2020 (Salome, 2019). Consequently, the Nigerian government seems to have lost hope and faith in Nigerian border security officials' ability to successfully control smuggling, illegal immigration, and arms trafficking. President Muhammadu Buhari submits that only God can secure the roughly 1400-kilometer land border between Nigeria and the Republic of Niger (Johnbosco, 2021). While the Nigerian government acknowledges that effective border management of the Nigeria-Niger Republic border is a difficult task, it is suicidal for the Nigerian government to rule out the possibility managing the Nigerian borders. Similarly, while the *Hausanization* of diplomatic relations between Niger and Nigeria favours Northern Niger, its fuelling tension, suspicion and mutual distrust between the Northern and Southern Nigeria.

References

- Abba, I. B. (2003). Nigeria-Niger trans-border management and cooperation: The Yobe case Study. In Asiwaju, A. I & Barkindo B.M. (Ed.), *The Nigeria-Niger transborder management and cooperation*, pp.126-131. Abuja: Ugwu Publishing Company Limited.
- Ajayi, F. A., & Crowder. M. (1976). *History of West Africa* London: Longman
- Alio, M. (1997). The Place of Islam in shaping French and British Colonial frontier policy in Hausaland: 1890-190. A Thesis submitted to the post-graduate school, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- Aneke, L. N. (2007). *The Untold Story of the Nigeria-Biafra War, a chronological reconstruction of the events and circumstances of the Nigerian Civil War*; New York: Triumph Publishing
- Anene J.C. (1970). *The International Boundaries of Nigeria 1885 – 1960. The Framework of an Emergent African Nation*, London: Longman Group Limited.
- Arase, S. E. (2018). Inaugural lecture on strengthening internal security frameworks and community policing in Nigeria: Models, policy options and strategies. A conference paper presented at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies, Kuru-Jos.
- Asiwaju A. I., & Nugent, P. (2011). African boundaries: Barriers, conduits, and opportunities in Audrey K. (Ed.), (2002) *Behind the curve: Globalization and international terrorism. International Security*, 27(3), 224-234.
- Ayodeji, A. (2021, February 12). Why we're building rail to the Niger Republic-Buhari. *Premium Times*.
- Bafarawa, A. (2003). Responding to the management of Nigeria-Niger international boundary: The Sokoto State experience. In Asiwaju, A.I. & Barkindo B.M. (Ed.), *The Nigeria- Niger transborder management and cooperation*, pp. 102-116. Abuja: Ugwu Publishing Company Limited.

- Baulin J. (1986). *Conseiller du Président Diiori*. Paris : Euralor – Press.
- Hoffmann, L. K., & Melly, P. (2015). *Nigeria's booming borders: The drivers and consequences of unrecorded trade*. Chatham House Report. London: The Royal Institute of International Affairs.
- Idowu, J. (2014). Inter-Security agencies conflict at Nigeria's borders: A challenge to Nigeria's national security. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 4(7), 211-216.
- Idris, A., & Tutumlu, A. (2021). Nigeria and Niger Republic trans-border management against arms trafficking: A whistleblowing model. *Security Journal*, 1-18. DOI: <https://org/10.1057/s41284-021-00307-0>
- Iliya, M. A. (1989). The Geographical imperatives of trans-border cooperation. In Asiwaju, A.I. & Barkindo B.M. (Ed.), *Nigeria-Niger trans-border cooperation*, pp.36-46. Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Johnbosco, A. (2020, December 22). Only God can effectively supervise Nigeria, Niger border-Buhari *Vanguard*. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/12/only-god-can-effectively-supervise-nigeria-niger-border-buhari/>
- Lamptey, A. A. (2013). *Rethinking border management strategies in West Africa: Experience from the Sahel*.
- Madiebo A. A. (1980). *The Nigerian Revolution and the Biafran War*. Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company Limited.
- Mahamane, A. (1998). *Institutions et imaginaire politiques hausa. Le cas du Katsina sous la dynastie de Korau*. Thèse de doctorat nouveau régime, option histoire, Université de Provence (Aix-Marseille I).
- Miles, W. F. S. (2005). Development, not division: Local versus external perceptions of Niger-Nigeria boundary. *The Journal of Modern Africa Studies*, 43(2),297-320, Cambridge: University Press.
- Miles, W. F.S. (1994). *Hausaland Divided, Colonialism and Independence in Nigeria and Niger*. Itacha: Cornell University Press.

- Momoh H.B. (2000). *The Nigerian Civil War 1967-1970*. Lagos: Sam Bookman Publishers, Lagos
- Nigeria National Population Commission and Institut National des Statistiques du Niger (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/>
- Nasiru, S.P. (2015). *The Regional Integration and its 21st century challenges*. Kano: Umar Press.
- Nigerian Tribune. (2019, May 10). The N52 billion e-border project. *Nigerian Tribune*.
- Okunade, S. K. (2017). Perspectives on illegal routes in Nigeria. *Africa Research Review*, 2(46), 4-24.
- Osimen, Goddy U, Anegbode, E. John, Akande, Clement. A, Oyewole, Oyindamola O. (2017). The borderless-border and internal security challenges in Nigeria. *International Journal of Political Science*, 3(3), 17-27. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.20431/2454-9452.0303003>.
- Sambo, U., Damaturu, N., Sule, B., Deribe, A. U., & Ahmed, A. (2020). The impact of small arms and light weapons (SALW) in the proliferation of armed Group Conflicts in Northeastern Nigeria: Interrogating the Boko Haram Phenomenon. *Arts and Social Sciences*, 6(4), 151- 161.
- Salome, N. (2019, November 14). Nigeria: Border Closure-Nigeria, Benin, Niger Joint Committee *Premium Times*. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201911150024.html>
- Wahab, B. (2019, November 2). Border closure: FG says N2.3tn smuggled guns, rice and petrol have been seized in 3 months, *Pulse*.