

# The Dilemma of Big Brother Diplomacy: An Analysis of Nigeria's Role in the Resolution of Ivorian Crisis: S.I. Ebohon & C.A. Isike\*

## ABSTRACT

This paper analyses Nigeria's Dilemma in the implementation of Big brother diplomacy agenda in the resolution of Ivorian Crisis. Situating the civil strife and imminent state collapse in the bonding of congeries of ethnic groups within the emergent nation state, it concludes that a cautious and discriminatory implementation of Big brother diplomacy in the region is inconsistent with Nigeria's regional hegemonic aspiration.

## INTRODUCTION

Since September 19, 2002, France most important interest in West Africa, the Ivory Coast has been engulfed in a civil strife that has polarized this former model of prosperity and political satiability in West Africa. The crisis in the Ivory Coast, which has pitched the now rebel-controlled Muslim North against the *Government-controlled Christian South*, is fast approaching a frightening crescendo that is tending towards state collapse. In the main, the focus of this paper is to analyse and capture the complex situation that has informed the spectre of diplomatic correctness that drives Nigeria's role in the resolution of the Ivorian crisis. This is as against the big-brother diplomacy and adventurism that coloured her role in similar crisis situations in the West African sub-region in the recent past, especially in Sierra and Liberia.

What is the nature and under-current of the crisis in the Ivory Coast? Why is the crisis attracting so much interests and multilateral actions from within the Region, the Continent and the Globe at large? What has been the trend and profile of Nigeria's foreign policy towards her neighbours since the end of the Cold War? And following this, why is Nigeria not intervening in the Ivory Coast the way she did in Liberia and Sierra Leone, which underscored her regional power aspirations and got her commendations from international community?

Answers to these core questions form the central theme of this paper. We conclude that the managers of Nigeria's foreign policy have not fully captured the under currents and dynamics at play in the Ivory Coast Crisis and have acted too cautiously so far. However, we feel that Nigeria should use the opportunity the crisis presents to establish her hegemonic aspirations in the region by playing a more active role. In this vein, Nigeria's ruling elites are urged to be proactive enough to take actions that will forestall a contagion of such crisis because all the factors that underlie the remote cause are present in Nigeria. This paper is organized in four sections. The first section examines civil strife in Ivory Coast, section two discusses the regional peace initiative while the dilemma of big brother diplomacy is articulated in section three. Section four presents the conclusion.

### Civil Strife & State Collapse in Ivory Coast: Background to the Crisis

To understand the nature of the crisis in the Ivory Coast and the course it has taken, it is proper to trace its origin albeit briefly. To do this, we shall discuss the remote and immediate causes. We are tempted to situate the remote genesis of the Ivorian crisis in the artificiality and irreconcilability of the colonially imposed territorial boundaries, which has created the profound leadership crisis that is at the heart of the rebellion in the Ivory Coast. At least, this factor permitted Konan Bedie's Ivorite policy which he and later, president Gbagbo used to exclude Allasane Quattara from the presidential race twice. This policy

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of exclusion and marginalization triggered the Doula speaking Muslim North uprising against the Government, which is backed mainly by Boules and Betes speaking CHRISTIAN SOUTH (Chonghale; 2002, Doyie; 2002 Torulagha; 2003). In Tandem with the above, we are also tempted to situate the crisis in the 33 years of autocratic rule of the country's paternalistic leader, Felix Houphouet Boigny. His reign was tainted with colorations of consociationalism which the charismatic leader used to put a lid on the seeds of discord that were sown during the period owing to corruption. (Cherian; 2002:2). However, for brevity and time focus, we will take off from 1993 when boigny died in office and was succeeded by Henri Konan Bedie.

Ivory Coast, a country with a population of 16.5 million people is a hodgepodge of ethnic nationalities geo-politically delineated as North, South and West. Before now, it enjoyed the status of the most stable polity in West Africa with a very sound economy whose fortunes were inextricably linked with those of her immediate neighbours. Such was the growing importance and influence of the Ivory Coast in West Africa and in Africa, given her seemingly stable polity, until the death of Preseident Houphouet-Boigny on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1993. Henri Konan Bedie, a former Minister in Boigny's cabinet succeeded him; engendering a free fall to political turmoil, strife, rebellion and imminent state collapse.

Bedie, obviously not able to command the same awe and respect Boigny commanded from his country men, engaged in a power struggle of survival which smacked of exclusion politics and the abuse of ethnic, religious and regional identity to secure and maintain power. And this is the trend that the others after him, the late General Robert Guei and incumbent President, Laurent Gbagbo have used to secure and maintain power. (Hara and Ero; 2002:1). From Bedie's regime in 1992 till date, the Muslim North of the Ivory Coast has continually voiced out crisis of marginalization which over time accumulated to fuel rebellion against the state today.

Apart from the struggle for power, which underlies the leadership crisis in the Ivory Coast, the conflict is a political symptom of the country's economic decline from the 1990s. Since 1993, the gross domestic product has declined steadily by more than 20% and as such, rival factions have come into even sharper conflict over the control of the state and the division of its declining wealth. Indeed, according to a public commentator and French citizen who grew up in the Ivory Coast, "the conflict will end,

like all other conflicts in Africa, when there is nothing left to loot" (BBV NEWS, World Edition, 2003).

In the light of this economic decline, Ivorians also started to resent the large presence of foreigners and immigrants who had hitherto, played important roles in the economic boom of the 1960s (Johnson; 2002:1). It was at this point president Bedie introduced the concept of "Ivorite" or Ivorianess, which he used, not only as an economic tool to exclude his main opponent in the 1995 general elections, Allassane Quattara, a Northern Muslim, from the presidential race. Ivorite soon permeated the rest of political life as Northerners were removed from senior posts in government and the security forces. Multi party elections became a farce and immigrants were blamed for the economic crisis.

Such was the climate of discrimination and xenophobia coupled with military discontent over salary disputes, until December 24, 1999 when the Head of the Arm Forces, General Robert Guei struck and seized power in a welcomed military coup (Cherian 2002:2). Guei turned out to be yet another despot determined to hang on to power at all cost as has always been the case with military interventionism in Africa politics. Gen Guei initially accommodated Quattara's supporters in his regime but soon kicked them out and revised the constitution to completely prevent Quattara from contesting further elections. In 2000, Gen. Guei agreed to hold presidential elections. The elections were marred by violence and in the confusion, he declared himself president, but was forced into exile in Benin in the course of the chaos that trailed the elections. In the end, Laurent Gbagbo, a history professor and long standing opposition politician was proclaimed president by a margin that led the rebels to question his victory at the polls. Gbagbo, like his predecessors, also used the "Ivorite" to maintain his grip on power, by promoting members of his ethnic group, the Betes, particularly in the security forces.

Such was the prevailing situation in the Ivory Coast until September 19<sup>th</sup> 2002 when some disgruntled soldiers staged another coup (the third since 2001) which failed like the other before it, to oust Gbagbo. This time, the coup plotters turned their failed attempt into a rebellion. Led by the Movement Patriotique Du Cote d' Ivoire (MPCI), the rebels seized the Northern city of Bouake which is Muslim dominated. They took over the armoury and launched several attacks without success to capture Abidjan; the capital city and over throw Gbagbo (Ugwoke, 2004:6). So began the Ivory Coast's descent to chaos, conflict and an imminent state collapse, that has claimed countless casualties including civilians.

### **Regional Peace Initiative**

A most commendable aspect of the crisis in the Ivory Coast, the certain implications for conflict resolution in Africa is the prompt response of the Economic Community of West Africa State (ECOWAS). It took the regional body 6 months to respond and intervene in the Liberian crisis, but in this case, it took 10 days for the ECOWAS to intervene after its emergency meeting of Heads of State from the region on the 29<sup>th</sup> of September, 2002 in Ghana. In solidarity, South African president Thabo

Mbeki, joined presidents Wade (Senegal), Kufour (Ghana) and Obasanjo (Nigeria) to try seek an amicable political and diplomatic settlement of the crisis. At their meeting in Dakar, Senegal, in December, 2002, the Heads of State formulated the establishment of an ECOWAS peace-keeping force for the Ivory Coast and appointed Nigeria's

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ambassador Ralph Uwechue as the special representative of the sub-regions peace-keeping operation under ECOWAS Mission in Core d' Ivoire (ECOMOCI) with a charge to monitor the cessation of hostilities; the process of disarmament and demobilization. More importantly, there was a ceasefire agreement between the warring factions.

Apart from the ECOWAS initiatives, France has also intervened in the crisis. It has been rotating its support between the government and the rebels through actions and inaction all in a bid to protect its citizens and imperialists interests in the Ivory Coast. For example, at the early stage of the crisis, it provided logistical supports to the government, boosted its deployment of troops to its military base; but also contradicted this support by not taking decisive actions early enough and even in the face of the terror unleashed by the rebels. According to a French newspaper, *Revolution International (RI)* report, "many people don't even dare any longer to go to work or go out shopping for food. The French forces have witnessed all of these horrors, without taking any action to stop them. Quite hypocritically, France has, been gathering evidence of the murders goings-on, in the event that it is called to give evidence to any enquiry of the UN High Commission. Nevertheless, the French State cannot hide from the eyes of the world its cynical complicity with the bloody murderers that terrorize and kill innocent civilians in the Ivory Coast" (RI: 2003). To further appreciate France cautious and Ipsoface, hypocritical role in the crisis, one must note the strained relations between Gbagbo's government and France. The French originally intervened to evacuate Westerners. Their second objective, to freeze the frontlines, has failed. Paris is reported to be exasperated that it has been sucked into a major engagement on behalf of president Gbagbo, whom it has never especially liked. (Caroll; 2003). A last point of France inaction in the crisis which tends to support the rebel cause was their refusal to heed calls by Gbagbo to disarm the rebels as agreed to in the Linas-Marcousis accord, even after Gbagbo had implemented part of harboring opposition politician Alassane Quattara in the French Embassy in Abidjan. (Global Security; 2003:5).

Also, noting the self-interest of surrounding countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and even those of their imperialist rival in the region, the United States and France decided to strong arm the warring parties to go to Paris for a negotiated settlement amidst ongoing peace negotiations in Togo. The result of this was the Linas-Marcousis accord which Gbagbo has recently criticized that he signed to under duress, and subsequently broke in November 2004 when he ordered government troops to disarm the rebels in the North (Sunday Vanguard; 2004:12). In the process, the French claimed, 9 of their soldiers were killed and had to attack key military bases in the Ivory Coast including the presidential palace in Yamoussoukro in retaliation.

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### **Nigeria & Her Neighbours**

Nigeria has always looked beyond its borders. While Africa has been the cornerstone of its foreign policy, Nigeria has seen itself and been perceived by others, as a global player on the world stage. This is evidenced from its role in the African liberation struggle to its recent peace keeping operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone. While Nigeria's foreign policy appeared to tilt towards the capitalist west during the cold war era, she has often acted in what she considered to be its national interest. This can be seen in the significant roles Nigeria played in the creation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and how she used the arena of the commonwealth and the United Nations to advance her national, as well as African interests.

Nigeria's approach to both Africa and its immediate neighbours has been based on a policy of decolonization, non-integration, a commitment to African Unity and more recently, economic diplomacy and African development. During the 1960s, Nigeria's foreign policy towards its neighbours was characterized by regional Hegemonic co-operation development, as seen in the creation of the lake Chad Basin Commission in 1965, and the setting up of the Niger River Basin Commission and subsequently, Nigeria-Benin and Nigeria-Niger joint commissions in 1973. However, the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 brought a fundamental shift in Nigeria's relations with its neighbours, changing its policy of "benign neglect" towards its neighbours. Thus, from then on, Nigeria's foreign policy shifted from an Afro-centric thrust to that of Concentricism, which subordinated her external relations to the logic of internal development. In this vein also, the establishment of ECOWAS as, an initiative led by Nigeria in 1975, sought, among other goals, to provide an institutional framework for managing relations with its West African Neighbours, as well as attempting to reduce their dependence on France. This rising hegemonic profile of Nigeria is one of the sore points in the frosty political relation between Nigeria and France, which guides both countries foreign policy actions towards each other.

Nigeria's ascendancy to regional and continental leadership, which is consistent with its four "concentric circles" of her national interests (Gambari; 21) manifested a great deal in the 1990s with her diplomatic and military intervention in Liberia and in Sierra Leone through the instrumentality of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). Nigeria-led intervention in Liberia and Sierra Leone, lasted eleven years and resulted in over 1,000 Nigerian fatalities and cost the Nigerian treasury billions of dollars (Vogt; 1998:105). Although Nigeria was itself enmeshed in its own political, financial and military difficulties, these interventions were the first in the post-cold War era to be launched by a sub-regional organization, ECOWAS. The Liberian missions between 1993 and 1997 was the first time that the UN has deployed peace/keepers alongside an existing sub-regional organization. In general,

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Nigeria's involvement in Liberia and Sierra Leone was part of its efforts to ensure stability in the West African sub-region. According to Vogt (1998:106), Nigeria went to

Liberia to defend core values of its foreign policy: protection of its citizens in Liberia, ensuring stability of the West African sub-region as well as preventing conflict contagion. The same reasons also explain her military intervention and peace keeping efforts in Sierra Leone, even though in both instances, the personal idiosyncrasies, attitude and beliefs of her leaders and their relations with the leaders of these countries at these points in time could have also influenced Nigeria's actions.

Given her frontal role in ensuring security and peace in the West African sub-region, why is Nigeria not intervening in the Ivory Coast in the way she did in Liberia and Sierra Leone? Why did she not contribute troops to the Region's military force to Ivory Coast in the early days of the crisis? Why is President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa in charge of Africa's intervention effort at the level of the Africa Union? And what implications, has the South African role on Nigeria's sub-regional and regional power aspirations? These questions tend to escalate the bankruptcy and inconsistency that characterize Nigeria's big brother diplomacy vision in West Africa.

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In finding answers to what factors and considerations constrains Nigeria's hegemonic role in ECOWAS and AU Intervention efforts so far, the following popular considerations are worth exploring.

### **Ivory Coast As A Regional Competitor**

The Ivory Coast is a very important country in West Africa. It is a leading member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) accounting for 41% of the groups combined GDP. UEMOA is composed of 8 West African states (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo) that share the same currency; the CFA franc. The Ivory Coast is also a member of the 16-nation ECOWAS. In September 1998, the Abidjan stock Exchange was replaced by the Bourse Regionale des Valeurs Mobilières (BRVM), a regional stock Exchange, which serves the member nations of UEMOA. The Ivory Coast was once a model of political stability and economic prosperity nurtured by a good dose of foreign investments and immigrant participation in the liberalized commodity economy. Ivory Coast ranks first among top Cocoa producers in the world and third in coffee production thus accounting for over 40% of the economy of the entire Francophone West Africa (Ugwoke; 2004:6). By implication, it is the zone's richest country (13£3C NEWS, World edition; 2003). Her primary exports are cocoa, coffee, and timber. Together, the revenue from these exports make up approximately 40% of her GDP and approximately 70% of the total export earnings.

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However, our interest in this section is to highlight the nexus between her strong economy and its foreign policy. This is because the foreign policy of any nation is determined by a number of factors chief among which include its economy, geography

and population. These factors determine the activeness or passiveness of the nation's foreign policy. The Ivory Coast is a Regional competitor to Nigeria because of her strong economy, which is reinforced by her central geographic position in the region. She shares more than 3,000km of land borders with five ECOWAS states: Burkina Faso (584), Ghana (668km), Guinea (610km), Liberia (716km) and Mali (532). At least, 4million of the 16.5million inhabitants of the Ivory Coast are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from neighbouring countries, with more than half of these originally from Burkina Faso (2.5 million). Others originated from Mali (over 1 million), Guinea (300,000), Ghana (200,000) and Liberia (100,000) (UNOW A: 2004). Countries such as Senegal, Niger and Nigeria also have many of their citizens living in the Ivory Coast. An overview of her economic and energy profile, which are strong domestic determinants of her foreign policy, will suffice:

### **Economic Overview**

Market Exchange Rate (03/04/04): US\$1 = 538.5 CF A

Nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDOP at market exchange rate) (2003E): \$ 14.2 billion.

Real GDP Growth Rate (2002E):-1.2% (2003E):-1.4%.

Nominal GDP per Capital (2002E): 4.2%

Current Account Balance (2002E): \$467 million

Major Trading Partners: European Union, United States, ECOWAS – member states; Merchandise Export (2002E):\$5.48 billion (2002E): \$6.18 billion

Merchandise Import (2002E):\$2.95 billion (2002E):\$3.30 billion

Merchandise Trade Balance (2002E): \$2.53 Billion (2002E):\$2.88 billion

Major Export Product: Cocoa, coffee, timber, petroleum products

Major Import Products: Food, Consumer goods, industrial goods, machinery

Total External Debt (2002E): \$10.7 billion

### **Energy Overview**

Proven Oil Reserve (111104E); 100 million barrels

Oil Production (2003E): 32, 970 barrels per day (bb1/d), of which 31,970 bb1/d is crude oil

Oil Consumption (2003E): 32,000bb1/d

Net Oil Imports (2003E): 970bb1/d

Crude Refining Capacity (1/1/04E): 65,200bb1/d

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Natural Gas Reserves (1/1/04E): 1.05 trillion cubic feet (tcf) Natural Gas Production (2001E): 47.7 billion cubic feet (bcf) Natural Gas

Consumption (2001E): 47.7 bcf

Electric Generation Capacity (1/1/01E): 0.89 million kilowatts

Electric Generation (2001E): 4.6 billion kilowatt-hours (of which 61% is thermal, 39% is hydroelectric) (EIA: March 2004; 5-6)

Comparatively, Nigeria with a land area of 923,768km<sup>2</sup> and an estimated population of over 120 million exhibits understated profile.

### **Economic Review**

Major subsistence resources: Rice, maize, (corn), taro, yams, cassava, sorghum, and millet

Major commercial resources: Sub-Sahara Africa's leading producer of oil.

Gross National Product: US\$29 billion in 1993, ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa behind Algeria and Egypt

Real Gross Domestic Product: US\$1540 in 1993

Nigeria rank 21<sup>st</sup> in Africa, 17<sup>th</sup> in Sub-Sahara African.

Total External Debt: US\$32.5 billion in 1993.

Debt service costs were equal to 29% of the value of goods and service exported (1992).

Nigeria, in addition to its huge population is endowed with significant agricultural, marine and forest resources. Its multiple vegetation zones, plentiful rain, surface water and underground water resources and moderate climate, allow for production of diverse food and cash crops. Over 60 percent of the population is involved in the production of food crops. The rain forests have been well exploited for timber and wood products of exotic and popular species.

Oil and Gas, by value, are the most important minerals. They are exploited and produced in the Niger Delta basin and off-shore on the continental shelf and in the deep sea of the territorial waters. Nevertheless, there are significant non-oil mineral deposits which have been identified and evaluated; coal, iron ore, gypsum, phosphate, lime stone, marble, columbite, barite and gold.

The point being made here is that though the Ivory Coast is a significant regional power, a fact which has informed Nigeria's rather cautious role in the crisis, she is still not strong enough to significantly challenge Nigeria's hegemonic aspirations and position. In relative comparison for example, looking at the population of both countries, the Ivory Coast has a higher debt burden than Nigeria on the average. Nigeria also has a higher Gross National Product with of course a higher energy production and reserve than the Ivory Coast. In addition Nigeria remains West Africa's centre of highest attraction of foreign capital.

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### **The French Connection**

Relations between Nigeria and France have been characterized from the outset by distrust, hostility, and conflict. Apart from the phenomenon of Francafrique, which has been used to describe the negative nature of Franco-African relations, based on France support for African dictators, the reason for the political frictions between Nigeria and



France can be traced to Nigeria's big brother role in Africa as the "Giant of Africa". This much, was at play in 1961 when Nigeria broke diplomatic relations with France, just one year after independence, over the testing of atomic weapons in the Sahara. Apart from this, Nigeria's geo-political position in West Africa surrounded by four former French colonies, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin is instructive in this regard. Because of the 'special' relationship that France has established with its former colonies, she has been seen as being the main obstacle to the fulfillment of France regional interests (Nuamah: 2003). It is in this context that we must understand the role of France in Nigeria's 3 years Civil War where it attempted to break up Nigeria while trying to keep Cameroon intact, and more recently, its role in the Nigeria/Cameroon dispute over the Bakassi peninsula. France supported and encouraged the decision to take the Bakassi dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICI) in 1994 knowing that the historical legal evidence for the territory was strong on the Cameroon side (Omogui; 2002).

For France, Nigeria has been the most potent threat to extending its influence in the region. As has been alluded to earlier, Nigeria's frontal role in the establishment of ECOWAS which strategically reduced Nigeria's immediate neighbours dependence on France did not go down well with Paris, which has deep economic interests in the post colonial economy and politics of its former colonies. In the Ivory Coast specifically, France imperialist interests cover Cocoa, Coffee, Electricity, Railways, Petrol and Financial sectors which are the main-stay of the economy. For example, till date, France guarantees the CF A Franc, which is the Ivory Coasts currency. Thus, the control of the Ivory Coast, one of the main bases for its continuing domination in this region, is an important strategic stake for French imperialism (R.1: 2003: 1). It is for this reason that France has taken an active interest in the crisis and has deployed a large number of heavily armed troops into the Ivory Coast. It has also used its strong diplomatic influence with the various armed factions disputing power to bring them to Paris to strong arm them into finding a negotiated settlement which came in the form of the Linas-Marcousis accord.

Arising from the above, Nigeria views its intervention in the Ivory Coast crisis with caution. Consequently, she did not contribute troops to the military force deployed by the ECOWAS to replace the French troops in a truce agreed to by all the parties in October 2002.

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However, this paper expresses a serious reservation on this restraint on an active role by Nigeria in Ivory Coast. For example, should Nigeria intervene actively in Ivory Coast the way she did in Sierra Leone and Liberia, how much worse will it strain the already strained relationship between her and France? Based on a Nigerian active involvement in the Ivory Coast crisis, can France declare war on Nigeria? Are our Foreign policy makers not being too cautious and creating a dilemma where really there should be none?

### **Nigeria's civil war experience with the Ivory Coast**

One of the major lessons Nigeria learnt from its 3 years Civil War and which subsequently impacted on its foreign policy was that the country's survival as a sovereign state could not be taken for granted. Based on that and on France sending arms to secessionist Biafra through Gabon and the Ivory Coast, there was compelling need for Nigeria to have friendly governments in neighbouring countries. However, despite the impact of this lesson on Nigeria's foreign relations, (it brought a fundamental shift to Nigeria's relations with its neighbours changing its policy of "benign neglect" towards its neighbours), Nigeria cannot forget in a hurry the role played by the Ivory Coast in perpetuating the Civil War by supplying arms to the secessionist Biafra, giving them diplomatic recognition and even subsequently granting asylum to the rebels. For Nigeria therefore, intervening effectively to end crisis becomes a normal burden. Either way, whether the lesson from the Civil War will make Nigeria tread softly in other not to lose the friendship of an important neighbour as the Ivory Coast, or whether the bitter experience of Ivory Coast's role in the Nigerian Civil War restrains her from actively participating in the peace process to end the crisis, caution is the word.

The second consideration leads us to a devil theory of War in that it could be in Nigeria's regional power interest for the civil war in the Ivory Coast to continue, at least for a while, because of the profound effects it would have on her economy, socio political and military well being. No doubt the war, which has already taken its toil on the Ivory Coast economy strategically, reduces her status as a regional competitor to Nigeria.

### **Conclusion: Big Brother Diplomacy In Post Cold War Order**

We have so far attempted to examine the crisis in the Ivory Coast and seek rationalization for Nigeria's Jettisoning of her assertive and adventurous big brother diplomacy as is consistent with its foreign policy profile in West African: This new posture does not only escalate the bankruptcy and inconsistency that characterize Nigeria's regional agenda but equally blurs the interface between domestic and foreign policy.

Our analysis shows that, escalated leadership crisis in the Ivory Coast has its roots in the colonial and immediate post – colonial past of the country. The artificiality, irreconcilability of territorial boundaries and the bonding of

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congeries of ethnic groups seething on diverse centres of loyalty in Africa as in Ivory Coast have created Mutual suspicion among national leaders. This kind of mutual suspicion, mistrust and recrimination that now pervade the post colonial African Political System have given rise to illegitimacy, military rebellion, insurgency and religious and ethnic animosities. On the demotic front, the ethnic hodgepodge that is the situation in Ivory Coast is typical of Nigeria's socio-political post-colonial reality. While Boigny's paternalistic and charismatic 33 years rule of the Ivory Coast put a lid on the rancour and acrimony being brewed in the country, Nigeria has held together since independence. That Nigeria's ruling elites have not been driven by this interface, is no justification for a

bankrupt policy that is inconsistent with Nigeria's wider regional agenda.

A devil's theory that preaches the advantages of a weak Ivory Coast as possible regional competitor with Nigeria lacks credibility and intellectual depth for two reasons. On the one hand, the contagion spells similar crisis for countries of the sub-region which Nigeria can ill afford to ignore. In addition, a weak Ivory Coast is a regional moral burden for Nigeria. On the other hand, the thesis of a regional economic competitor suffers poverty of idea. With its large population, oil and natural gas production capacities and reserves as well as significant mineral deposits like coal, iron ore, gypsum, kaolin, phosphate, lime stone, marable, comlumbite, goal, etc., Nigeria is obviously the darling of foreign capital in Sub-Sahara Africa. Its possession of a large pool of skilled manpower and scientist has given the country a unique advantage over any competitor with regional hegemonic agenda.

The ascendant post-cold war order has brought tremendous changes to relations between and within sovereign states. The rising wave of Americanization of the world as manifested in the actualization of the old American dreams of rising American profile and aggression, do not only point to the beginning of a uni-multi-polar configuration of international order, but has unleashed serious implications for the character of neo-colonial competition. The fear of a French reprisal in the event of a repeat of Nigeria adventurism in Liberia and Sierra Leone is not only unreal but also an expression of descent from hegemonic heights. A peace enforcement mission like Liberia and Sierra Leonean examples is not an occupation army. The reduction of world tension occasioned by the declining number of centers of ideological conflict has tended to blur the sharpness of neo-colonial competition between the former colonial powers. In the Ivorian case, the refusal of France to implement a UN mandate to intervene in the Ivory Coast clearly testify to the declining neo-colonial competition following the end of the cold war. A BBC report of President Chirac's refusal to visit Ivory Coast while accepting to be hosted by Senegal during a recent African tour is further proof of the declining fortunes of neo-colonial fixation. Therefore, Nigeria's fear of possible French reprisal lacks potency and a sense political responsibility.

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While this paper appreciates the spectre of diplomatic correctness that drives Nigeria's role in Ivorian crisis as against her big brother diplomacy and adventurism in past regional conflict resolution, we think that Nigeria is rather being unnecessarily cautious. This option suggest, a weakness and disappointment to members of the international community who would expect the opportunity presented by the crisis to be trapped by Nigeria for asserting and confirming herself as regional power instead of inviting another competitor – South Africa to seize the opportunity.

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