

SHIFTY DEMOGRAPHIC CONFIGURATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the significance of demographic trends to national security, development, and regional/global influence. Specifically, it interrogates the impact of countries' populations, their varying demographic presentations inclusive, on their domestic and external affairs. One stream of thought contends that the larger the population of a nation, the more active and influential roles it plays abroad. This is predicated upon the assumption that population constitutes a key element of national power. If properly harnessed, a relatively big population translates into big market opportunity for economic growth, as well as huge reserve for military service. This, in turn, serves as a critical indicator for national security and stability. It is in this context, coupled with its geographical size and location, among other power elements, that Nigeria is often conceived as the 'giant of Africa' - a country with 'manifest destiny' to lead the West African sub-region, and indeed the entire continent. Nonetheless, it is evident that mere population advantage, without corresponding positive mobilization, does not equate national security and development. Indeed, it could become a threat to national security where a large segment of such population is alienated and unproductive. This emblemizes Nigeria's emergent security challenges as depicted in the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, militancy in the Niger Delta, banditry in the Northwest, farmers-herders' clashes in the Benue Valley, kidnapping in the Southeast, robbery and gangsterism in the Southwest, and several intra-and inter-ethnic conflicts festering around the country. It is, therefore, the contention of this paper that particular demographic trends can hinder human security, as well as other dimensions of a country's national security and overall development, even if it does not necessarily depict shortage of regional influence. The paper deploys secondary data, and uses content analysis to demonstrate the inseparable linkage between a nation's shifting demographic configuration and national security and development; and the paradox attendant upon the exercise of regional influence even in the face of evident population and demographic challenges.

Keywords: Population; National Security; Human Security; Development; Insecurity; Conflict

1.0 INTRODUCTION

With an estimated population of 200 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa, the seventh most populous country in the world, and the country with the highest concentration of people of black descent on earth (UNPD, 2019). It is estimated that, one in every six black men in the world is a Nigerian and one in every four Africans is a Nigerian (Ogunsanwo, 2009). While the sheer size of Nigeria's population is not in doubt, cognizance must be taken of the contradictions inherent in the fact that much of what is bandied around as the country's population is conjectural. As a former Uganda's Environment Minister, Kahinda Otafire, noted in 2005, Nigerians are one people that are incapable of

counting themselves (see BBC, 2005; Mimiko, 2006) due to controversies, and rejections that trailed virtually all the censuses in the country. The 1962/1963 census was devoid of the requisite legitimacy fundamental to such an exercise. The 1973 edition conducted by the military government of General Yakubu Gowon, ended up in controversy. The chairman of the census commission, and foremost politician, Chief Obafemi Awolowo, both called for the cancellation of the results, because of the general impression that they lacked integrity. By the time Gowon was removed from office, July 1975, his successor, late General Murtala Mohammed, cancelled the entire exercise. It wasn't until 1991 that the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida conducted the next census, years after it should have been undertaken going by the conventional 10 yearly interval from one census to another. Like the two censuses before it, the 1991 exercise was also fraught with controversies. Public opinion, particularly from the South, was quite critical of the figures, on the basis that it was a build-up on the 1963 census, supposedly manipulated to favour the North. The position of some prominent Nigerians, including Justice Adetokunbo Ademola, Professors Sam Aluko and Wole Soyinka, that the exercise was adequate did not detract from this pattern of general suspicion of the figures (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2017).

If the official census figures are anything to go by, the population of what came to be known as Nigeria has continued to witness exponential increase since 1863 when the first headcount was conducted in the former Lagos Colony by British colonialists. Similar exercises were conducted in 1871, 1881, 1901, 1911, 1921, and 1952/1953, in colonial Nigeria (*Nigerian Tribune*, 2017). The trend continued in post-colonial period, from the controversial census of 1962/1963 and subsequent ones conducted in 1991 and 2006. In the 1991 exercise, the country's population figure was officially put at 88.9 million. Fifteen years after, in 2006, the figure had jumped to 140.3 million (NBS, 2012; *Nigerian Tribune*, 2016). Since the 2006 census, several estimates and projections by the National Population Commission (NPC), and relevant international organizations, suggest that Nigeria's population has continuously grown. According to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Population Division (2019), Nigeria's population growth trend followed a particular pattern: 158.5 million in 2010, 164.7 million in 2012 (IMF, 2012: 30), 181.1 million in 2015, 185.9 million in 2016, 190.8 million in 2017, 195.8 million in 2018, and 199.9 million in 2019. Therefore, with the UN estimate of the country's current population of 201 million (as at May 2019) (UNFPA, 2019), Nigeria's population, with a density of 221 per km² (571 people per mi²) is roughly 2.6 per cent of the total world population (*The Punch*, 2018; *Premium Times*, 2019).

According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2017), Nigeria is projected to be the fifth-largest country in the world by 2030, with an estimated population of 264 million, and the third-largest by 2050 with 410 million projected population. Significantly, no less than 63 per cent of Nigeria's current estimated population is under the age of 25 (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018; and *Premium Times*, 2019).

Corresponding to the size of Nigeria's population is the economy. Nigeria is Africa's largest economy with an estimated 2017 gross domestic product (GDP) of \$400 billion, compared to South Africa's \$317 billion, the continent's second largest economy (IMF Report, 2017). Nigeria accounts for 71 per cent of West Africa's GDP, and 27 per cent of the continent's GDP. However, despite such seemingly good economic outlook, Nigeria's GDP per capita in 2018 was \$2,123, compared to \$5,588 in South Africa. With a population growth rate of 2.6 per cent per year to an economic growth rate of 0.8 per cent to 1.9 per cent in 2018, this implies negative to zero per capita income – meaning that more people will, going forward, be thrown into poverty (Okonjo-Iweala, 2018: xvi). The country has

also failed to acquaint itself creditably in relation to other indexes of development, like maternal mortality, nutrition, etc. Thus, by the end of the first quarter of 2019, the country was already ranked the sixth most miserable place to live on earth by the World Misery Index (Toromade, 2018; Uwugiaren, 2019).

Such paradox of endemic poverty in the midst of potentials in terms of human resources, mineral deposits, arable land, and the huge population, with humongous youth component (UNPD, 2017 and NPC, 2019), hold significant national security and development implications. To all intents and purposes, Nigeria confronts a reality in which instead of becoming a tool for nation building and economic prosperity, its huge population, if not properly harnessed and oriented to development, may pose grave security risks.

1.1 The Problematic

No doubt, population constitutes a tangible element of national power. In the conduct of foreign policy and external relations, population advantage plays an important role. On the other hand, a population not appropriately mobilized for development tends to become a burden to a state. This is the case with Nigeria, which large population, the largest in Africa, is not well mobilized. Yet, the country remains the dominant force in the West Africa sub-region. What explains this peculiar configuration? How come Nigeria still retains this influential status in the region, in spite of its rickety population? To what extent does Nigeria's population serve as indicator of its national power, and influence in the West African sub-region? What are the other factors of national power that accord Nigeria relevance in sub-regional and regional affairs? This is the problematic that this paper addresses, with a view to proffering actionable recommendations in relation to the appropriate framework for mobilizing the country's population to the effect of enhancing its national power for greater relevance in regional affairs.

1.2 Conceptual Exploration: Population, National and Human Security, and Development

Population is the demographic study of the size, structure and development of human inhabitants in a particular place over a given period of time (Scheidel, 2006). For Preston, Heuveline and Guillot (2001), population is a "collection of persons alive at a specified point in time who meet certain criteria. Or better still, the kind of collectivity that persists through time even though its members are continuously changing through attrition and accession". Hence, the population of Nigeria in this context refers to the aggregate of persons who are alive in the area defined as Nigeria, and possibly even those who were born and live elsewhere but have legitimate claim to Nigerian nationality and/or citizenship.

The word population is of Latin origin, *populus*, meaning 'people'. Hence, United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) (2001) defines population as "all the inhabitants of a given country or area (province, city, metropolitan area etc.) considered together". It further posits that population in sampling could also be "the whole collection of units which include persons, households, institutions, events etc., from which a sample may be drawn". Population also refers to a number or body of people, persons, or individuals, who have a common quality or characteristic, and inhabit a particular locality from which samples are taken for statistical measurement. It is in this sense that population and demography are used interchangeably. The core distinction, however, is that demography (which literally means 'description of ... people'), is more specific. It equates statistical study of human

populations, especially with reference to size and density, distribution, and vital statistics in terms of changes such as the number of births, deaths, marriages, illness, wealth and poverty ratio, etc., that occur over a period of time (Reference?). To Duncan and Hauser (1972, in UNSD, 2014), “demography is the study of the size, territorial distribution, and composition of population, changes therein, and the components of such changes, which may be identified as natality, mortality, territorial movement (migration), and social mobility (change of status)”.

National security and *human security* are intertwined, yet differ. For Agwu (2013), national security is a commodious concept whose free usage is clichéd and subjected to profound controversy and misunderstanding. It is open to different interpretations, and readily lends itself to varied or divergent perceptions. Indeed, the very fact that the American National Security Act of 1947 did not define it buttresses the point. For one, such ambiguity leaves the government of the United States the discretion to invoke the Act on any issue perceived as a threat to the interests of the country. Nonetheless, Agwu (2013: 132 – 135) traces the origin of the concept of national security to the Westphalia Peace Treaty of 1648; its evolution as an academic concept to Yale University in the United States in 1790; and its formal admittance in the United States as the official guiding principle of its foreign policy in 1947. It was in 1947 that the US Congress passed the bill on National Security, signed into law by President Harry Truman on July 26, 1947 (Agwu, 2013). In this paper, national security is conceived more broadly as the condition or situation in which a country or any of its parts, and all or part of its assets – human and non-human, tangible and intangible – are protected or saved from harm, or any form of military and non-military (economy, energy, environment, health, etc.) threat. In this broader context, security threat is tantamount to “anything that endangers the lives and property of a people, a particular social order, and/or a way of life to which a people is committed” (Mimiko, 2008: 290).

Essential to national security is *human security*, which emphasizes not territorial security or regime security, but people’s welfare and wellbeing. It involves safety of individuals in terms of their economic, food, health, environment, personal, community, and political needs. There are two broad dimensions to this notion of security. First is ‘freedom from fear’, which focuses on protecting individuals from violent conflicts and poverty, lack of state capacity, and other forms of inequalities. Secondly, is ‘freedom from want’, which includes elements like hunger, disease, and natural disasters – regarded as inseparable concepts in addressing the root of human insecurity. According to the United Nations Human Development Report in 1994 (*Human Security Journal*, 2007: 2), “in the final analysis, human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode into violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity”.

The concept of *development* is perceived variously as “economic growth”, “increased industrialization”, and “change” and “advancement” in technology, among others. This plurality of perspectives is underpinned by ideological specificities, making a common conception practically impossible. For analytical purpose, however, the definitions of Walter Rodney, and Dudley Seers are adopted here. Both are preferred for their emphasis on the human condition; and presage the type of developmental challenges the Nigerian populace faces. According to Rodney (1972: 9), “Development in human society is a many-sided process. At the level of the individual, it implies increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing.” For Seers (Seers, 1969: 3), development question must be posed thus:

The questions to ask about a country's development are ... what has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? And what has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high levels, then beyond doubt, this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result "development" – even if per capita income doubled.

The relevance of these conceptions to the reality of Nigeria is unmistakable. Both address the challenge that Nigerians face. Thus, while basic statistics suggest that the country is richly endowed, the underlying challenges of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and ignorance remain unresolved. It is indeed doubtful if there is 'increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing,' either at individual or collective level of existence of Nigeria's citizenry.

2.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper, Human Capital Theory (HCT) is adopted. The origin of the theory is traceable to the work of Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776. Smith's idea was formulated on the basis of what was to later become the science of human capital (Smith, 1976). The theory was later popularized by Leroy Almendarez (2011), G. Becker (1962), A. Fagerlind, and L. J. Saha (1997) among others. The underlying assumption of the theory is that, a human population that is highly invested on in terms of formal education and other requisite skills that are instrumental to and necessary for greater productivity and output, constitute the most productive capital. This presupposes that human capital will lead to greater economic output. Hence, the HCT and its proponents believe that an educated and empowered population is a productive one, and a productive population gives rise to a productive society, while the latter breeds peaceful co-existence, stability, growth and development (Becker, 1962; Fagerlind and Saha, 1997; Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1997; Odekunle, 2001; Mimiko, 2005; Cohen and Soto, 2007; and Almendarez, 2011). This, according to Fagerlind and Saha (1997), provides justification for large public expenditure on education in many countries. This theory considers education as the key determinant of economic growth and social stability. The implication, therefore, is that, any nation that pays little attention to the education of its citizens, and their empowerment, risks having its population as a liability. Such could constitute some form of security threats, become agents of destruction, and cause instability, instead of serving as national asset for socio-economic and political prosperity and development. Thus, the suitability of the theory in the Nigerian context cannot be over-emphasized.

2.1 Nigeria's Shifty Demographic Configurations and Challenges

Nigeria is the most populous country on the African continent, and the largest concentration of black people in the world. It is, however, a country substantially weighed down by weak national unity. Such a reality of shaky national cohesion, does not just detracts from the country's quest for economic prosperity, and human security, as noted by Paden (2016), but also from regional and global reckoning and respectability. Even so, this huge population, in spite of the attendant contradictions, conveys a

power image that underlines much of the resentment that Nigerians face across Africa, and the phoney veneration their country is accorded by many of the countries on the continent (Akinterinwa, 2014; Ogunsanwo, 2015). The truth, however, is that the huge size of the country's population does not correspond to high per capita income (PCI) for its citizens when compared with those of neighbouring countries. While the country, with a PCI of \$2,081 in 2018 (Table 1), is ahead of all other countries in the sub-region, except the island nation of Cape Verde (\$3,250), the significance that this represents pales into utter irrelevance against the backdrop of the very poor showing of Nigeria in terms of virtually all human development indexes.

Table 1 below shows Nigeria's performance in terms of PCI compared to other West African countries in 2018.

Table 1: Per Capita Income of ECOWAS Member-States, 2018

S/No.	Country	Per Capita Income (PCI) in USD
1.	Cape Verde	\$3,250,
2.	Nigeria	\$2,081
3.	Ghana	\$2,045
4.	Ivory Coast	\$1,538
5.	Senegal	\$1,516
6.	Mali	\$852
7.	Benin Republic	\$827
8.	Guinea	\$823
9.	Guinea Bissau	\$794
10.	The Gambia,	\$769
11.	Liberia	\$694
12.	Burkina Faso	\$643
13.	Togo	\$610
14.	Sierra Leone	\$506
15.	Niger	\$378

Source: Available online at: <https://countryeconomy.com/countries/groups/economic-community-west-african-states>. Accessed on 22/04/2019

The World Bank Report (2019), for instance, indicates that extreme poverty has been on the increase among the Nigerian populace. It notes that while the country has made some progress in socio-economic terms in recent years, its human capital development profile remains weak. The country ranked 152 out of 157 countries in the Bank's 2018 Human Capital Index. Inequality in terms of income and opportunities has been on the increase, adversely affecting poverty reduction. Large segments of Nigeria's population, some 86.9 million of them, still live in poverty, without adequate access to basic services. At 13.2 million, Nigeria has the highest number of out-of-school children at the primary education level. By 2019, Nigeria had gone ahead of India to become the country with the most under-five deaths in the world, as more children die of malaria in the country than in any other in the world (World Bank, 2018). With an estimated 87 million Nigerians, around half of the country's population, living on less than \$1.90 a day, Nigeria has overtaken India as the country with the largest number of people living in extreme poverty (Adebayo, 2018). Former Governor of Nigeria's Central Bank,

Mallam Sanusi (in Waheed, 2018), projects that based on current realities, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo will house 40 per cent of the world's poorest people by 2050. Available job opportunities remain very limited, with the attendant high poverty levels, sub-regional inequality, and social and political unrest in the country (World Bank, 2019).

The foregoing is quite significant in the context in which regional respect is no longer a function of some variables, as highlighted by Omole (2010), to wit: population size, and natural resources; but by the rule of law, quality of governance, security of life, respect for human rights, and the quality of life of the citizenry (Ibid). As noted by Mimiko (2006: 1-21), the fact of ineffective leadership that has defined the Nigerian state for so long constrains its ability to leverage its huge population, which ordinarily should be an advantage. Such contradictions in the governance of the Nigerian state, especially the disconnect between the government and the governed, is put in bolder relief by Clinton (2009) and Egwu (2013). It is an arrangement in which "Nigerian voters are mere voters and do not, in the liberal sense, constitute an electorate, such that little or no contact occurs between people who cast their votes and officials who do not owe their election to what was on the ballot of the vote casters" (Egwu, 2013). Thus, electoral authoritarianism prevails in the country as the dominant actors have captured the important institutions for building electoral democracy, including the election management bodies and political parties (Egwu, 2013: 8). This equates Hillary Clinton's (2009) "failure of governance" thesis, or what in Achebe's (1983) parlance amounts to "failure of leadership." All of these provide a ready platform for the high level of insecurity in the country, emblemized by the Boko Haram insurgency (Obiyan and Usman, 2013). The former US Secretary of State provides a very succinct outlook on the Nigerian contradiction in this manner,

...[W]e (the Americans and American government) recognize, as I have told the government officials with whom I have met today, that Nigeria is at a crossroads, and it is imperative that citizens be engaged and that civic organizations be involved in helping to chart the future of this great nation... Today, I am in Nigeria, a country that produces 2 million barrels of oil a day, has the seventh-largest natural gas reserves of any country in the world, but according to the United Nations, the poverty rate in Nigeria has gone up from 46 per cent to 76 per cent over the last 13 years. Now, there are many reasons why Nigeria has struggled... The most immediate source of the disconnect between Nigeria's wealth and its poverty is a failure of governance at the local, state and federal level... The lack of transparency and accountability has eroded the legitimacy of the government and contributed to the rise of groups that embrace violence and reject the authority of the state... In order to create a peaceful, stable environment that creates development among the people, citizens need to have confidence that their votes count, that their government cares about them, that democracy can deliver basic services (Clinton, 2009) (emphasis ours).

What Clinton failed to add however to this precinct summary of the Nigerian situation is the fact of the incompatibility of the prevailing structure of governance that the country seems married to

with the agenda for development. The truth is that the Nigerian state is deliberately designed and structured to act and behave in a particular manner conducive to state capture, and rent seeking, and distortive of social development. This was the structure put in place by colonialism, which was inherited and tuned up for greater delivery of exploitation of the citizenry by the new class of elites who took over power from the colonists. The wide gap between potential and actual development that has defined Nigeria therefore, is but a symptom of the real problem; the latter being the structure of the Nigerian state, which cannot but reproduce dysfunctionality vis a vis social development (Mimiko, 2009: 1-11; Mimiko, 2016). The overt centralization of governance in a fundamentally heterogeneous social formation cannot for instance engender the type of creativity requisite for national development. Rather, it breeds exclusion, alienation, and indeed constitutes the very basis for rebellion and delegitimization of the state. In this circumstances, the assumption that the dysfunctionality of the Nigerian state is a function of corruption, is therefore quite simplistic, as corruption is nothing but a symptom of a deeper malaise, which thus far has been mostly neglected or tolerated in Nigeria.

It is apposite in the circumstances that a society bedevilled with the problem of endemic poverty and unemployment, especially among the most productive segment of its population, as it is currently the case in Nigeria, will retrogress, and have its peace and stability endangered (Usman, 2015; Usman, 2018). In this instant case, the largest and by far most energetic component of Nigeria's population is badly battered by governance dysfunctionality, poverty, and shrinking opportunities. This situation holds at least two implications, to wit, this critical segment is not only unproductive, but also poses serious security threat to the polity. Inevitably, they tend to manifest a very high propensity for systemic disruption, and violence in consonance of Ted Gurr's (1970) frustration-aggression theory. This is what the country has witnessed as, among others, the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, sectarian conflicts, assassinations, political thuggery, kidnapping, and militancy, and advanced fee frauds.

Significantly, in spite of the foregoing, Nigeria remains the biggest, and most influential player in the West African sub-region, and one of the better leveraged in the whole continent of Africa. Its dominance in ECOWAS, the formation of which it promoted soon after its Civil War, is clearly evident. On most sub-regional, and indeed continental issues, the opinion of Nigeria is widely sought, and its acquiescence is obtained before major diplomatic initiatives are delivered. Thus in 2017, two of its former Ministers, Akinwumi Adesina, and Amina Mohammed, got elected into the prestigious positions of President of the African Development Bank, and as Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations respectively. It is virtually a given, that its Permanent Representative at the United Nations, Mohammed Tijjani-Bande, will lead the General Assembly from September. Nigeria's reluctance at signing the treaty of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA), has virtually stalled the initiative. All of these are emblematic of a country that exercises influence all over the African continent.

2.2 Nigeria's Power and Influence Relationship in Africa

The question that arises against the foregoing backdrop is, why, in spite of the population and demographic contradictions it projects, does Nigeria still exercise influence in the West African sub-region, and across Africa as a whole. Its huge population remains very poorly mobilized, its economy is monocultural and structurally weak. Its fault lines are deep, and make the task of nation-building gargantuan. Its governance institutions are weak, and probably not getting stronger either. The answer lies in the central thesis upon which this paper is predicated, to wit, its population and demographic

contradictions notwithstanding, a country that is disproportionally situated, or greatly advantaged in terms of size, population, location, and resource outlay, in relation to its neighbours, even where such power elements are yet to be reasonably mobilized, will continue to exercise considerable diplomatic influence in the region. This can be cited as the theory of Disproportionate Engagement.

In Nigeria's case, a number of factors make the demographic and population-related challenges, which the country faces, pale into utter insignificance. So compelling are these elements that neighbouring, and indeed other nations would seek to engage with the country, notwithstanding its rickety population profile. First is the fact that the population, its limitations notwithstanding, constitutes an attractive market that no country really wants to be disengaged from. It does not matter how financially incapacitated such a population is, its hugeness confers some reasonable degree of attraction on it from countries that have a range of products and services to market.

Secondly, the fact that Nigeria is richly endowed with crude oil and natural gas gives it a compelling force in its region, if not beyond. At least thus far, and in spite of the movement in the direction of clean energy, virtually every country still desires to have a little more of fossil fuel – for the foreseeable future. Thirdly, Nigeria's strategic location, and the role it plays in the Gulf of Guinea axis is strategic for international commercial navigation. As demonstrated by Mimiko (2013: 119-237), the Gulf of Guinea sits on an estimated 50 billion barrels of crude oil, and of the purest low sulphur quality. As well, unlike several other waterways and transit routes around the world, the Gulf of Guinea does not have transit chokepoints, i.e. narrow shipping maritime lanes, making it a preferred operational route for most vessels desirous of minimal risks to navigation (Ibid). It is also proximate to the main crude oil markets of Europe and the Americas; and the relative weakness of institutions notwithstanding, Nigeria is generally regarded as still being reasonably capable of administering some degree of stability in the Gulf region (Ibid).

The fourth critical basis for the influence relationship Nigeria exhibits in its sub-region, in spite of its relatively weak demographics and governance institutions, is the fact that the country retains the ability to mobilize a force of reasonable degree of capability enough to police (even if tentatively) the sub-region of its location (Mimiko, 2013: 231 – 233). The fact that Nigeria remains a country of potential is the fifth basis of its regional influence. The idea is that all countries that hold the hope that someday this sleeping giant would wake up and assert itself and occupy its place in the global scheme of things would convert some degree of cordial relations with Nigeria. They would hope to be relevant as a friend of the potentially enormously powerful Nigeria, when eventually the country finds its feet, if it ever does.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Population constitutes one of the key elements by which national power is determined in the international system. It is, therefore, always an important determinant of a country's influence relationship in the system. Ordinarily, a huge population confers advantages, militarily and economically. Nigeria has such a huge population, in both absolute and comparative terms. Yet, the huge population, which ordinarily should be a national asset, does not seem to constitute one, because it is not adequately mobilized, economically, politically, and socially. Indeed, Nigeria's behemoth of a population is inverted, and becomes some form of threat to national wellbeing, and security. The fact that in spite of its basic contradictions, Nigeria remains disproportionately advantageous when placed side by side with its neighbours account for the extensive influence it continues to exercise in the sub-

region, thus validating the central thesis of this paper. It is that, its population and demographic contradictions notwithstanding, a country that is disproportionately situated, or greatly advantaged in terms of size, population, location, and resource outlay, in relation to its neighbours, even where such power elements are yet to be reasonably mobilized, will continue to exercise considerable diplomatic influence in the region. This is the type of engagement and influence relationship that is predicated upon a nation's disproportionate profile vis a vis its neighbours.

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