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Dear Readers,

It is with genuine pride that I present to you our special issue on the topic of „Nigeria: Balkanization ahead?,” a multifaceted collection of scholarly takes on the dangers and opportunities that appear amidst Nigeria’s inter-religious and inter-ethnic challenges.

The guest editors of this specialized collection of articles are Dr Adam Mayer, (of Széchenyi University Győr, Africa Research Center, Óbuda, Hungary, and UNED, Madrid, Spain) and Dr Michael Nwankpa (of Unicaf, Roehampton, and Centre for African Conflict & Development, London). Dr Mayer taught and researched in Nigeria’s Northeast for three years, and has published extensively on matters Nigerian. Nigerian-British Dr Nwankpa is a fixture in Boko Haram scholarship in the UK and beyond, as well as a security scholar of pan-African importance.

The fact that such a special edition can appear in Hungary is in itself significant and shows that Hungarian African studies has matured and that its venue, our very journal, is attractive to African, Eastern European and well as Western scholars. Hungary today has superseded that lack of interest that characterized the country’s turn away from the global South since 1990. Since the year 2015 and Hungary’s Eastward Opening and Southward Opening initiatives at the political level, the country is active again in both Asia and Africa – with Nigeria earning high state visits from Budapest and a special focus, due to its size and economic importance.

Nigeria today is bustling with creative energy in fields as varied as banking, IT, music, and movies. At the same time, it is experiencing security challenges that question the meaning of the word „peacetime” in the country. A crucial element in those challenges is the ethnic conundrum that has burdened the country since independence itself. Our contributors address this conundrum from different vantage points and arrive at very different conclusions regarding possible ways out of the current maze. Their opinions do not reflect the views of JCEEAS, naturally. But it is my conviction that every single one of them contributes to our better understanding of the topics at hand.

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# Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies

## Table of contents

<b>A. Mayer:</b> <i>Introduction to Nigeria: Balkanization ahead?</i> .....	3
<b>B. Agozino:</b> <i>Genocidist Discourse and Intellectuals in Africa</i> .....	13
<b>M. Nwankpa:</b> <i>The Politics and Dynamics of Secession in Nigeria</i> .....	33
<b>M. Yakubu – K. F. Aideloje – B. S. Taiwo:</b> <i>The Criminality of Counter-Insurgency in North-East Nigeria, 2012-2019: A Study of the Multinational Joint Task Force</i> .....	48
<b>A. M. Kovács:</b> <i>Here there be Dragons: Evolution, Potentials and Mitigation Opportunities of Cybercrime in Nigeria</i> .....	68
<b>T. N. S. Kaze – M. N. Mbapndah:</b> <i>Is Nigeria Ripe for Break Up? The Mitigating Importance of Cameroon and France in the Survival (prevention / protection) of Nigeria’s Territorial Integrity</i> ...	82
<b>T. Ososona:</b> <i>Toxic Elite Consensus and Leadership Gaps as the Main Driver of Nigeria's Crisis of Nationhood</i> .....	103
<b>U. I. Ya’u:</b> <i>Boko Haram Insurgency and Environmental Degradation in the North-East Region of Nigeria, 2009-2021</i> .....	117
<b>D. O. Iweze:</b> <i>The Role of Religious Leaders in Fostering Inter-Faith Dialogue Amid Boko Haram Insurgency in Kano, Northern Nigeria</i> .....	132
<b>J. Besenyő – M. Kármán:</b> <i>Changing Nigerian Migration Trends and its Hungarian Context</i> .....	148
<b>A. Cann:</b> <i>A Review of: “The Boko Haram Reader” by Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa and David Cook</i> .....	167
<b>Gy. Suha:</b> <i>Ways out of the maze in Nigeria? A Review of: “Naija Marxisms: Revolutionary Thought in Nigeria” by Adam Mayer</i> .....	170
<b>G. Sinkó:</b> <i>A Review of: “African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges” by Ryan Schaffer</i> .....	173
<b>M. Nwankpa:</b> <i>A Review of: “Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield” by Jason Warner, Ryan O’Farrell, Héni Nsaibia, and Ryan Cummings</i> .....	177
<b>Author Guide</b> .....	179



## Introduction to *Nigeria: Balkanization Ahead?*

Ádám Mayer<sup>1</sup>

Nigeria is a composite postcolonial state with more than 250 ethnic groups. Three of them, Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo constitute a relative plurality, as those are the largest communities in the federal state. These three major ethnic groups (sometimes called micro-nations, nationalities, or tribes) are sometimes together referred to as Nigeria's power „tripod.” Despite this, since 1966 there has not been an Igbo president or military head of state in the 200 million strong country, tilting the tripod towards one of its sides, namely the Hausa/Fulani-Yoruba nexus (especially since federal victory in the Biafra War in 1970). Nigeria is globally consequential. It is Africa's largest oil producer, and Africa's largest economy (since 2018 when it overtook South Africa). It is a cultural powerhouse, whose music, films, modern visual art, and novels reverberate way beyond the country's borders, and where financial services, as well as certain forms of religion, are top global exports, overtaken only by oil. That said, Nigeria in 2021 was second to Afghanistan only in terms of the number of terrorist attacks committed. North and South, Muslims and Christians, Yoruba and Igbo are vying for the same scarce resources in the country. Or are they? Is it really ethnocentrism and inter-religious hostility that together define the fate of Africa's giant, or are there other factors that play a role as well?

West Africa's giant Nigeria, is obviously struggling today to resolve its internal contradictions and security challenges. The federal government has expressed its interest in inviting direct US military presence via relocating AFRICOM headquarters to Nigeria's soil, then when confronted with US human rights concerns over its own behaviour, in a sharp U-turn, decided to approach Russia instead, for military hardware, just to sort out its differences with the United States and the West soon in another volte-face (this saga took two years to unfold, in 2020-2022) (Okafor 2022).

Igbo and Yoruba circles in the Christian majority South of the country are busy discussing secession – and have set up illegal security organizations without federal sanction (Amotekun, Eastern Security Network) in an effort to halt what they see as Northern encroachment but also, possibly, as vehicles of independence or at the very least, regional autonomy. Even Northern Nigerian politicians and traditional rulers have started talking about the need for restructuring and zoning. One of the editors (and authors) of our special edition, Michael Nwakpa, argues that the introduction of Sharia twenty years ago, as well as Boko Haram and its splinter groups today, are expressions of the Northern will to Northern secession.

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What are the driving forces behind the colossal failure of the Nigerian state? Why is 22 out of 36 states today, sites of Army deployment (as opposed to stationing), and why are army, police, and even the Joint Task Force against Boko Haram and Islamist radicalism, routinely accused of gross human rights violations, possibly including the wiping out of entire villages and settlements (so much so that Yakubu, Aideloje and Taiwo call the activities of the Multinational Joint Task Force in our collection, „a war crime“)? What causes lie behind the hollowing out of Nigerian democracy, originally modelled in 1979 on the US system, and one that draws on unparalleled hydrocarbon and human resources in Sub-Saharan Africa, including a professional managerial elite with close ties and an important diaspora within both the US and the UK? How does France affect the regional balance of power, from a Nigerian point of view (as Kaze and Mbapudah ask in this collection), or how does Cameroon? How does Russia, the PRC, India, Saudi Arabia, Israel, South Africa, and others affect the security context for Nigeria? How do institutional problems affect the state of democracy in the country? How does class affect democracy, and how does Nigerian capitalism benefit, or else impede, Nigeria’s chances for integrated development? How does the country’s political economy, new and traditional religious groups, its traditional authorities affect our analysis? What are the chances that Nigeria will be the African continent’s sick man in the coming decade? Is Nigeria balkanizing/morselizing (as former US Ambassador to Abuja John Campbell surmises in: Campbell 2010)? What are the survival chances of an independent Biafra, Yorubaland, or a Northern conglomerate, as separate, sovereign nations? Are we witnessing the start of a low intensity civil war already today in the country?

The provenance of the ethnic groups in question, the ones that rule Nigeria and the ones that are marginalized as well, is subject to fierce debate of course. Not only do theoreticians of Nationalism Studies form ‘primordialist’ and constructivist groups, where an Ernest Gellner and an Eric Hobsbawm, a Benedict Anderson would supply the ‘constructivist’ thesis and Azar Gat the modern, 21st century revisionist anti-thesis (the latter talks about the ancient roots and historico/biological reality of tribes and nations) – but within the Nigerian historiographical context, there are also two distinct schools: one constructivist and one primordialist, when it comes to the origin of the different ethnics of Nigeria (Gellner 2007, Hobsbawm 2012, Gat 2012).

The progressivist, leftist Zaria School of History, especially Yusufu Bala Usman, posited that these ethnic groups themselves in their modern form are products of colonial modernization, urbanization, migration and economic change (today, the Literary critic Biodun Jeyifo is the strongest proponent of this school of thought, denying entirely, the historical reality of „the tripod“), whereas writers Chinua Achebe, and even Wole Soyinka, along with many historians who focus on the historical achievements of their own respective ethnic identity communities and regions, take ethnicity as an ancient, given, pre-colonial reality of an undeniable kind (Usman 1979, Jeyifo 2016). For the progressives, ethnicity and religion are ‘masks’ that political entrepreneurs and contractors put on, to mislead the public into following and



sacrificing for them. For the traditionalists on the other hand, it is not ethnicity but class that is an artificial construct in an African context.

The collection of essays that as guest editors, Michael Nwankpa and Adam Mayer present here, are mostly closer to the primordialist end of the spectrum (albeit there are exceptions, Biko Agozino and Michael Nwankpa for example). As an editorial team, we did not prejudicate on this matter, as we also tried to avoid basing editorial decisions on the submissions' authors stance on whether federal Nigeria is 'worthy of' survival as an integer territorial unit in the long run. The existence of Nigeria is of course legally and politically undeniable, and we left moral judgements pro or contra, to our authors.

A definite *pièce de résistance* in our collection is also our very first essay, by Virginia Tech Professor of Sociology Biko Agozino, a global name in intersectional, decolonial criminology, and an all-round Nigerian American Marxist person of letters. His tone in this short work is anything but mild, however. The title of his essay is „Genocidist Discourse and Intellectuals in Africa.“ In his erudite piece, he implicates mainstream and even radical (i.e. Marxist) Nigerian intellectuals in what he views as the intellectual and moral cover-up of Igbo genocide in the Biafra War (1967-1970). He calls these incriminated intellectuals (notably including Professor Toyin Falola of the University of Texas at Austin, and Professor Biodun Jeyifo of Harvard University, both global luminaries in their respective fields) „genocidist intellectuals“ for what Agozino sees as them denying the genocide of Biafran women, children, elderly, men, and even soldiers, who died of hunger over the civil war years due to the federal blockade of the territory. Agozino offers African epistemological systems to replace neocolonial ones, as well as the overcoming of sexism specifically in the Nigerian Left, as preconditions to admitting federal Nigerian responsibility for deaths that numbered in between one and two million. Obviously this is a controversial article – it will be a platitude even to state this.

Calling what happened in Biafra 'genocide' cuts to the heart of Nigerian politics of memory, indeed the very heart of the federal Nigerian project, positing that the federation itself survived due only to purposeful genocide. It is interesting to furnish the reader here with a North American parallel for clarity. When Howard Zinn not only called Columbus a *génocidaire* in his great *People's History of the United States*, but called US policy on Native Americans also 'genocide,' he kickstarted a debate that had not stopped ever since, prompting debates on high school textbooks and university curricula in the country: a major point of US *Kulturkampf* still. What Agozino does here is that he attacks the core suppositions of the Nigerian democratic/military „ethnic rotation“ based presidential system, points to Igbo exclusion from it, and finds the explanation to this phenomenon in the denial (or else we may say: formulation) by major Nigerian intellectuals that posits Biafra as a civil war, and its casualties as terrible, but which stops short of a claim of conscious and deliberate ethnic cleansing or genocide by federal forces.

At *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*, we think that academic freedom, and freedom of expression in academia, are core values, indeed that they are



inherently valuable. JCEEAS does not endorse, condone, or else, on the contrary, condemn on an intellectual plane either, Agozino's views expressed in this collection's essay written by him, on the Biafra War. We think that this article will serve the discourse in a major way though, and that by publishing it we serve Nigeria scholars and Nigerianist discourse worldwide. With Indigenous People of Biafra leader Mazi Nnamdi Kanu in prison and under trial currently in mid-2022 (after having been caught by British secret agents at a Kenyan airport, then extradited to Nigeria a year back), this for the second time (as MNK had spent 2015-2017 in their custody already), with his Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) freely instituting curfews in the South-East, and with weekly clashes between Igbo vigilantes and pastoralists from the North, to still claim that debates around Biafra's 'politics of memory' are over forever, is wishful thinking.

Agozino however, is likely in a minority among Nigerian Leftists with his views on the matter. Pro-Biafran Marxist intellectuals had of course existed, Ikenna Nzomiro chief among them, but today, any position that (rightly or wrongly) seems to indicate unhappiness with federal Nigeria including Igboland, has the capacity to invite controversy even among Nigerian trade unionists and Leftists. Not only that, but as it happens, the memory of Biafra, Biafra itself, is a cause célèbre of the international hard right. Former Nazi mercenaries flew airplanes for Biafra. Salazar's Portugal backed Biafra, along with metropolitan France, uber-conservative Gabon and Cote d'Ivoire, and the Vatican. So did and do South African Afrikaner icons, such as Security Studies czar Al J. Venter (a veteran of the Biafra War), gun enthusiasts and war buffs of various persuasions, monarchists, Francoists and Trumpists. There is an angle to Biafra, of 'Christians being persecuted by Muslims', grossly simplified and rather irrelevant (as rural Northern Nigeria had barely been Islamized at the time of the Biafra War, and even in Igboland, traditional African religions had near-equal sway to Christianity at the time.) Nonetheless, when Biko Agozino calls Biafra 'genocide', his position is ipso facto complicated by Al J. Venter calling it genocide as well (Venter 2018). Almost regardless of the historical and forensic facts of the matter, this is what complicates and makes it so difficult, for radicals and progressives everywhere, to question the prevailing mainstream narrative on Biafra, even if Biafra, apart from being the international alt-right's cause célèbre was also the historical starting point of Médecins Sans Frontières and a number of other, high profile international NGOs who did, still do, and always have been doing, great work all over the world and who naturally, win people's hearts for what they do everywhere.

These entanglements started with Biafra's original, highly unusual Cold War constellation. It was a conflict that saw the UK and the USSR both supporting the selfsame side, the federals. The UK did so because of its traditional special relationship with the Hausa/Fulani elite, and in order to side with the winner. The USSR did, just six years after Lumumba's death and well into the Katanga conflict, to forestall the morselization of African countries that the Soviets viewed as a neocolonialist Western plot to undermine national liberation movements and progressive causes worldwide. Along with the occasional Western mercenary, (then) pro-Soviet Egypt sent Ilyushin planes to fight and bomb Biafra on behalf of Nigerian Military Head

of State Gowon. Agozino's position is thus not something that comes without a price for a Nigerian Leftist. Even Chinua Achebe did not emerge unscathed from some of the controversies that surrounded his works that dealt with Biafra in concreto. On the other hand, even Jeyifo might perhaps agree with Agozino on the matter of 'Igbo presidency,' or rather the lack of it even as a pious wish in the Nigerian context. Jeyifo puts the point thus: „Again as every politically active and morally conscientious Nigerian adult knows, the ultimate canard – spoken or whispered – about the workings of this post-civil war dispensation is the presumed specter of an Igbo-speaking executive president of the country. Without mincing words, this canard is one of the most hideous expressions of the principle of a rotational presidency.” (Jeyifo 2016: 32). And here we are in 2022, seeing two primaries producing a Yoruba godfather, and a Fulani ex-vice-President to Obasanjo, the hyper-neoliberal Atiku Abubakar, facing each other on the two sides of the arena, predictably but sadly, again with no Igbo contender standing. Jeyifo of course, has his own recommendations, all geared towards overcoming ethnicism as such, and divisions as such. Rotational presidency after all, produced the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s. A rotational/confessionalist system produced the Lebanese Civil War of 1975-1989. Nigeria's rotational system displays some features of both Yugoslavia and Lebanon, with rampant terrorism already added into the mix (in what we call „peacetime”). Whether Agozino's eloquent attempt here to call a spade a spade, is actually oil to the fire, or on the contrary, it is 'telling truth to power' and a starting point towards long term reconciliation, is left entirely for the reader to decide.

The second essay in our collection, „The Politics and Dynamics of Secession in Nigeria,” is a Security Studies essay that aptly uses historical methods to its great advantage. For its author Michael Nwankpa, „The religious, linguistic, socio-cultural and political fault lines among Nigeria's plural society have created tension and conflict throughout its existence as a political unit,” but he does not explicate the British either, pointing to historical and external factors. His article critically examines the politics involved in secession in Nigeria as well as the dynamic nature of selected secessionist movements.” Importantly, Nwankpa first brings conceptual clarity to secession. He discusses how there is no such thing as automatic right to secession, implied in people's right to self-determination. In detail, he discusses the Igbo Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), armed vigilante groups O'Odua People's Congress (OPC) in the Yoruba South-West, Bakassi Boys in the South-East, Manbilla in the Middle Belt, Hishbah Police in the North, Amotekun in Yorubaland (2019), the Yoruba Global Alliance that demands secession, Ogoni causes of the 1990s, the Ijaw Youth Council (1998), 2003-2009 in the Delta: the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), the famous Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), as well as today's Niger Delta Avengers. Discussed are also today's Arewa Youth Consultative Forum (2017), the Arewa Youth Development Forum, the Arewa Students Forum, the Kaduna Declaration (for Northern secession), the 2000-2003 adoption of Sharia criminal code (as a form of secession), as well as Boko Haram (similarly a secessionist organization despite its formal statements to the



contrary, according to Nwankpa). The Igbo Youth Movement (IYM), and the Eastern Consultative Assembly (ECA), organizations that supported Nnamdi Kanu in 2017 and beyond, are also described and analyzed in detail in Awankpa's excellent combination of theoretical and conceptual clarity, and forensic, historical detail.

The collection's third essay, written by UNILAG and University of Benin contributors MJ Yakubu, KF Aideloje, and BS Taiwo, is again more controversial in its logic and conclusions, but its authors back those up with admirable elegance. „An Analysis of Crimes Committed by the Multinational Joint Task Force in North-East Nigeria” is similar to Bill Hansen's admirable articles on police brutality in the selfsame North-East (Hansen 2020). The Lake Chad Basin Commission's MNJTF, in its chase against Boko Haram, has committed torture, extra-judicial executions, and gender-based violence from 2012 to 2019, through its Counter-Insurgency operations. The article does not hide the MNJTF's achievements (chief among them was actually ousting Boko Haram from the Sambisa Forest), but the authors conclude that the Task Force had committed crimes, including what legally count as war crimes whilst achieving these results. In terms of the crimes themselves, (somewhat controversially again), biological theory as well as Cultural Transmission Theory are employed, and the problems bedeviling the participant nations' relations with each other are also discussed (Nigeria has had a complicated relationship with Cameroon, as well as Chad). The essay proposes ways to curb this kind of criminality.

AM Kovács's „Here there be Dragons: Evolution, Potentials and Mitigation Opportunities of Cybercrime in Nigeria: A Review, Analysis and Evaluation,” relates to our special issue's overarching theme by the connections between financing and operating terrorist, insurgent and vigilante activity through means of cybercrime. Nigeria today, as we learn from the author, has 33.6% of internet penetration. The country is one of the global cradles of cybercrime activities, with US\$649M annually lost through these nefarious machinations. Nigeria passed a cybercrime act in 2015. As many as five Nigerian universities offer cybercrime-specific course though, offering hope. The activity affects the banking sector, and thus Nigeria loses 0.08% of its GDP to cybercrime annually – a bewilderingly serious problem. The author provides a typology and also furnishes the reader with recommendations as to how best to tackle this menace.

Cameroonian authors TNS Kaze and MN Mbatndah (University of Yaoundé) enrich this collection by their excellent essay „Is Nigeria Ripe for a Break-up? The Mitigating Importance of Cameroon and France in the Survival of Nigeria's Territorial Integrity.” Cameroon's English-speaking region, „Ambazonia,” is adjacent to Nigeria's Igboland: they share a border. Their agendas of disintegration are similar. The role of ECOWAS, as a place where Nigeria-France contests for West African leadership are usually played out, is also given ample attention in this exciting take.

T Osoyona's „Toxic Elite Consensus and Leadership Gaps as the Main Driver of Nigeria's Crisis of Nationhood,” provides a new explanatory framework for what John Campbell calls

'the oga system' (Campbell 2010), the oligarchical system that actually runs Nigeria. Ososona does not have what we would ordinarily call class analysis in mind, but a sociology of the elite and an analysis of what this elite does that contributes to, enables, or even actively underwrites, the security challenges of the country. The data used here come from the World Bank and the Ibrahim Index, ie. mainstream sources. But even thus, the author enlightens us with observations as crucial as „public office being a legitimate and primary source of wealth, accumulation and redistribution,” the elite being in „continuous circulation” even in the case of pastors who inherit their 'apostolic' offices to their sons and form dynasties (!), the leadership context, and what the elite consensus means on the ground: „extraction, exclusion, rent seeking, and conspicuous consumption,” while in Northern Nigeria, absolute poverty levels are above 70%.

Gombe State University's own UI Yau discusses „Boko Haram Insurgency and Environmental Degradation in the North-East Region of Nigeria, 2009-2021.” Yau links migration, loss of biodiversity through conflict, destruction of ecosystems, to rapid desertification (0.6 km / year), excessive deforestation (0.4% reduction/ year), severe erosion, seasonal flash floods, and garbage accumulation in urban areas. He presents reintegration/deradicalization efforts especially in Gombe State, where „repentant” Boko Haram fighters routinely become armed robbers and bandits. Yau digs deep with a treatise on the Islamic textual foundations of protecting nature, especially trees, a welcome feature.

Our Founder János Besenyő, and our Editor Marianna Kármán delight us readers with an exposition and analysis of Nigeria's migration situation, including how it affects Hungary, Nigerians living abroad (the diaspora), a breakdown of the different types of internal and external migration, Nigerians living in Hungary, as well as Covid-19's effects on these phenomena. The Nigerian diaspora in Hungary is yet to reach the glamour of its United States counterpart where Nigerian Americans are literally the most educated immigrant group overall in the nation (!) (Fosco 2018), and where entire segments of immigrants end up constituting upper middle class and elite professional strata (such as medical doctors, lawyers, academics), to the extent that a certain level of alienation had developed between US Blacks and elite Nigerian immigrants, partly fueled by different historical and class trajectories in certain parts of the United States among those two different groups. In Hungary, Nigerian immigration was fueled primarily by university student intakes up to the country's transition in 1990, so there is an elite current especially in those cohorts. With Hungary's political freedom came different patterns of mobility, and the profiles of Nigerian immigrants into Hungary are now more multifaceted, as we learn from this great contribution. Besenyő's former contributions to Boko Haram scholarship are also noteworthy here (Besenyő and Mayer, 2015).

DO Iweze's „The Role of Religious Leaders in Fostering Inter-Faith Dialogue amid Boko Haram Insurgency in Kano, Northern Nigeria” is an article that despite the title, gives a great account of developments in Kano, Jos as well as the titular Kaduna, focusing on reconciliation



and interfaith dialogue, and religious peacebuilding methods. Religion had not always been seen as a viable tool or context for conflict resolution, indeed it was mostly seen as the prime cause of conflicts until the late 1980s and even the 1990s. This changed with the proliferation, and good works, of religious NGOs, as well as the higher profile of some religious decision makers in high places in the early 2000s (such as IMF head James D. Wolfensohn) who promoted concepts around religious peacebuilding with funds globally. Nigeria was a pioneer of such initiatives with the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna, (by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa, both former victims of atrocities). This article makes use of oral interviews, focus group discussion, and ethnographic research in establishing its primary data.

The volume's Review section is also rich in reflection. A. Cann reviews Michael Nwankpa's, Abdulbasit Kasiim's, and David Cook's *The Boko Haram Reader*. Ambassador György Suha reviews Adam Mayer's *Naija Marxisms: Revolutionary Thought in Nigeria*. G Sinkó reviews *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges*, by Ryan Schaffer. Guest Editor Michael Nwankpa then reviews *Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield*, by Jason Warner, Ryan O'Farrell, Héni Nsailia, and Ryan Cummings.

Our entire selection anticipates and encourages, indeed welcomes debate and follow-ups by academics as well as professionals and activists, through subsequent editions of *Journal of Central and Eastern European African Studies*!

To compound this special edition's conscious provocations, I conclude this Introduction by revoking one of the most complex, most principled takes on Nigerian secession by a trade unionist of global renown, Baba Aye, who considers Nnamdi Kanu a 419-er (a fraud) and considers the current wave of secession, writing in 2019, a „farce.” He puts the matter thus: „Many on the socialist left have put forward the formulation of support for the right of self-determination in an unqualified manner. (...) Generalized support for the right of self-determination to all nationalities, including dominant nationalities, would amount to a continued right of one or more dominant nationalities over the oppressed nationalities. We saw how this played out during the Civil War. The minority nationalities of the Niger Delta remained in chains during the short-lived Republic of Biafra. Meanwhile, IPOB for example, still maintains the map of old Biafra, which includes these nationalities, for the country it seeks to reestablish. Similarly, all the maps drawn by O'odua separatist agitators include the old Mid-Western Region, which comprises several minority nationalities like Edo-speaking peoples, and the diverse peoples of the Delta State. Some of these maps go as far as including the Ijaws. (...) (...) An uncritical approach to applying the principle of support for the right to self-determination would be like cutting off one's nose to spite their face. With the reality of the Nigerian situation, it would be very much like peeling an onion. (...) We support the right of oppressed nationalities to self-determination. But we must tell the people the truth about the consequences of realizing that right. And supporting this democratic right, which of necessity for us includes the right of secession, must not be construed to support secession.

As Voltaire is reported to once have said, „I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend you to the death your right to say it.” (...) Does this mean that we stand by Nigeria’s so-called „indivisibility and indissolubility” or with those who insist that Nigeria’s unity is „not negotiable”? To this, again, we say no. That is absolute nonsense! (...) the poor of all nationalities are equally impoverished. In fact, poverty is much greater in the so-called oppressor North. (...) Who bore the brunt of the Civil War? It was the poor masses. As rank-and-file soldiers, they were killed on the battlefields. When the federal government used starvation as a dastardly weapon, those who died from hunger in Biafra were the children of the poor masses. The high and mighty and their families were hale and hearty” (Aye 2021).

And indeed, Biafran ideologue Ikenna Nzimiro had described the Civil War as a class conflict between different elite groups (on this see Mayer 2016), already in the 1980s, pointing in a very similar direction. Aye may exaggerate the amenities that Biafran elite enjoyed during the war (in the last two years elite strata also lost life, limb, houses, their bookshelves, and even clothes on their backs, as did Mokuwugo Okoye who was caught by the front multiple times), but the disagreement over man made hunger as a weapon seems only to lie in nomenclature between Agozino and Aye (who in other ways disagree deeply and fundamentally).

With these insights, aspects and caveats, we invite reactions to this special issue’s collection of research essays and reviews from Nigerian federalists and from regional secessionists, from Christians and from Muslims, from secular academics to people who pin their hopes on the redeeming qualities of religious NGOs. Your debate articles, reactions, and reflections will be given space on the pages of JCEEAS as long as they bring added value to the discourse on these topics. It is lucky for our journal to be edited in Hungary, where neither the global mainstream, nor local schools of thought (Hungarian, Nigerian or otherwise) can stop academics from expressing their thoughts freely – and this provides a window of opportunity for authors who put forth opinions that are not ‘smooth’. Our efforts are focused on fighting epistemic racism against African as well as Eastern European scholars in today’s global but still brutally hierarchical and classist academia.

Guest editors Michael Nwankpa and I would like to extend our thanks also to the Editorial team at JCEEAS, especially of course the Founder Dr habil. János Besenyő, but also Editor Marianna Kármán, who did not blink an eye when she spotted that a submitted text’s every single citation referred to non-existent (entirely made up) sources (!), or when the Journal received threats regarding a particular publication from another zealous author. Editors Dávid Vogel, Gábor Sinkó, and the Journal’s native English copy-editors are also due our gratitude for helping to put the material in shape. Similarly, we thank JCEEAS’ anonymous reviewers who (as is the practice in neoliberal academia) toiled without remuneration of course on their excellent, excellent feedback on the pieces! They also represent a range of geographical regions in Nigeria scholarship, from South Africa through Nigeria and West Africa, again through Egypt, to Hungary and Romania and South-East Europe in general, stretching to the UK and the US. The fact that this is the Journal’s very second special issue, points to a



recognition of Nigeria's importance at JCEEAS and at its home, the Africa Research Center at the University of Óbuda in Budapest, Hungary. Importantly, we also thank our authors who put up with our demands with patience, and often characteristic humor. The School at the University of Óbuda in Budapest offers full scholarships through the Hungarian state's generous Stipendium Hungaricum program to Nigerian and other African doctoral students! We welcome applications from qualified young scholars who want to join our vibrant community of open inquiry and search for truth on matters vital for Africa.

### Notes on Contributor

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## Genocidist Discourse and Intellectuals in Africa

Biko Agozino<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

The relationships between intellectuals and genocide have historically seemed paradoxical. Intellectuals are supposed to be more enlightened than manual laborers and with higher enlightenment comes the expectation that intellectuals would be inclined to offer moral leadership to society. Paradoxically, wherever genocide has taken place globally and in post-colonial Africa in particular, the footprints of intellectuals are almost always imprinted in the crime scenes as leaders of anti-social thought and action. The genocide against the Igbo in Biafra is a case in point. The intellectuals provided the leading ideas that rallied the masses and unleashed them against the target group without provocation or justification. Almost always it is the international ruling classes that fund genocidist intellectuals and use them to pursue ruling class interests disguised as national interests. It is almost always macho intellectuals who champion genocidal looting and plundering of target groups of children, women, and men especially when they are poor and defenceless. This paper offers a race or ethnicity-gender-class articulation or intersectionality explanation of why genocidist ideologues tend to be masculinist intellectuals who are indoctrinated to defend the ideology of white supremacist imperialist patriarchy. The paper concludes that the decolonization of social thought, research methodology, action and policy discourse would contribute towards the ending of genocidal violence through the adoption of the Africana philosophies of non-violence, Ubuntu and Mbari. Cruse (1967) observed contemptuously that the most radical wing of African American intellectuals during the Civil Rights Movement was the Students Nonviolence Coordinating Committee while those who were armed were pursuing reforms and not a revolution. Our primary case study is the genocide against the Igbo in Nigeria and in Biafra with specific reference to the failure of leadership by some African intellectuals.

### Keywords:

Igbo, Biafra, genocide, intellectuals, Africa, Nigeria.

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## *Introduction*

Nri philosophy implores intellectuals to transform themselves into “warriors for peace” during periods of crisis, with a proclivity for action over rhetoric. Many of our finest writers and thinkers were armed with this ancient wisdom and worked towards a peaceful resolution to the hostilities (Achebe, 2012: 109).

Our approach is in keeping with critical discourse analysis with a focus on documents and thoughts that are verifiable as representative of the tendencies that we analyzed. Given that such documents and social thoughts are in the public domain, other scholars can consult them and draw their own conclusions. We are aware that archives and documents are terrains of struggle for power about the interpretations of representations and so we do not seek to overgeneralize our findings beyond the empirical referents of thoughts and documents from which we draw our conclusions. Other analysts are welcome to disagree with us and draw different conclusions from the same facts that are available to us. We adopt the scholar-activist methodology of critical and centered committed objectivity to suggest that we are against genocide, and we oppose it in all its guises while remaining objective in our analysis by not concealing or distorting oppositions to our points of view or perspective (Agozino, 2003). Those who implicitly or explicitly support genocide are also arguably, committed but they cannot claim to be objective or else they would also join us in opposition to genocide since genocidists tend to distort reality in genocide denialism.

Theoretically, we are guided by the paradigmatic thoughts of critical Africa-centered scholar activists. What they all have in common is their opposition to violence against Africans by anyone or any group for any reasons or pretenses and their support for the right to self-determination in opposition to colonialism, neocolonialism, racialism, sexism, and imperialism. All of these authorities center their critical intellectual work on people of African descent, and all adopted activist orientations in their scholarship as a model that it is not enough to analyze the ills of the world because the point of such analyses is to change the world for the better. Our list of influential theoretical frameworks is not exhaustive and so many more authorities will be invoked in the analysis as we go on to flesh out the relevance of each theorist to the task of understanding the puzzle that Africans have pursued genocidal policies with gusto even after the restoration of political independence.

Fanon (1963) predicted that the phantom bourgeoisie and pseudo intellectuals who were groomed by the colonial authorities to take over power in Africa were not interested in genuine liberation of the people because the emergent elites lacked capital and were dependent on imperialist forces to prop them up in return for the mass repression of the restive people who desire genuine freedom. Kwame Nkrumah (1967) theorized the new order as neocolonialism and saw it as the last stage of imperialism with the prediction that Africa would someday unite to foreclose attempts by foreign powers and internal compradors to

recolonize the people ever again. All our theoretical models agree that the deepening of democracy across Africa will usher in genuine liberation and thereby frustrate the schemes of genocidal forces and their intellectual lackeys to keep Africans shackled. A few African scholars particularly stand out as giants in the critique of genocidal policies in Nigeria and they offer the defense of the endangered Igbo as a model for making genocide history in Africa. They are joined by international intellectuals who became what Christopher Okigbo called “warrior intellectuals” exemplified by Stanley Diamond, Dan Jacobs, Auberon Waugh, Kurt Vonnegut, Herbert Gold, Harvey Swados, Geoffrey Hill, and Douglass Killam and who rallied to do what they could to end the genocidal war in Biafra as recounted by Achebe (2012). This is in sharp contrast to Nigerian intellectuals who have continued to defend the genocidal war under the ideology of what Lenin (1963) dismissed as ‘national defencism’.

### *The Weapon of Theory*

Amilcar Cabral (1979) convinced us that military weapons are not the only arms deployed in a war of national liberation. He suggested that the struggle involves theoretical weapons that are sharpened by critiquing even those ideas that are influential among the nationalists who must also delve into their own culture of struggles to help them to make sense of their concrete situations instead of fighting for ideas in the head of anyone. Thus, Cabral challenged the theory of Karl Marx on the motive force behind the dialectics of historical materialism. Marx correctly stated that it was class struggles, not ideas, that led to the transformation of human society from slavery to feudalism and to capitalism and concluded that class struggles would continue to transform history towards socialism and communism.

By recognizing the weaponization of theory, Cabral was reminding us that even according to Marx, revolutionary ideas or theories have their place in a struggle for the restoration of independence though ideology may not play the primary role and though ideology could also play an anti-social role as false consciousness. Moreover, although class struggles are important forms of struggle in all known society, there were classless societies in communalism and yet history existed in the distant past as a result of the development of the productive forces. Therefore, even after the emergence of communism in the distant future, history will continue to be made through the transformation of the forces of production long after classes have disappeared while racial, ethnic, religious or gender struggles, for instance may continue in articulation or intersectionally (Hall, 1980; Crenshaw, 1989). Finally, according to Cabral, the orthodoxy of class struggles could be modified by calling on the petit bourgeoisie to commit class suicide by sacrificing their class privileges and by throwing in their lots with The Wretched of the Earth the way Frantz Fanon did.

Cabral can be critiqued for calling this ‘class suicide’ since the petty bourgeoisie will remain petty bourgeois despite their class alliances just as white allies will not commit race suicide and male allies will not stop being male in the struggles against imperialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy. Similarly, I contend that Hausa and Yoruba intellectuals will not be



committing ethnic suicide when they join Wole Soyinka, Fela Kuti, Femi Fani-Kayode (2017), Governor Ayo Fayose (2017) and foreign intellectuals in condemning the genocide against the Igbo in Biafra.

### *The Case of Biafra and the Role of Intellectuals*

If we look at the roles played by intellectuals in the Nigeria-Biafra conflict, we could use the framework provided by Cabral and others to evaluate if they made any original contributions to critical theory the way Cabral did, if they engaged in class struggles on the side of the masses or simply rallied in support of bourgeois nationalism, and if they were able to recognize the intersectionality or articulation of the different struggles that were never separate in the conflict. Whereas many Nigerian Marxists bent over backwards to prove that only class struggles exist in Nigeria, Chinua Achebe pointed out that the ethnic hatred of the Igbo by almost all other Nigerian ethnic groups defies explanation by reference to class struggles alone. Achebe admits that there is a class explanation for the oppressive role of the exploiting elites, but he insisted that the struggle in Biafra was ethnic and gendered as well as being class specific. Cabral, Fanon and Achebe were not social scientists and yet they arrived at original critical thinking about the African post-colonial condition while the social scientists were busy parroting Eurocentric theorists whose ideas were not developed with Africa in mind.

Another intellectual who was also a creative writer like Achebe rather than a social scientist is Wole Soyinka who tried to recruit intellectuals to form a Third Force against the genocidal war by leading delegations to campaign against arms supplies to both sides of the conflict. For his troubles, he was arrested and detained throughout the duration of the genocidal war. No critical social scientists spoke up in defense of Wole Soyinka while he languished in solitary confinement without trial except Achebe and foreign intellectuals. The critical social scientists may have ignored the plight of Soyinka because he was not a Marxist, but Soyinka reminded them that there was a Marxist Trade Union leader who was also detained by the genocidist Nigerian government and tortured to death just because he was an Igbo man. Yet the Nigerian intellectuals kept silent in the face of the tyranny, leading Soyinka to dismiss them as dead intellectuals on the ground that the man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny. Soyinka (1988) went on to mock the archeologists who went digging for ancient relics and bone fragments while ignoring the rivers of blood that flowed before their eyes and he dismissed the sociologists with their erudite irrelevances in the face of genocide.

Another intellectual who has consistently called on Nigerian intellectuals to interrogate their opportunistic complicity in the genocidal war in Biafra is the mathematician, Edwin Madunagu (1982). He reported that every time he raised the call for self-criticism about the events of the Biafra genocide, his left-wing fellow intellectuals told him to hush it lest the debate increased the fragmentation of the left in the country. One leftist Nigerian intellectual who expressed anger at Achebe for revisiting the genocide against Biafra is Biodun Jeyifo (2016) who called Achebe an Igbo supremacist and ideological apparatchik just for saying that

he was a roving peace ambassador for Biafra. Jeyifo repeatedly tried to deny the genocide against the Igbo by calling it an 'alleged attempted genocide' and falsely accused Achebe of not mentioning the class struggle only to contradict himself by admitting that Achebe analyzed the politics of the elites against the masses in Nigeria. Jeyifo has never called on the Nigerian government to atone for the genocide against his fellow Africans in Biafra. To set the records straight, let us reflect on the testimonial that Achebe left for us on the role of intellectuals in the conflict just before he died.

In *There Was a Country*, Achebe addressed the role of intellectuals in three sections of part two of the book. One section was on 'The Writers and Intellectuals' and in it Achebe paid tribute to the international intellectuals who came to the defense of Biafra when fellow African intellectuals were defending the genocidal state. Auberon Waugh visited Biafra and wrote 'a devastating book on Harold Wilson's duplicitous policy' of orchestrating the genocide against the Igbo. Waugh also named his child Biafra Waugh in solidarity with the starving children of Biafra. Among the writers and intellectuals were some US writers like Kurt Vonnegut, Herbert Gold, and Harvey Swados who paid solidarity visits to Achebe and other endangered Biafra writers. Vonnegut was reported to have been devastated by the visit and to have checked himself into a hotel where he cried for days while his family went on a skiing holiday. Vonnegut's essay, "Biafra: A People Betrayed" remains a damning testimony against the genocide (Achebe 2012: 105-106).

Other writers and intellectuals who visited Biafra and bore witness to the genocide included Geoffrey Hill, Douglas Killam, Stanley Diamond, and Conor Cruise O'Brien. Diamond had done extensive fieldwork in Anthropology in Nigeria before the war from the last days of the British colony and understood the ideological context of the Nigeria-Biafra conflict as the case of the attempt by Britain to continue implementing colonial policies through a neocolonial regime. While Prime Minister Harold Wilson presented the genocidal Nigerian government as progressive nationalism fighting against primitive tribalism in Biafra, Diamond saw it as the orchestrated attempt to abort a genuine African national independence at the very moment of its birth. While the Nigerian left tried to stereotype Biafra as kowtowing to racist Portugal and South Africa, Diamond correctly observed that the bulk of the weapons of Biafra were manufactured internally by Biafrans while the few imported came from China and Czechoslovakia, but the Czech sources dried up after Soviet tanks crushed the Prague uprising in 1968 and removed Alexander Dubcek from office (Achebe, 2012: 106-107; Nwankwo, 1972).

Conor Cruise O'Brien published a long review in *New York Review of Books* in May 1969 following a return visit to Biafra with Stanley Diamond. "Biafra revisited" was illustrated with a poem by Achebe in honor of his friend, Christopher Okigbo, who had just been killed resisting the genocide in Biafra. It also included a poem by Diamond, "Sunday in Biafra", which captured the African tragedy in Biafra in an indelible portrait. O'Brien reported that the fate of Africa was represented by two of the best African writers alive, Wole Soyinka who was in solitary



confinement in Northern Nigeria for opposing the war and Chinua Achebe who was dodging bombs and facing starvation while seeking a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The Nigerian poet, Ezenwa Ohaeto (1997) later summarized the thesis of O'Brien as an acknowledgement that the survival of Biafra would have proved to be a victory for African originality, resilience, and for a skillful contribution to genuine African independent development.

In contrast to the solidarity of foreign intellectuals with those suffering in Biafra, the vast majority of Nigerian intellectuals who were not of Igbo descent opportunistically sided with the genocidist regime to serve as what has been identified as 'Africa's Murderous Professors' by Michael Chege (1996). According to him, following the arguments of Paul Johnson in his *History of the Jews*, genocidist ideas circulate not just as a result of 'vulgar rumor but by the deliberate propaganda of intellectuals'. This is supported by Bauman (1989) who argued that the holocaust against Jews was not an aberration but a logical conclusion to the ideology of the Enlightenment as exemplified by the modernist thoughts of Max Weber. Weber laid an emphasis on the technical superiority of rational bureaucratic administration to all other systems of administration even if what was being administered by the iron cage was mass murder. Contrary to suggestions that German intellectuals and masses suffered from mental illness to allow them to commit such barbarism, Bauman concluded that rationality without compassion is consistent with genocidal policies. Chege argued that such a rational administration of genocide by the iron cages of bureaucracy was not something that happened in the past nor was it limited to European populations. He stated that it was happening also presently in Africa where genocidist policies are being implemented by African neocolonial regimes with the support of African intellectuals and imperialist countries that supplied the modernist weapons of mass destruction. Chege applied this theory to the Afrikaner Broederbond of apartheid South Africa and to the Akazu faction of the Hutu ruling class in Rwanda during the genocide and afterwards in Kenya where more than 400 of the intellectuals fled with their hate-mongering journal, *Kangura*, and where Kenyan intellectuals themselves were prominent in opposition to multi-party democratic elections. Despite mentioning the Nigerian Professoriate among the African intellectuals that use allegations of tribalism to discredit legitimate opposition to the genocidist state and despite making the analogy that the kikuyu were chided by intellectuals that they brought the 1992-1993 massacres on themselves by migrating to other regions and prospering at the expense of the locals and so they should 'quit whining that they were being treated like Ibos or Jews of Kenya', Chege failed to extend his theory directly to the foundational genocide of postcolonial Africa, the genocide against Biafrans.

Herbert Ekwe-Ekwe (2013) paid tribute to Achebe as a scholar who centered the genocide against Biafra as the paradigm for explaining the genocidist state that imperialism imposed on postcolonial Africa. According to him, Achebe provides Africans with the memory of the precolonial African civilization, the realization that colonialism did not completely wipe out African freedom, and the awareness that Africans continue the struggle for freedom by countering the 'conquest literature of the aftermath'. Starting with his novel, *Things Fall Apart*,

Achebe consistently reflected on the necessity to oppose the European conquest and occupation of Africa even when the balance of forces seems to suggest that resistance was suicidal, according to Ekwe-Ekwe, quoting CLR James via Walter Rodney (1972). Ekwe-Ekwe maps the colonial genocides in Africa from its inception in Abame among the Igbo before it spread to other parts of Africa. Given the leadership role of the Igbo in the struggle for the restoration of independence, the British set out to punish the Igbo by spreading the propaganda of Igbo will to dominate Nigeria. Then they turned the other eye when ethnic hostilities led to the massacre of the Igbo in other parts of Nigeria in 1945 and 1953 while the British were still in control. Similar propaganda led to the characterization of the 1966 coup as an Igbo coup and resulted in the mass killing of the Igbo with Nigerian soldiers leading the genocide especially after the counter coup. The punishment of the Igbo continued in the genocide against Biafra with Britain supplying the weapons and rationalizing the use of starvation as a legitimate weapon of war to kill 3.1 million people in Biafra. Ekwe-Ekwe also followed Achebe in stating that Awolowo, a British trained lawyer and deputy chair of the federal executive committee during the genocidal war, served as the chief genocidist theorist of the doctrine that starvation was a legitimate weapon of war. Awolowo, as Finance Minister, also imposed the immiserating policy of confiscating the life savings of the Igbo after the war in return for 20 pounds per male family head while authorizing the sale of the shares of foreign companies to Nigerian compradors at a time that the impoverished Igbo could not participate in the indigenization policy. Ekwe-Ekwe concluded that the survival of the Igbo and their remarkable thriving in the face of what he classified as phase 4 of the Igbo genocide 'is arguably the most extraordinary feature for celebration in an otherwise depressing and devastating age of pestilence in Africa of the past 47 years.'

Achebe recognized Ekwe-Ekwe among the Nigerian intellectuals who have expressed outrage over the Igbo genocide in Biafra while other elites in Nigeria continued to behave like Anwu or the wasp that habitually stung other insects and laid her eggs in their belly while they were incapacitated so that the lava would hatch and eat the host insects alive. Other compassionate intellectuals who campaigned against the genocide include Cyprian Ekwensi who left his illustrious writing career and elite appointment as a director in the Nigerian Ministry of Information to serve Biafra in the Directorate of External Publicity. Achebe recalled serving with Ekwensi and the poet, Gabriel Okara, as roving ambassadors for peace. Another intellectual who defied ethnic chauvinism and myopia to support Biafra was Wole Soyinka, already recognized at the time as the foremost dramatist of Africa. Soyinka had risked a journey to Biafra to appeal for a cease-fire to allow for negotiated settlement of the dispute by a delegation of anti-war intellectuals from both sides that he planned to set up. He was arrested by Nigerian troops on his return and charged with gun-running for Biafra and of being a Biafran agent or spy. But he was never tried as he went on to spend the years of the war in solitary confinement. Achebe told *Transition* magazine in 1968 that the Nigerian situation was untenable and that if he was a Nigerian, he would have been in prison with Soyinka for opposing the war against Biafra (Achebe, 2012: 110).



Another roving ambassador was Kenneth Onwuka Dike, the pioneer Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan who resigned that position to assume the same post in the University of Biafra. His renown as a historian and former professor in universities like Harvard attracted media attention to his speaking tours explaining the cause of Biafra. Vincent Chukwuemeka Ike was another intellectual who served the Biafran cause bureaucratically and went on to contribute literary major works after the war. Among the female intellectuals who supported Biafra was Flora Nwapa who wrote the first novel ever published by a woman in Nigeria. She served Biafra in different capacities and went on to lead some of the reconstruction efforts regarding the institutions destroyed by the war in the east central state of the Igbo. Achebe acknowledged that Igbo women deserve recognition for their ingenuity in providing food from thin air even under threats of air raids to keep their families alive, for organizing schools to teach the young ones and for volunteering to direct traffic during the heavy throngs of feet and a few cars ferrying refugees from town to town. Some of the women also enlisted in the army. Adichie also centered her *Half of a Yellow Sun* on the courageous role played by young Igbo women who continued to love the men in their lives despite the material deprivations brought by the war. Christie Achebe (2010) and Buchi Emecheta (1982) also narrated the struggle of women in *Destination Biafra* but with a focus on Debbie Ogedemgbe, a Yoruba woman who joined the Nigerian army to fight for her country only to wonder if her British lover and Nigerian military adviser was in it to help Nigeria or to help British interests.

Achebe dedicated a whole section of part 2 to a discussion of the life and works of the 'finest' Nigerian poet of his time and 'the most remarkable anywhere of our time', Christopher Okigbo, who volunteered to resist the genocidist war against Biafra and died of fighting. A prominent Kenyan intellectual, Ali Mazrui, had published a propagandist novel in which he 'tried' Okigbo and found him guilty of betraying poetry because of his commitment to his tribe, though Mazrui was always loyal to his own Arabic-African-European heritage. Achebe disagrees with Mazrui's characterization of the struggle of Biafra as a tribal war given that Biafra embraced a multiplicity of ethnic nationalities in the Southeast region. Achebe recalled watching Christopher Okigbo debate his elder brother, the eminent economist, Pius Okigbo, on the merits of secession. When the elder brother argued for one Nigeria, the younger Chris warned that he should be careful lest what happened to the military head of state, Ironsi, who was assassinated while trying to keep Nigeria united by 'appeasing extremists', should repeat itself. Christopher was passionately dedicated to Biafra following the pogroms in northern Nigeria and he admired the Biafran military officers and what they said in private conversations. He knew that Achebe may have tried to dissuade him from joining the army and so he pretended that he was going on a top-secret trip to Europe only to turn up two weeks later in the uniform of an army Major.

Achebe also spent a section of the book characterizing the two major Nigerian actors in the war - Ojukwu and Gowon. Both of them qualify to be included among the intellectuals given that Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu was trained in Oxford university as a historian before he joined the Nigerian army and rose to the rank of Colonel before the war. Gowon also



attended top military colleges in England before the war and rose to the rank of colonel before becoming head of state following the assassination of Ironsi. Then he went on to obtain a doctorate degree from Warwick University after he too was overthrown. The western media represented Ojukwu as an aristocrat because of his wealthy parents but showed preference to Gowon as the gentleman General. Both officers had been invited to Ghana by the military ruler of that country, General Joseph Arthur Ankrah, who had overthrown Kwame Nkrumah, to try and resolve the conflict on a conference table at Aburi. They signed the 'Aburi Accord' which ruled out the use of force to resolve the conflict and recommended confederation as a way to keep Nigeria united. On return from Ghana, Gowon went back on the agreement, split the regions into 12 states and launched a 'police action' to try and forcibly reintegrate the eastern region which quickly declared secession. Achebe shared a short poem about the very first shot in the war fired by an unknown 'anonymous' soldier. Demas Nwoko went on to paint pictures and make terracotta sculptures of Soja in the slaughter field of the war front (Okeke-Agulu, 2015).

To counter the invasion from the north, Biafran troops invaded the Midwest region and tried to liberate the Benin Kingdom. But Gowon quickly regrouped and pushed them back under the field command of Murtala Muhammad. Muhammad overthrew Gowon after the war before being assassinated in an abortive coup in 1976. The Nigerian forces gathered all grown up men and boys in Asaba and massacred them, wrongly believing that it was the hometown of Major Kaduna Nzeogwu who led the first bloody coup. Ojukwu was made to believe that the Midwestern incursion could have been sustained if not for the betrayal of some officers in the Biafran army. As proof of this conspiracy, a memo signed by four intellectuals in the Biafran army was tendered as evidence of sabotage. Brigadier Victor Banjo, Major Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Sam Agbamuche, and Major Phillip Allele were tried and found guilty of sabotage for suggesting that Biafra should sue for a cease fire since they did not have the weapons to defend themselves. They were executed by firing squad while members of the public jeered at them. Achebe suggested that they should have been spared for their crime as it appeared in a poorly worded memo. The Nigerian troops were reported to have resorted to Nazi like total solution when they captured the city of Calabar and decided to eliminate all the Igbo residents and managed to kill about 2000 Igbo civilians. They also shot and killed 14 nurses and patients at a hospital in Oji River, a town where Queen Elizabeth had visited to see a leper colony during her visit to Nigeria in 1956. The French Press agency reported that; 'On entry to Aba, Nigerian troops massacred more than 2000 civilians'. One of the genocidist military intellectuals, Benjamin Adekunle told the international press that Biafran Aid was 'misguided humanitarian rubbish ... If children must die first, then that is too bad, just too bad' (Achebe, 2012: 138). He also boasted that they shot everything that moved and also shot at things that did not move (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2006).

Toyin Falola (2014) testified that when Adekunle returned from the war front on leave, the people of Ibadan celebrated him as a war hero and the herbalists made charms to send to the troops committing genocide in Biafra to embolden them at a time that the peasants of



Agbekoya were fighting against exploitation by the military government but without expressing any solidarity with the people suffering in Biafra. Without expressing outrage over the mass starvation of children in Biafra, Falola alleged that the Igbo were not happy with Awolowo because he proposed imposing a ban on the importation of stock fish after the war. Falola wondered why the Igbo regarded dried cod stock fish, *okporoko*, imported from Norway as a delicacy when Awolowo believed that it was 'nutrition-deficient'.

In contrast to the silence of the Nigerian intellectuals or their cheer-leading of the genocidal war, foreign intellectuals were expressing their disgust and opposition. Jean-Paul Sartre and Francois Mauriac spoke out against the war in France. John Lennon returned his OBE medal to the Queen in opposition to the British role in orchestrating the genocide. Martin Luther King Jr. cancelled his trip to Nigeria and Biafra on behalf of a coalition of African-American intellectuals due to lack of guarantees of safety especially given his message of nonviolence. Joan Baez and Jimi Hendrix performed a benefit concert for Biafra in Manhattan on August 28, 1968. A young Jewish student, Bruce Mayrock of Columbia University, immolated himself in protest over the silence of the UN while innocent Biafra children were being killed in the genocide. Public pressure forced the Nixon administration to admit that what was going on was genocide that called for a change in US policy. Dan Jacobs (1987) reproduced a cable:

"FOR SECRETARY GENERAL UN FROM WCC REFUGEE RELIEF BIAFRA. DEAR MR. THANT. ESTIMATED DEATH FROM STARVATION IN MONTH OF JULY 6000 PER DAY. AUGUST 10000 PER DAY. SEPTEMBER 12000 PER DAY. PRESENT SUTUATION HOLDING OR DECREASING SLIGHTLY WITH PRESENT LEVEL OF RELIEF FLIGHTS. HOWEVER UNLESS IMMEDIATE CEASE FIRE MONTH OF DECEMBER COULD SEE DEATH RATE UNITS OF 25000 PER DAY. CARBOHYDRATES LIKELY TO BE EXHAUSTED IN NEXT SEVEN WEEKS. BIAFRA WILL BE COMPLETELY WITHOUT FOOD. ACUTE MASS STARVATION UNAVOIDABLE. ANSWER DOES NOT LIE WITH RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS. ANSWER LIES WITH END OF WAR."

Cable from Dr. Middlekoop to the UN Secretary-General who tried to suppress it even after it was leaked to New York Times of Sunday Oct. 20 1968 after which Thant denied receiving the cable and did nothing to send relief or to seek a cease fire. African intellectuals have also joined the culture of denial and conspiracy of silence (Cohen, 2001) despite knowing the enormity of the evil visited on fellow Africans in Biafra.

According to Achebe (2012: 143), 'It did not escape Biafra's founders that a great nation needed to be built on strong intellectual foundations.' For this task, Ojukwu set up a National Guidance Committee that produced a report that came to be known as Ahiara Declaration which was similar to the Arusha Declaration of Julius Nyerere in Tanzania. Under the chairmanship of Cambridge educated literary theorist, Dr. Emmanuel Obiechina, the intellectuals and Ozo (titled) community leaders in the committee recommended socialism as the ideology for Biafra. Achebe reported that there were people who preferred US style democracy, while others preferred radical Marxists, Leninists, Maoists, and communist admirers of Che Guevara and yet others preferred African thinkers like Nkrumah and Nyerere

while Achebe preferred traditional African values. Achebe saw his role as that of pushing for African common sense and a task to keep the more radical elements of the committee like the 'firebrand professor Ikenna Nzimiro' under control. During the committee work, Nzimiro was arrested by the police for insulting them and it took the intervention of Achebe and Obiechina with appeals to Ojukwu to get the radical released from detention and return to the committee. Nzimiro (1982) later wrote that there was a class struggle in Biafra between bourgeois and left-wing intellectuals over the ideological direction of the new republic. Ahiara Declaration appears to be a little token of success by the left-wing intellectuals in contrast to the left-wing intellectuals who blindly supported the genocidist Nigerian regime but made no impact on the ideological direction of the neocolonial regime of Gowon.

When Nwankwo and Ifejika (1969) published *The Making of a Nation: Biafra*, a reviewer at Columbia University wrote that it read like the perspective of the partisans in the struggle and wished that other writers from other parts of Nigeria will publish their own perspective for a more balanced understanding of the conflict. More than 40 years after the war, we are still waiting for the perspectives of the intellectuals especially from Northern Nigeria to help us understand what they were doing when the masses from Eastern Nigeria were being slaughtered in the pogrom and when young men volunteered without being conscripted to go and carry out the final solution to the Igbo question perhaps because of a shared hatred for the Igbo (Achebe, 1983, 2012).

Major accounts came from allegedly genocidist commanders like Olusegun Obasanjo who appeared to absolve Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogu of blame for the first bloody coup in the country by writing a glowing tribute to his friend. Whereas the first coup was spun as an Igbo coup, there is evidence that officers from all regions of the country participated in the coup and the goal of the coup was to free Obafemi Awolowo from prison where he was serving time for attempted treasonable plot to overthrow the government by force. The Igbo officers implicated in the coup were mostly from Western Igbo of the Midwest region which used to be part of the Western region in which Awolowo was admired for introducing free primary education and free healthcare. Obasanjo has also written about his command of the allegedly genocidist forces and bragged that he ordered the shooting down of a plane carrying relief for the starving children of Biafra, a war crime if ever there was a plane.

We are still waiting for the account of the Northern Nigerian intellectuals about the genocidal hatred and aggression against the Igbo who have sacrificed much to help to bring socio-economic development to Northern Nigeria more than any other group. Instead of recognizing the error of targeting the innocent Igbo for genocide and thereby retarding the development of Northern Nigeria, the elites from the North, such as Sanusi Lamido Sanusi (2017), the Emir of Kano and former governor of the Nigerian Central Bank, keep bragging that the killing of 3.1 million Igbo was a deserved punishment for their leadership of the first coup that killed Northern leaders and Western leaders but spared Southeast leaders. Even Sanusi admits that the Igbo have been 'punished enough for their foolishness' and that the whole



country paid the price for the repression of the industrious Igbo, but he offered no apology to the millions of Igbo people who were killed during the genocide. On the contrary, youth organizations in Northern Nigeria continued to issue quit notices to the Igbo artisans living in the region. The latest such threat came in mid-2017 during the campaign for a referendum on self-determination led by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). A notorious genocidist song in the Hausa language and sung by women also circulated on social media asserting that the Igbo deserved to be eliminated from Nigeria because they were supposedly a curse to the country.

Jibrin Ibrahim (2015) focused his opinion on the elites and concluded that the Igbo elites had failed to win the presidency because they did not know how to build coalitions. Although he agreed with Arthur Nwankwo that the Igbo are more cosmopolitan and tend to travel to other parts more than their neighbors, he noted the pogroms against them, the millions that were starved to death during the war, and the impoverization policies that followed the war, but still saw the solution as the changing of the narrative by the elites rather than the demand for reparations and referendum by Igbo youth, at least in recognition of one of the 'remarkable stories of our time', the story of Igbo survival in the face of the genocidal odds that face all Africans due to neocolonialism.

No serious scholar has written about the eyewitness of the genocide against the Igbo in the north, leaving creative writers like Wole Soyinka and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2006) to reconstruct the carnage from primary accounts by combatants who fought in the war and from secondary archival sources. It is possible that there is a rich library on the genocide in the non-Europhone literature of the Hausa and Fulani who have a long history of revolutions led by intellectuals like Uthman dan Fodio with the aim of promoting more ethical lifestyles and preventing oppressive taxation of the Talakawa by the feudal elites, but such literature remains relatively unknown due to lack of translations (Kane, 2012). The eminent Marxist historian, Yusufu Bala Usman (2006), passed away without shedding a drop of ink to lament the tragedy of the genocide against millions of Talakawa (ordinary) Igbo by a neocolonial army of occupation. Instead, Bala Usman was accused by Mayer (2016) of sounding more like a quasi-fascist in his dying days perhaps because he started advancing the fanciful geological theory that the oil and gas in the Niger Delta were sedimentations from the ancient flora and fauna of the ancestors of the Northerners and so, they had the right to take the oil for themselves. Mahmud Mamdani paid tributes to Usman for advancing the original theory that Hausa identity was a recent formation given that hometown identity was the norm with identities like Kanawa for people from Kano before the Sokoto Jihad and then British rule came to construct a pan-Hausa identity. Given his work on fascism in Uganda under Idi Amin, Mamdani (2012) would have been expected to question the silence of Usman on the genocide against the Igbo that he must have been aware of especially after working with Igbo intellectuals to build a radical political party that was split when some Northern elites started accusing the Igbo leaders of trying to destroy their Northern party (Achebe, 1983; Nwankwo, 1985; Agozino, 2016). Instead, Mamdani gave a commencement address in South Africa

where he tried to justify the unprovoked hatred of the Igbo in the North with the false claim that the Hausa and Muslims were equally hated in Enugu. Whereas, the first mayor of Enugu elected by the people was a Hausa-Fulani who defeated the Igbo candidate of the ruling party of Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1952 and served until 1958. Igbo candidates have continued to win elections in the North to represent the predominantly Igbo Sabo Ngeri or migrant quarters in Kano, and also in Lagos with huge Igbo migrant populations.

A younger scholar from the North central region has emerged in the person of Moses Ochonu (2014) but his accounts of internal colonialism by the Hausa Fulani over the Middle Belt minority ethnic groups completely ignores the fact that the genocide against the Igbo was led and perpetrated by Christian Middle Belt officers and masses. The bulk of the killing of the Igbo fleeing the initial pogrom was carried out in Gbokom where their trains were stopped, and they were forced out to be killed by the soldiers and the masses. Pregnant women had their fetuses cut out and beheaded along with their mothers. When the war broke out, the same Middle Belt Christians volunteered in large numbers to join the genocidal army and carry out the final solution against their fellow Christian Igbo perhaps because the military dictator of the time was the Middle Belt Christian, Yakubu Gowon, who was supported by top allegedly genocidist Middle Belt officers like Theophilus Danjuma. Instead of condemning the Christian fundamentalism of his kith and kin in the genocide against the Igbo, Ochonu wants us to believe that his people used to conquer and rule over the Igbo before the white men came to colonize Nigeria.

Toyin Falola and Ogechukwu Ezekwem (2016) put together a huge edited collection about the published works on the Biafra conflict in 2016 but the book failed to acknowledge genocide in the index despite the fact that the Igbo authors who contributed to the book variously testified against the genocide in their chapters. The European authors who contributed to the book also condemned the genocide against the Igbo but almost all the Yoruba authors in the book tried to deny, evade, or belittle the pain of the genocide still felt by the Igbo. This echoes the intransigence of Obafemi Awolowo when he was asked by a journalist if he would like to take back his criminal ideological assertion that 'starvation is a legitimate weapon of war, and all is fair in warfare'. Thirteen years after the end of the genocidal war, Awolowo defended the statement and said that he had no regrets for implementing such a genocidal policy as Finance Minister. The private secretary of Awolowo, the poet Odia Ofeimun (2012), maintains this line of thinking by stating in his rambling review of Achebe's *There Was a Country*, that the Igbo had themselves to blame for the genocide against them. The obstinacy of Nigerian intellectuals makes us wonder why they failed to follow the example of intellectual giants as Fela Anikolapo-Kuti who hustled for some bread by making a propaganda song, 'Keep Nigeria One' in 1969. But he admitted after the war that he was wrong and that Biafra was a justified secession (Moore, 1982).

The human rights lawyer, Gani Fawehinmi never said a word against the genocide in Biafra (though he condemned the torture and killing of a radical Igbo trade unionist, Gogo Nzeribe,



by the military during the war). The leading Marxist, Eskor Toyo, continued to demonize the 'Ojukwus of Guinea' after the war (Toyo, 1967; 1972). The story of those Igbo intellectuals who served the Nigerian government during the war – Dr. Ukpabi Asika, the war-time governor; Samuel G. Ikoku, the Marxist economist; and General Ike Nwachukwu, for instance – remain to be told to explain how they survived the ethnic cleansing during the genocide. Chielozona Eze (2017) indicates that some Igbo intellectuals like himself still buy into the propaganda that the Igbo have themselves to blame for the genocide against them. He blamed Achebe for writing the account of his role as a peace ambassador. Eze blamed massacred Igbo youth who waved the Biafran flag in honor of their beloved killed during the genocide or who demonstrated peacefully to call for a referendum on self-determination in 2017. Eze was bemoaning the fact that Igbo intellectuals failed to take Ojukwu and the Biafra leadership to task for leading the people into an avoidable genocide. Leaders like Akanu Ibiam, K.O. Mbadiwe, Michael Okpara, Christopher Okigbo, and many others failed to offer the courageous critique that Chinua Achebe, Ikenna Nzimiro, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Phillip Effiong, Arthur Nwankwo and N.U. Akpan were able to muster during and after the war.

Even though the Biafran Army was commanded by ethnic minority officers like Colonel Phillip Effiong (2004) and Colonel Basse and that the Chief of Staff to the Government of Biafra was Mr Ntieyong U. Akpan (1972), some of the intellectuals from the Southeast minority ethnic groups have not concealed their hatred for their Igbo neighbors. They seized their properties as abandoned properties after the war. Ken Saro-Wiwa (1989) refused to write the name of Biafra with a capital B and mocked the Igbo in his poetry to distance his Ogoni people who are of Igbo descent from the targeted Igbo long before his army officer friends framed him for murder and hanged him with eight other Ogoni activists. Even Elechi Amadi (1969) who bore Igbo names, bragged that he was the one who led the federal troops to the hideout of the Igbo to flush them out and kill them. Isaac Adaka Boro (1982) who was elected as student union president at the University of Nigeria by predominantly Igbo students before the war declared a revolution against Igbo domination. One of the 'revolutionary actions' he took was to arrest a female trader who had gone to purchase *kaikai* moonshine gin for sale in Onitsha. He claimed that the alcohol belonged to his people and they interrogated the woman for two days before her escape. When the war broke out, he was released from prison and joined the genocidal Nigerian army to kill the Igbo but ended up being killed by the feds. More recently, younger intellectuals like Alhaji Asari Dokubo (2017) have admitted that their elders were duped into supporting the genocidist forces against the Igbo. They now identify with the revival of the assertion of the right to self-determination and the call for self-determination by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra whom the genocidist Nigerian army continues to terrorize with extra judicial killings that Amnesty International (2016) condemned.

## **Conclusion**

We conclude by calling Nigerian and African intellectuals to add their voices to the condemnation of the genocide against the Igbo in Nigeria. Otherwise, they will remain indicted in the words of Wole Soyinka (1993) who asked what sort of intellectuals will remain silent in the face of tyranny? Martin Luther King Jr. invited us to see ourselves as the descendants of a great writer who left a World House to his descendants. It is up to the descendants to fight and burn down the house or join hands to fix it up and live together harmoniously or go their separate ways and build their own houses if they prefer. Desmond Tutu refers to this philosophy as Ubuntu or the bundle of humanity which says that I am because we are, not I think therefore I am. Chinua Achebe synthesized this philosophy of nonviolence with the symbolism of Mbari or the clay miniature house that Igbo communities build with miniature characters from all cultures represented under one roof as a symbol of tolerance.

It is time for all African intellectuals to demand for atonement for the Igbo genocide and the other genocides in Africa while we push for the United States of Africa that Azikiwe (1937; 1960) called for throughout his life and which is currently taking shape under the African Union Commission with its own parliament and passport already in place. The story of how the Igbo survived the genocide and rebounded with unprecedented energy as a force to be reckoned with in the development of Africa is already well known and should be lauded by more African intellectuals.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## **Notes on Contributor**

Dr. Biko Agozino (Edinburgh University, 1995) is a Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA, USA. He is ranked as one of the top Influential Criminologists in the world now by [www.AcademicInfluence.com](http://www.AcademicInfluence.com) and he is the author of the following books – *Community Policing in Nigeria* (co-authored, FDP and VTP, 2021); *Routledge Handbook on Africana Criminologies* (co-edited, 2020); *Critical, Creative and Centered Scholar-Activism* (2016, FDP); *Counter-Colonial Criminology*, 2003; *Pan African Issues in Crime and Justice* (co-edited), 2004 republished by Routledge, 2017; and *Black Women and the Criminal Justice System*, 1997, republished by Routledge, 2018. Also, Director-Producer, 'IE: Inclusive Excellence', premiered on Blue Ridge Public Broadcasting Service ECHO Channel and selected for Open Vision Film Festival, 2021; 'Shouters and the Control Freak Empire', winner of the Best International Short Documentary Prize, Columbia Gorge Film Festival, USA, 2011. He won the 2020 Amistad Award from Central Connecticut State University; he was appointed Professor Extraordinarius by the University of South Africa, 2021-2024; and he won the Excellence in Outreach and International Initiatives from the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences, Virginia Tech, 2021. He is the founding Editor in Chief of *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies*, 2005 to the present. He has been a visiting fellow at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and Flinders University, Australia.



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## The Politics and Dynamics of Secession in Nigeria

Michael Nwankpa<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract:

From its inception, the different components that constitute Nigeria have lived in mutual fear and suspicion of one another. The British colonial government, through its racialised and politicized system of indirect rule, sowed the seed of discord among the different ethnic groups and regions such that even before gaining independence in 1960, both the majority and minority ethnic groups were sceptical of the capacity of an independent Nigeria in protecting their interests and rights. The religious, linguistic, socio-cultural and political fault lines among Nigeria's plural society have created tension and conflict throughout its existence as a political unit. This has often led to secessionist and self-determination drives and movements that reached their peak less than a decade after independence (1967-70) with Nigeria experiencing a bitter and costly civil war with the Igbo separatist nation of Biafra. Although Nigeria survived the breakup attempt, it continues to face threats of secession that manifest even at the sub-group level. The injustices that are ingrained in Nigeria's political system remain a strong push factor, but in many cases the secessionist drives are elites' manipulation to further their own interests and political survival. Based on the resurgence of secessionism in Nigeria, this article critically examines the politics involved in secession in Nigeria as well as the dynamic nature of selected secessionist movements, comparing or charting the trajectories from historical to contemporary secessionist movements

### Keywords:

Secession, Nigeria, self-determination, IPOB, Niger Delta.

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## *Introduction*

In the decade before Nigeria gained political independence from Britain, the process of decolonization of Africa started. This was marked by a heightened political consciousness among former European colonies and a sharp demand for self-government. By 1960, Nigeria and 16 other African countries had gained their political independence, making 1960 the 'Year of Africa'. Arguably, the Second World War (WWII) sparked the spate of the demand for political independence. WWII with its undesirable outcomes had badly damaged the reputation and economies of European colonial powers and contributed to the decline in their influence. More so, there was now very little support from the United States, one of the major powers that emerged economically and militarily stronger from the war, for colonial empires. Although the fight for independence was marred by violent struggle in some countries, the greater majority of African countries gained their independence peacefully. The few countries that gained their independence through war with the colonial powers include French colonies of Algeria and Madagascar; and all former Portuguese colonies including Angola, Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau. A few other countries such as the British colony of Kenya and Belgian colonies of Congo-Kinshasa, Burundi and Rwanda have elements of war of independence that do not involve a clear-cut struggle between the colonies and their former colonial powers, but nonetheless are still part of that process of disengaging from the control of the former colonial powers. Despite gaining independence, the new African states remain an arbitrary creation of former European powers.

The arbitrary nature of African states remains a controversial subject until today. The controversy stems from the argument by some scholars that the arbitrariness of state creation is responsible for the plethora of conflicts in the continent (Ekeh, 1975; Suberu&Diamond, 2002; Englebert&Tarango, 2002; Falola, 2009; Ikome, 2012). Interestingly, African states have not shown enough effort or mustered the will to redraw their artificial boundaries (Mbembe, 2000) and there have been very minimal inter-state wars in Africa (Asiwaju 1984). On the contrary, there has been an overwhelming number of civil wars and wars of self-determination and secession. Although the popular notion is that the assembling of different cultural and political groups has contributed to the sheer magnitude of internal conflicts in the continent, not everyone accepts that. Collier and Hoeffler (2002) argue instead that a high degree of uniformity in the ethnic composition of a society has a greater chance of leading to civil war than a much more diverse cultural group. Akin to that, Mamdani (2001) questions the idea of a pre-colonial homogenous society. He argues that there were multiple forms of territoriality with social ties, and consequently, of rights that did not match with cultural, linguistic and religious identities in pre-colonial Africa (Mamdani, 2001). Regardless of the competing thoughts about the arbitrariness of state creation in Africa, the artificial mapping and demarcation of Africa by European colonial powers in the Berlin Conference of 1858 continue to have adverse effects on inter-ethnic relations, creating fissures, tensions and conflicts that are endemic and enduring. This article begins with a brief conceptual clarification of the concept of secession and then proceeds with the discussion of the historical manifestations of

secessionist drives in Nigeria. The next section considers the resurgence of secessionism in Nigeria and the last section analyses the political and dynamic nature of secessionist drives and movements in contemporary Nigeria.

### ***Secession: A Conceptual Clarity***

It is important to clarify the concept of secession as it is often used synonymously with self-determination. Since the French Revolution and the American Declaration of Independence, self-determination has come to be associated with the right of nations to statehood and sovereignty. But self-determination as a concept of political rights can be traced to political consciousness evident in ancient Greece and Rome (Bereketeab, 2012). Since the end of World War Two (WWII), self-determination has found greater expression as a universal right in the United Nations (UN) Charter. Article 1(2) of the UN Charter states that:

To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace;

There seems to be an obvious contradiction as the UN Charter, Article 2(4) prohibits the 'threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. Self-determination is defined as 'the right of a people to freely determine their government' and this can take several forms including forming an 'independent state (political independence), joining another state (union); or an autonomy within a state (cultural independence)' (Bereketeab, 2012, p.2). Secession therefore can be defined as a form, or severe form of self-determination. It involves the 'separation of a part of [a] state from the rest of its territory leading to political withdrawal of a region from an original state' (Bereketeab, 2012, p.2). Self-determination is generally perceived positively, whereas secession is frowned upon and seen to be negative in international law (Bereketeab, 2012; Walter & von Ungern-Sternberg, 2014). Although that is the case, international law 'neither prohibits nor authorizes secession' (Walter & von Ungern-Sternberg, 2014, p.3). Some scholars even invite us to consider situations where secession is morally justifiable, especially in an overwhelmingly unjust state (Buchanan, 1991, 1998; Philpot, 1995, 1998; Patten, 2002, 2014).

Contrary to the popular assumption about the obvious incongruity between the right to self-determination and protection of territorial integrity in international law, some scholars do not find these two incompatibles (Brilmayer, 1991). According to Brilmayer, 'secessionist claim involves, first and foremost, disputed claims to territory' (ibid, p.178). Brilmayer shares the sentiment of many scholars in her argument that 'the plausibility of a separatist claim does not depend primarily on the degree to which the group in question constitutes a distinct people' (Brilmayer, 1991, p.178; see Collier & Hoefler, 2002; Mbembe, 2001; Mamdani, 2001; Moore, 1998). The post-WWII elaboration on the concept of the 'peoples' emphasized in the Wilsonian construction of self-determination as the political independence of ethnic or



national communities does not refer to 'ethnic or national groups, but rather multi-ethnic people under colonial rule' (Moore, 1998, p.3). In other words, a territory does not necessarily have to correspond with a homogenous group of people. Secessionist claims should therefore be based on the need to correct a historically disputed territory and not on the high moral ground of self-determination which concerns the relationship between the state and the people. In terms of the latter, self-determination can be pursued by a group that claims to be suffering 'discrimination and massive human rights violations committed by the mother state' (Walter & von Ungern-Sternberg, 2014, p.2). However, 'the mere fact that the secessionist group constitutes a distinct people does not by itself constitute the right to secede' (Brilmayer, 1991, p.179). More importantly, there must be a justifiably territorial claim. This is 'important in the group's conception of itself as a nation' (Moore, 1998, p.3). It is rarely the case that the identity of a geographic or territorial unit corresponds, with the people in the territory sharing the same ethnicity with no significant minority group. In most cases,

the definition of "the people" and the territorial units in which self-determination is to occur are contested, and the possibility of alienated minorities within the state, stranded minorities on the other side of the border, contested homelands, and mobilized unionist groups against the possible secession are very real indeed' (Moore, 1998, p.3-4),

### ***A History of Secessionist Drives, Trends and Movements in Nigeria***

Nigeria is a pluralistic society like many African states. It is therefore subject to the pull and push forces of the consequences of the arbitrary creation of states. Even before independence, the different components have either threatened or attempted to secede. For instance, in his autobiography, *My Life*, Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto and leader of Northern People's Congress, boldly defended the north's resistance against self-government and independence in 1960. In defending the northern opposition to Nigeria's independence, Ahmadu Bello asserts: 'I considered that independence must wait until a country has the resources to support and make a sense of independence' (1962, p.viii). Bello's stated concern fails to conceal the real fear which is 'replacing European domination with southern domination' (Ibrahim, 2000, p.45). It was clear in the years leading up to independence that the Eastern and Western region had great comparative advantage (in terms of skillset) over the north (Maier, 2000). The only way that the north could maintain a balance with the obviously more developed south is to gain control of the centralised political power. It is therefore not surprising that the north rejected the proposed 'representational ratio of 45:33:33 for the North, West and East' at the 1950 Ibadan Constitutional Conference. The north wanted 50 percent of the seat or secede from the country' (Tamuno, 1970, p.568). The north eventually gained control of the federal government through the help of the British who expressed preferential treatment towards the Fulani. Before then in the Lagos Conference of 1953, the Northern House of Assembly and House of Chiefs had demanded for confederation and separation as denoted by the passing of an eight-point resolution (Tamuno, 1970, Ibrahim, 2000). There was also indication of secession in the Western region.

Although the Western region with its Action Group political party played a prominent role in the struggle for self-government and independence for Nigeria, it would, in the Lagos Constitutional Conference of 1954, 'demand that a secession clause be inserted in the Constitution, but it was then opposed by the NPC and NCNC' (Ibrahim, 2000, p.45; Tamuno, 1970). The historical alliance, in the decade before independence and a few years into independence, between the Northern People's Congress (representing the Hausa-Fulani interest) and the National Council of Nigerians and the Cameroons (representing the Igbo interest) was based on strategic reasons. The country's economic mainstay at the time, prior to the discovery of crude oil in the late 1950s and its dominance in the 1960s, was cocoa that was produced entirely in the Yoruba Western region. The political alliance 'between the two natural resource-scarce tribes [was] to enforce the sharing of the rents on cocoa production' (Collier&Hoeffler, 2002, p. 17). The control of Lagos, an important port and trading route, which was situated in the Western region, also spurred the strategic collaboration between the NPC and NCNC (Tamuno, 1970).

In the early 1960s, the Western region was a theatre of political contestation and struggle between the regional and federal government and internecine war between different political factions loyal to the Yoruba leaders Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Samuel Akintola respectively. The tension and crisis in the Western region degenerated into violent conflict that attracted the intervention of the federal government, who declared a state of emergency in the Western region and deployed the military to quell the riot (making it the second time that the military was used in internal security in an independent Nigeria). The first time the military was deployed for internal security was against the Tiv people in 1964 (Maier, 2000). Military intervention in Nigeria's internal security and politics would become normalised a few years later when the military seized power from the civilian government in a coup d'état in 1966. Like the Yoruba and AG, the Igbo people with the NCNC party were instrumental to the attainment of self-government and independence. Interestingly, the Igbo, the third largest ethnic group in Nigeria, despite not having expressed separatist tendencies in the years leading up to independence, as demonstrated by the Yoruba and the Hausa-Fulani, would, unlike the other two major ethnic groups, actually attempt secession. Although, there were few Igbo leaders such as Michael Okpara, the Premier of the Eastern Region and Frank Okpigo, a Member of Parliament representing NCNC who publicly favoured the secession of the Igbo people, this was not a major Igbo or NCNC stance (Tamuno, 1970).

Nigeria experienced another historical secessionist attempt in February 1966, shortly after the first military coup. The secession attempt was carried out in the Niger Delta region by Isaac Adaka Boro, who belonged to the Ijaw group, the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria. Boro declared the Republic of Niger Delta on 23 February 1966 but crumbled to the combined force of Major General AguiyiIronsi's central military government and Colonel Ojukwu's Eastern regional government, after just 12 days of revolution. The centrepiece of the revolution is the gross underdevelopment of a region that is ironically home to the nation's oil wealth and fear of Igbo domination in an independent Biafran state. Boro's secessionist attempt may have



been politicized and encouraged by the northern elites (Nwajiakwu-Dahou, 2009). This is not far-fetched considering that Boro would fight on the Nigerian side during the Civil War.

However, a more serious threat of secession would occur within the first decade of gaining independence. Within six years of gaining independence, Nigeria succumbed to the separatist tendencies as it experienced one of the worst civil wars of the Twentieth Century. In 1967, a year after Nigeria had survived two costly military coups, the January 1966 coup led mostly by Igbo military officers and a July 1966 counter-coup led mainly by northern military officers, Nigeria engaged in a bitter civil war with Biafra, the Igbo separatist nation. The Eastern region with majority Igbo people withdrew from the Nigerian state and declared itself an independent nation. The reprisal killings of hundreds of Igbo military officers and thousands (up to 30, 000) of Igbo civilians in the northern region in the July 1966 counter-coup motivated the Igbo secessionist drive. Unfortunately, the January 1966 coup, carried out chiefly by Igbo military officers, although planned without an ethnic bias, resulted only in the murder of key leaders in the Northern and Western regions, with a conspicuous absence of any notable Igbo leader casualty. While the unlawful killings of thousands of Igbo civilians in the north and the displacement of millions are enough motivation to drive Biafra secession, there is perhaps a higher incentive that is largely material in nature. Oil had been discovered in the Eastern region in the late 1950s and by the 1960s, it was clear that oil was significant to Nigeria's economy. It is therefore very likely that Biafra was 'not a war of ethnic identity [but] a natural resource grab' (Collier & Hoeffler, 2002, p.17-18).

The war lasted for three years (1967-70) and resulted in victory for the Nigerian state, but led to the death of 3 million Igbo people. Although Nigeria suppressed the secessionist attempt of the Igbo nation and reintegrated the Eastern region and the Igbo people into Nigeria, the cost of the victory seems to be very high. The death of 3 million Igbo people and the persistent unjust treatment and political marginalization of the Igbo people continue to be a spanner in the works regarding unity, peace and progress in Nigeria. The ghost of Biafra continues to haunt Nigeria as several pro-Biafra groups have emerged in the predominantly Igbo dominated southeast within the last two decades since Nigeria returned to civilian government. The two major groups include the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

### ***A Resurgence of Secessionist Drives and Movements***

Nigeria has seen resurgence in the demand and struggle for self-determination and secession from groups in the oil-rich Niger Delta, Yoruba groups in the former Western region, Igbo secessionist movements in defunct Biafra and several groups in northern Nigeria. The self-determination and secessionist drives and movements became more pronounced in the current democratic dispensation, Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-till present). Nigeria returned to democratic government in 1999, after 16 years (1983-1999) of consecutive military rule. The return to democracy restored hope as well as created opportunities for



aggrieved groups to express their grievances, which were largely suppressed by the previous military regimes. Unfortunately the nascent democratic state's underwhelming response to the riots and protests ignited the rise of self-help or armed vigilante groups. In the Southwest, we saw the establishment of the O'Odia People's Congress (OPC), in the Southeast, Bakassi Boys, Mambilla Militia group in Middle Belt state of Taraba and the Hisbah Police in the north. The capacity of law enforcement and the Nigeria Police Force has been greatly undercut by the long years of military rule. The armed non-state groups rose to fill the security vacuum created by the underperforming police, and enjoyed the support of the host state. But the need to confront insecurity that was palpable in the absence of effective law enforcement was not the only factor. The return to democratic rule also increased tensions between ethnic groups such as Ife/Modakeke and Ijaw/Itsekiri; and between ethnic-based and religious-based groups and the Nigerian state.

In the Southwest, for instance, from 1993 to 1998, during the military regime of General Sani Abacha, the largely Yoruba pro-democracy group, NADECO (National Democratic Coalition) engaged the junta government of Abacha in a violent struggle that led to a 'few noteworthy politically-motivated-indeed, terrorist attacks' (Giroux&Nwankpa, 2019, p.414). These included series of bombings in major cities including Lagos, Kaduna, Illorin and Onitsha. NADECO's unifying mission was to restore the mandate of Moshood Kashimawo Abiola (MKO), a Yoruba businessman, whose Presidential election victory was annulled by President Ibrahim Babangida in 1993. OPC was established in 1994, the same year as NADECO. Unlike NADECO that had broad support from a coalition of Nigerian pro-democracy activists from other ethnic groups, OPC was purely a Yoruba establishment created to promote and protect the interests of the Yoruba people. Although OPC has always expressed self-determination, this was more pronounced in the ideology of the more radical and militant splinter group that emerged from the split in 1999. The militant OPC led by Gani Adams expressed goals that include: 'self-determination, social emancipation for the Yoruba, regional autonomy, self-government and self-management' (Adebanwi, 2005, p.344). Although there was no outright call for secession, the goals of Gani Adams-led OPC are nothing short of secession. OPC would however play a major role as an informal but state-endorsed security outfit in the early years of Nigeria's Fourth Republic (1999-2002). OPC continues to operate in many Southwest Yoruba states, but its activities have been downgraded due to a combination of factors that include the infighting between the Gani-Adams faction and the moderate faction led by the original founder, Dr. Fasehun; and loss of the overwhelming state support it enjoyed during the early years.

Historically, there has always been a high ethnic and regional consciousness among the ethnic nationalities that comprise Nigeria's multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state; and this predates Nigeria's political Independence from Britain (Tamuno, 1970). Chief Obafemi Awolowo, one of the founding fathers of Nigeria established Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Yoruba: "Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa") in 1947 in Nigeria, having originally started the group in 1944 whilst studying in London. Egbe Omo Oduduwa was formed to promote the culture and unity of the Yoruba people. Egbe Omo Oduduwa provides the rallying ideology for



a wide array of Yoruba groups, well over 100, which have been created over the years. One of such influential groups is the Yoruba World Congress (YWC). YWC is, according to its website, ‘the umbrella body of Yoruba people and groups across the globe’ whose ‘aims are to promote, defend and achieve the collective growth and developmental aspirations and interests, prosperity, security, wellbeing, welfare and sustenance of Yoruba People and culture’ (<https://yorubaworldcongress.org/about-us/>). YWC, now known by its indigenous name, *Ilana Omo Oodua*, represents the face of Yoruba secession. Other Yoruba groups such as the Yoruba Global Alliance (YG) strongly promote Yoruba secession. In line with its commitment to protecting the Yoruba communities from the invasion of the Fulani herders and the perceived planned domination by the Fulani, YWC, in conjunction with Southwest states’ Governors, established Amotekun in Nigeria in 2019. Amotekun is, like OPC, an informal state-endorsed armed vigilante group. Several other prominent Yoruba groups and leaders have disassociated themselves from the demand for a Yoruba nation and caution against such move.

Similarly, during the military regime of President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida (IBB), the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) emerged in 1990 in the Niger Delta region. The emergence of MOSOP represents the beginning of contemporary conflict in the Niger Delta. MOSOP was led mainly by the Ogoni ethnic group, a tribe of about half a million people. The objective and scope of their grievance are couched in the ***Ogoni Bill of Rights*** (1990) presented to the military government of IBB and Royal Dutch Shell (the major oil company in the region at the time). Article (20) of the Ogoni Bill of Rights states that:

The Ogoni people wish to manage their own affairs. NOW, therefore, while reaffirming our wish to remain a part of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, we make demand upon the Republic as follows: That the Ogoni people be granted POLITICAL AUTONOMY to participate in the affairs of the Republic as a distinct and separate unit by whatever name called, provided that this Autonomy guarantees the following: (i) Political control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni people; (ii) The right to the control and use of a fair proportion of OGONI economic resources for Ogoni development (MOSOP, 1991, *Bill of Rights*, p.5-6).

MOSOP’s modus operandi was a non-violent approach. Unfortunately, MOSOP’s leader, Nobel Prize nominee, Ken Saro-Wiwa and other eight Ogoni leaders were murdered in 1995 in a ludicrous trial by General Abacha, the then Head of State. The murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa remains a watershed in the Niger Delta crisis, as it paved way for the emergence of more militant groups. The Ijaw ethnic group (the fourth largest ethnic group in Nigeria, constituting 10 percent of Nigeria’s 170 million populations) spearheaded the next wave of resistance in the Niger Delta. In 1998, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC) published the ***Kaiama Declaration***, declaring their intent for self-determination and resource control as evident in Article 10: ‘we agreed to remain within Nigeria but to demand and work for Self-Government and resource control for the Ijaw people’. Like MOSOP, IYC pursued a non-violent campaign. However, between 2003 and 2009, a full-blown insurgency emerged in the Niger Delta with the establishment of armed groups such as the Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF),

Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND)-an umbrella organisation for over 100 smaller militia groups.

From 1998 to 2003, the oil-rich region experienced a yearly average of 400 acts of vandalism on oil companies' facilities, and another 581 between January and September of 2004. The oil revenue loss during this period is set at USD \$1 billion annually. In 2006, when MEND emerged, we witnessed about 19 attacks on foreign oil operations in the first 6 months. From January 2006 to around mid-year 2009, over 400 expatriate oil-worker hostages have taken place; over 12,000 oil pipeline acts of vandalism and over 3000 oil spills (Joab-Peterside, Porter & Watts, 2012, p.8). Since the summer of 2009 when 30,000 ex-militants received Presidential Amnesty, relative peace has returned to the region. Yet, incidents of crime, oil theft and piracy have spiked, but usually underreported. For instance, from October 2012, Nigeria is accused of hijacking 12 ships, kidnapping over 30 sailors, and killing a number of oil workers. From 2011 to 2016, a total of 90 actual and attempted piracy and armed robbery attacks on ships occurred in Nigeria (International Chambers of Commerce-International Maritime Bureau, ICC-IMB, 2016, p.5). MEND is likely behind these attacks. In recent times, there has been a resurgence of militancy and increase in new militia groups, such as the Niger Delta Avengers. The latest development is a response to the abortive plan by the administration of President Buhari not to extend the amnesty programme.

In the Igbo Southeast, the ghost of Biafra continues to haunt the Nigerian state and threaten its stability. Since the return to democratic rule in 1999, there have been several secessionist groups that have emerged in the former Eastern region with the aim of recreating the defunct independent state of Biafra. Two groups stand out-Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). MASSOB was established in 1999 by Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, an Indian-trained lawyer. IPOB was formed in 2012 by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, a British-dual citizen of Nigeria. Both MASSOB and IPOB adopt a non-violent approach in their struggle for the creation of an independent Igbo nation. The Igbo secessionist group is based on 'perceived sense of injustice and marginalization of the Igbo ethnic group in Nigeria's socio-economic and political space' (Nwankpa, 2021, p.53). MASSOB's modus operandi involves staging mass rallies and peaceful protests, part of a 25-stage campaign that will culminate with an UN-supervised referendum. But, at the height of its campaign, MASSOB hoisted Biafran flags in different locations in the Southeast and re-introduced the Biafran currency and Biafran passport. MASSOB has often clashed with the Nigerian security forces leading to the detention and killing of many of its members; and multiple arrests of its founder who was accused of treason in 2011.

IPOB's activities include demonstration of mass protests and rallies, boycotting of elections, grounding of economic activities through its sit-at-home orders, media propaganda, primarily through its London-based Radio Biafra, an online radio that has been in existence since 2009, and demand for referendum to decide Igbos' exit from the Nigerian state. Like its predecessor, IPOB often clashes with the intolerable government of President Buhari, leading to mass



incarceration and extra-judicial killing of members of IPOB, arrest and imprisonment of Nnamdi Kanu and the proscription of the group as a terrorist organisation in 2017—an action that has attracted widespread condemnation from the local and international community. However, in 2020, IPOB joined the Southwest in creating an informal security unit. IPOB established the Eastern Security Network to protect the Igbo people and Southeast from the threats and attacks from Fulani herders. Although Eastern Security Network, just like Amotekun, is a direct response to the insecurity created by an expanding and armed Fulani herder community and perceived subtle attempt by the Fulani to dominate other ethnic groups in Nigeria, it is seen as the armed wing of IPOB. IPOB's activities have scaled down since June 2021 due to the extra-legal extradition of Nnamdi Kanu by the Kenyan Government (on the instruction of the Nigerian Government). Kanu is currently under the custody of the Nigerian Government facing several charges including terrorism and treason.

In Northern Nigeria, the most visible evidence of secession is found in the widely publicized joint communiqué by the Arewa Youth Consultative Forum on 6 June 2017 with several other northern groups including Arewa Citizens Action for Change, Arewa Youth Development Foundation and Arewa Students Forum. This is known as the Kaduna Declaration. The Declaration reflects an anti-Igbo sentiment and is couched as a reaction to the incessant push by IPOB for Biafra. The position of the group is stated below:

- 1. From today, June 6, 2017, when this proclamation is signed, the North, a critical player in the Nigerian project, hereby declares that it will no longer be disposed to coexisting with the Igbos and shall take definite steps to end the partnership by pulling out of the current federal arrangement.*
- 2. This conclusion is necessitated by the realization that it since ceased to be comfortable or safe to continue sharing the same country with the ungrateful, uncultured Igbos who have exhibited reckless disrespect for the other federating units and stained the integrity of the entire nation with their insatiable criminal obsessions.*
- 3. Rather than certain sections holding the whole country to ransom at every stage, each should be allowed to go its own way as we categorically proclaim today that the North is fed up with being the same country with this pack of acrimonious Igbo partners.*
- 4. The North hereby openly calls on the authorities and other national and international stakeholders to acknowledge this declaration by taking steps to facilitate the final dissolution of this hopeless union that has never been convenient to any of the parties (Kaduna Declaration, 2017).*

While the Kaduna Declaration represents an unequivocal statement and intent for northern secession, it is neither the only nor the first secessionist attempt in contemporary northern Nigeria. The brazen adoption of Shariah criminal code by 11 northern states in the early years of the Fourth Republic (2000-2003) can be interpreted as a secession attempt. Likewise, Boko Haram's attempted exit from the state and its terrorist campaign against the Nigerian state since 2009 can be described as a form of secession.

## *The Political and Dynamic Nature of Contemporary Secessionist Movements in Nigeria*

Virtually, every region in Nigeria has expressed desire for self-determination, but it is not always clear what they mean by self-determination. In one instance, it can signify aspiration for self-governance and autonomy within the existing federated union. In another case, it can denote an outright demand and attempt at separating from the union. Clearly, secessionist drives in Nigeria are dynamic and complex. They are often based on genuine or perceived grievances. Yet, they conceal other motives and agendas. In other words, contemporary secessionist drives and movements in Nigeria are framed in a legitimate and undeniable framework of injustice and grievance, but often betray the elitist political interests. This section focuses on the politicised and dynamic nature of contemporary secessionist movements in Nigeria.

For instance, while not denying the contribution of the pro-democracy campaign in the waning years of military rule in Nigeria, it is safe to argue that the political activism pursued primarily by Yoruba Southwest activists during Abacha's regime was driven largely by the need to restore the denied mandate of MKO. The emergence of Obasanjo, a Yoruba man and former military Head of State (1976-1979), as the President (1999-2003; 2003-2007) was therefore a calculated attempt to pacify the Yoruba for the annulment of MKO's electoral victory and his suspicious death in prison. The People's Democratic Party (PDP) machinery and the Northern oligarchy 'went to get him [Obasanjo] from prison and made him president instead of Alex Ekwueme', according to Commodore Olawunmi, a former military General that I interviewed in 2021. Whether the Yorubas were pacified by the choice of Obasanjo is debatable, considering the underwhelming support Obasanjo received in the Southwest. At the end of the day, some of the pro-democracy activists 'have abandoned civil society today using the money they made from CSO to join politics', according to Miliki, a Human Rights Activist in Kogi State that I interviewed in 2016. However, since 1999, many Yoruba socio-cultural groups have sprung up in struggle for Yoruba's cultural independence and self-determination. Again, the heightened insecurity in the country, particularly the expanding threat and criminality (including banditry and kidnapping) from Fulani herders who are emboldened by the ambivalent and weak response of President Buhari's (a Fulani man) government, has motivated the renewed demand for restructuring or self-determination, and in extreme case, secession. The perceived threat and claim of colonization and Islamization by the Fulani are however not rooted in reality and facts (Nwankpa, 2021)

More so, the multiplicity of Yoruba socio-cultural groups and their divergent positions on self-determination reveal the myth behind the notion of cultural commonalities. The divergence between pro-secessionist and anti-secessionist groups proves the conceptual ambiguity between self-determination and secession (Osaghae, 1999). It is usually very difficult to distinguish between the need to protect Yoruba ethnic identity and the attempt to separate from the federation. For example, the Draft of the O'Odua Region Yoruba



Constitution that was prepared in 2017 by the Egbe Omo Odua, a group that is historically known for promoting the Yoruba culture and unity, presents the desire for restructuring of Nigeria's federation that would give the Yoruba nation greater autonomy over its affairs as evident in Article 1(1):

Yorubaland existing as an autonomous nation in a union of Nigerian constituent nationalities shall be known and styled as "Oduduwa Region" (EgbeOmoOdua, June 30, 2017, <https://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/253666/draft-of-the-oodua-region-yoruba-constitution.html>)

The proposed Oduduwa Region with the constitution resembles the federal system practiced in Nigeria in the early years of political independence (1960-66), with each of the three regions: Western, Eastern, Northern, and later fourth region, Mid-West having greater autonomy and regional constitutions alongside the Federal constitution. Yet, the demand for regional control of the federal armed forces and the specific condition expressed in Article 1(4) that: '90% of which personnel shall be indigenes of the region' raises the problematic dichotomy between indigene and settler, or how citizenship and access (as well as restriction) to benefits, including protection would be delineated. In my interview with Murtala, a conflict analyst with Humangle in 2021, Murtala, in his rejection of the constitution of state police, poses salient questions: 'how do we define who would be in a state police force, especially in a country like Nigeria where you have state of origin? Are you going to use your state of residence? Article 1(4) of the constitution of the proposed Oduduwa region confirms Murtala's point. Since 1960, the demographics of the Southwest have changed drastically due to migration of millions of Nigerians from other regions and ethnic groups, who have settled in Yoruba land. Inter-ethnic marriages have also expanded the socio-cultural ties and integration of ethnic groups. The Yoruba nation made up of a people with homogenous identity and common goals is far from reality. Historically and preceding colonialism, the Yoruba people have always engaged in wars among themselves for control and dominance. Therefore, the Oduduwa nation will likely present greater challenges than the existing federal structure. Although the proposed constitution seeks an autonomous Yoruba nation that exists within the Nigerian federation, but with a weakened Central Government that 'shall have no power to interfere nor intervene in the affairs of the Oduduwa region'. The demand for an Oduduwa region is therefore nothing short of secession. The renewed quest for restructuring, confederation and secession betrays a political calculation that southern political elites seek to leverage on for their own political gain in 2023 elections (Nwankpa, 2021).

Unlike the southwest, where there is significant elite support for the self-determination of the Yoruba people, the drive for secession and self-determination of the Igbo people has not received any significant support from the Igbo elites. In the early years of the Fourth Republic, the Igbo vigilante group, the Bakassi Boys enjoyed the State Governments' patronage and support. The Eastern Security Network does not enjoy similar support. To a great extent, the relationship between the Igbo secessionist groups and Igbo political elites including the Southeast States Governors and the Ohaneze – the traditional umbrella socio-cultural Igbo

organisation that was established to promote and protect the interests of the Igbo people has been frosty. IPOB's frequent sit-at-home orders, election boycott, rallies and marches have often grounded commercial activities in the region and pit the proscribed group against the Southeast Governors. There is no denying the fact that the Igbo people are marginalized politically. There has not been an Igbo President in Nigeria since the early years of Independence when Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe was the nominal President of the Parliamentary (1960-63) and Republican Governments (1963-66) and General Aguiyironi headed the first military government (1966). The Igbo people have been strategically side-lined and as Miliki boldly asserts, 'there can't be peace when there is no basic justice'. IPOB is therefore driven by genuine grievance, but IPOB 'is not as organized to achieve the objective they set out to do. But 80 percent of their failure is due to the politicians from the southeast themselves', according to Commodore Olawunmi.

Although the self-determination of the Igbo people is driven by non-state groups such as IPOB, this has not stopped the Igbo elites from exploiting IPOB for their own political survival and interest. The detained leader of IPOB, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu (MNK) remains a bargaining tool for both the Nigerian government and the Igbo political elites. As MNK is battling terrorism and treasonable charges in the Nigerian Federal Court, there are ongoing informal negotiations between the President Buhari-led Federal government and the Igbo elites. The Igbo elites have at best maintained an ambivalent disposition towards the IPOB-led struggle for Biafra. On one hand, the Igbo elites have unequivocally condemned IPOB's demand for an independent Igbo nation and, conspicuously refused to speak unanimously against the widely condemned proscription of IPOB as a terrorist organisation or act against the military occupation of Igboland and killing of unarmed protesters. On the other hand, the Igbo elites have played a mediatory role between IPOB and the Federal Government and empathized to a certain degree with IPOB's cause. For example, the Igbo elites, specifically the South-east Senate Caucus led by Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu, had met MNK's stringent bail conditions and secured his freedom from federal detention in 2017. MNK had been in detention from 14 October 2015 until his release on 25 April 2017 by Justice Binta Nyako. The Ohaneze Ndigbo, and the Igbo Youth Movement (IYM) and the Eastern Consultative Assembly (ECA) supported MNK's release. Also, the Southeast Governors met with MNK in August 2017 amidst IPOB's directive for election boycott and the plan by the Court to revoke MNK's bail. MNK also met with the leadership of Alaigbo Development Foundation, a pan-Igbo elite group of academics and professionals based in Nigeria and abroad. There have also been other muted meetings and private support particularly when IPOB had momentum before the extradition of MNK that indicate that the Igbo political elites were willing to cooperate with IPOB or at least soften its tough stance against the group. IPOB offered the opportunity for the Igbo political elites to bargain for the Presidency in the upcoming 2023 election.

The Niger Delta case, which is considered Nigeria's only 'serious secessionist rebellion' (Collier&Hoeffler, 2002, p.18), like the other regions, is based on legitimate grievances. To a large degree, the Niger Delta rebellion provided a more united front in the struggle for self-



determination and resource control. The creation of MEND, an umbrella insurgent body made up of a coalition of smaller insurgent groups, was instrumental in the effective and coordinated campaign against the Nigerian state. The Presidential Amnesty of 2009 and the emergence of Goodluck Jonathan, of Niger Delta extraction, as the President of Nigeria, 2010-2015, mitigated against the Niger Delta insurgency. Although relative peace has returned to the region due to the Amnesty, the Presidential Amnesty was nothing short of bribery and pay-off to warlords (Nwankpa, 2014). This should however not take away the laudable surrender of arms by up to 30, 000 ex-militants in exchange for training, capacity building and monthly stipends. Yet, the overwhelming beneficiaries of the Amnesty programme are militants from the Ijaw ethnic group, and also overwhelmingly male. The Amnesty programme neglected the other groups including women, the Ogoni and Itsekiri. The relative peace that the Amnesty programme secured also masks the perennial inter-ethnic conflict in the Niger Delta region, particularly between the Ijaw and Itsekiri. Although there is relative peace in the region, lasting peace remains elusive as long as inter-ethnic tensions and the developmental challenges of the Niger Delta remain unaddressed.

In the north, religion has played a massive role in the drive for secession, both as a means to an end and an end in itself. For non-state armed groups such as Boko Haram, where the establishment of a “pure” Islamic state is a declared goal and whose over a decade old terrorist campaign has caused the death of thousands, displacement of millions and destruction of livelihood, it may be difficult to identify them with any legitimate grievance. However, the rise of Boko Haram can be traced to legitimate concerns against perceived northern elite corruption, double standard and the need to withdraw from such a society to practice a “pure” form of the Islamic religion (Besenyő&Mayer, 2015). Although Boko Haram’s idea about an ideal Islamic state may be based on an ignorant and discredited view,

When they started initially, they were running away from the Nigerian state. They were not fighting the Nigerian state. Muhammad Yusuf was running. They were trying to create an ideal Islamic state...It was actually the Nigerian state that was responsible for radicalizing the Boko Haram people, in the manner they misunderstood them, in the manner they killed Mohammed Yusuf, and in the manner they subsequently handled the post-Mohammed Yusuf. So the Nigerian state essentially radicalized Boko Haram and turned them hostile (2014 Interview with Baba Ahmed, Federal Permanent Secretary and member of the Presidential Committee on Dialogue and Peaceful Resolution of Security Challenges in the North)

In contrast to Boko Haram’s exit attempt from the Nigerian state, the adoption of the criminal Shariah code by 11 northern states in 2000-2003 was driven by a political motivation—the need to protect the political interest of the northern geopolitical zones against the unbridled ambition of a southern President and its unpopular policy against the north. This action however constituted a threat to the unity of the country and can therefore be described as a secession attempt. Similarly, the Kaduna Declaration, despite its dangerous and unbridled threatening language, is nothing but a political move to protect the northern interest.



## **Conclusion**

The Nigerian state is in crisis as it battles with a growing surge in the demand for self-determination and secession by several ethnic groups in the country. In the former Eastern Region, groups such as MASSOB and IPOB are trying to restore the defunct Biafra nation; several groups in the Yoruba-dominated Southwest rally round the ideology of Awolowo as they pursue self-determination and, in extreme case, an independent Yoruba nation. Although largely defused due to the Presidential Amnesty of 2009, the struggle for self-determination and autonomy in the oil rich Niger Delta remains alive. In northern Nigeria, there is sub-group secession and challenge to the unity of the country by Jihadist groups, mainly Boko Haram (Besenyó&Mayer, 2015), as well as secessionist threats from northern elites-backed groups. The motivations for these groups range from marginalization, political exclusion, underdevelopment and neglect, to insecurity. The Nigerian state battles with legitimacy as it is not able to guarantee prosperity and security for millions of its citizens. More so, there are historical injustices that have been left unaddressed. The political history of the country particularly the colonial history and the inherited absolutist political structure presents as a source of tension and conflict between the multiple ethnic groups. These often lead to centrifugal tendencies.

Yet, underneath the legitimate grievances that drive many of the demands for self-determination and secession is a sophisticated elite manipulation and politicization. Elites in Nigeria exploit group identities and grievances for the advancement of their own personal interests and political gains. Interestingly, this kind of behaviour is always observable close to elections, at the cusp of transition from one administration to another. This is however not a simple and straightforward process. The nature of secessionism in Nigeria is complex and dynamic as it shows interplay between the country's socio-political histories, culture and greed. The political elites in Nigeria have managed in the past to keep Nigeria one through the principle of consociation-a conflict-regulating mechanism that involves affirmative action to achieve a balance of power among different groups in a plural society. Usually, these take any of these forms: "grand coalition", "mutual veto", "proportionality" and "segmental autonomy" (Lijphart, 1969). In Nigeria, this entails applying the principle of 'federal character' which is proportional representation that aims for ethnic balance in federal appointments. It is therefore very likely that the elites would be able to find a compromise that would prevent the breakup of the country, but the prospect of finding a lasting solution to the centrifugal elements and fractious inter-ethnic relations remains dim.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.



## Notes on Contributor

Dr Michael Nwankpa is the Founding Director / Director of Research at the Centre for African Conflict and Development in London. He holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Roehampton. His main research area is the nexus between conflict and development, including the concept of a human rights-based approach to development. His other research interests relate to counterinsurgency, counterterrorism, foreign and security policy, and African security.

He has published several articles on Boko Haram and conflict in Nigeria generally. Dr Nwankpa is the co-author of the seminal work on Boko Haram entitled 'The Boko Haram Reader - From Nigerian Preachers to the Islamic State', published by Hurst and Oxford University Press in 2018. He is currently writing his second book on Nigeria's militarised democracy.

He teaches students registered on Liverpool John Moore University's (in partnership with Unicaf) online master's degree programme in International Relations. Additionally, he supervises PhD students registered with Unicaf University. Dr Nwankpa held two prestigious fellowships at the Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University, and at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, University of Maryland.

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## An Analysis of Crimes Committed by the Multinational Joint Task Force in North-East Nigeria

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### Abstract:

The Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) is the major collaborative military initiative among the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC) saddled with the responsibility of combating Boko Haram Terrorism (BHT) within the region. Although the body seems to have achieved some successes, they have however, over the years, been involved in seemingly clandestine activities such as torture, extra-judicial execution, gender-based violence, etc., which, according to international humanitarian law, if committed during non-international armed conflict, are regarded as war crimes. This study seeks to investigate the nature and pattern of war crimes committed by some Nigerian military forces under the MNJTF in the course of Counter-Insurgency (COIN) operations against Boko Haram terrorists in north-east Nigeria between 2012 and 2019. It also investigates the implications of these travesties on victims, the war against terrorism and Nigeria in general. It analyses the various war crimes committed by the MNJTF. It also examines the measures for curbing the criminal activities of some members of the MNJTF. This study engages the following issues: what are the war crimes committed by the Nigerian soldiers under the MNJTF or why is the latter accused of gross human rights violations? What are the implications of the criminality of the MNJTF? What measures should be taken to curb the criminality of the MNJTF in north-east Nigeria? This study uses both primary and secondary sources. It anchors on Biological and Cultural Transmission Theories of criminology. The study reveals that the statutory body in charge of countering terrorism and also securing human lives, is also, like the Boko Haram terrorists, terrorising innocent civilians and promoting insecurity in north-east Nigeria. The conclusion is that the MNJTF is smudged with the brush of brutality and terrorism.

### Keywords:

War crime, MNJTF, North-East, Nigeria, terrorism.

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## *Introduction*

The Multinational Joint Task Force, whose mandate is to counter insurgency in north-east Nigeria, has done tremendously great at some fronts, dislodging the terrorists from their Sambisa stronghold and reducing Boko Haram terrorism to guerrilla warfare. The latter, seems to have been vilified for criminal activities against innocent civilians and/or citizens. (Amnesty International, 2018, p. 59). The MNJTF in the course of its operations, between 2012 and 2019, committed war crimes such as torture, extra-judicial execution, arrest of innocent persons, unlawful detention of Boko Haram suspects and gender-based violence, and thus, promoted insecurity within an already tensed and insecure north-eastern region of the country (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 36). Rather than freeing hundreds of thousands of people who had been trapped in the recaptured vast swathes of territory that was once under the control of Boko Haram, the MNJTF embarked on systematic patterns of violence and abuse against this population, including crimes against humanity (United Nations Security Council Report, 2017, p. 6). To this populace and many other inhabitants residing within the region, terrorism and/or fear and insecurity seem to be in perpetuity.

Worrisome as the case may be, the narratives on this perspective of the criminality of the MNJTF in the course of its operations, are conspicuously missing in extant literature on counter-insurgency in Nigeria. Peace and conflict scholars have captured several aspects of this subject such as, the origin and/or establishment, changing pattern and nature, weaknesses and achievements, problems and prospects, of counter-insurgency in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this critical aspect of the criminality of military forces has not been well discussed and documented for both academic and general knowledge purposes.

It is, therefore, the position in this study to investigate war crimes committed by the military forces under the auspices of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the course of Counter-Insurgency (COIN) operations against Boko Haram terrorism in north-east Nigeria between 2012 and 2019. This study examines the nature and pattern of war crimes committed by the military forces during this period and the implications of the travesties on victims, the war against terrorism and Nigeria in general. It discusses measures that can be deployed in curbing the criminality of the MNJTF and how these affect the fight against COIN in Nigeria.

This multidisciplinary study utilises primary and secondary sources of data. As primary sources, interviews were conducted with serving military personnel who were part of the MNJTF counter-insurgency in the north-east, and have been subsequently redeployed to the Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport (NASST), Benin, Edo state. In addition, the reports of Amnesty International and the United Nations Security Council are also used. This study employs the investigative and descriptive styles in its presentation. It anchors on Biological and Cultural Transmission Theories of criminology. The chapter is subdivided into sections. The first part is on conceptual and theoretical explanations. The next section focuses on the historical development, achievements and challenges of MNJTF. Section three is on the analysis of the criminality of the MNJTF. The following section is devoted to the consequences



of the criminality of the MNJTF. And the last part discusses the measures for curbing the criminal activities of the MNJTF.

### *Conceptual and Theoretical Explanations*

This section begins with conceptualisation of some concepts such as crime and/or criminality, and war crime. The explanations of these concepts provide a better and clearer understanding of the argument raised by the authors.

**Crime:** This is defined as any action or omission which constitutes an offence and is punishable under the law (The Scottish Centre & Justice Research SCCJR, 2019, p. 1). To SCCJR, crime is seen as, “action or failure to act” that is considered by law to be a community wrong and is punishable by the law of the state. Crime, from a different perspective, is viewed from fundamental attributes of all criminal behaviours (Sampson & Laub, 1993 p. 301; & Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990:67). To these scholars, instead of attempting to separately discuss crimes such as homicide, robbery, rape, burglary, embezzlement, drunken driving, child neglect, and failure to pay tax, it is safer to identify a common feature of crime. To this end, Gottfredson and Hirschi opine that all criminal behaviours involve the use of force, fraud, or stealth to obtain material or symbolic assets. In their behavioural definition of crime, they lay emphasis on criminality, a certain personality profile that causes the most disturbing and alarming sets of crimes. As they noted, criminality is a style of premeditated and tactical conduct branded by self-centredness, indifference to the suffering and needs of others, and low self-control. And that individuals are more likely to find criminality as an attractive pattern of behaviour due to its immediate gratification through relatively easy or simple but risky tactics. As it is, crime, in most cases, are committed with the intent of acquiring material, symbolic and hedonistic resources. For example, an individual who commits crimes such as narcotics trafficking and gambling, has the intention of obtaining money which is being used to procure material resources; in crimes such as sexual assaults and illicit drug use, not associated with theft, people obtain hedonistic resources that increase enjoyable feelings or reduce unpleasant feelings; and political crimes such as terrorism or election fraud are perpetuated towards obtaining symbolic resources including but not limited to power and prestige (Agnew, 1992:48 & Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990).

**War Crime:** The term war crime is any act, or omission, committed in an armed conflict that constitutes a serious violation of the laws and customs of international humanitarian law and has been criminalised by international treaty or customary law (Fleck 2013:83). From a broader perspective, war crimes are all acts constituting a violation of the laws or customs of war, irrespective of whether the behaviour is criminal (Werle and Jessberger, 2014:391). Two elements or conditions of what constitute a war crime are, one, an abuse of international humanitarian law, and second, the outlawing of the behaviour under treaty, agreement or customary international law (Cassese. 2013:67). According to Cassese, the first condition has to do with violation of what constitutes international humanitarian law. When there is a

violation of such international agreement or treaty during armed conflict, a war crime is committed. Also, a conduct, even if not criminal, but has been outlawed or criminalised by the international humanitarian law, when being displayed becomes a war crime.

Amnesty international further submitted that these acts, including but not limited to the following, arbitral arrest, torture, extra-judicial execution and gender-based violence, committed in the context of a non-international armed conflict, constitute war crimes so far as the military commanders bear both individual and command responsibility, and that this criminality may also amount to crimes against humanity. The evolution of war crimes can be traced to the traditional laws of war, which is generally called international humanitarian law. These laws regulate the conduct of armed conflicts whose rules were derived from international conventions and customary international law. International humanitarian law addresses individual criminal and belligerent state responsibilities for serious violations committed during armed conflict situations. According to the definition of article 8 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, war crimes during non-international armed conflict include acts against persons who do not participate in ongoing hostilities, including violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture (International Criminal Court, 2011). In addition, the Rome Statute also outlaws attacks targeted at the civilian population not being involved in any form in the fighting.

To further understand the drivers of crime and criminality, two criminological theories, such as biological and cultural transmission theories are examined. These theories provide plausible explanations for the crime of military forces saddled with the responsibility of ensuring national security and peaceful existence of citizens.

**Biological Theory:** Biological justifications of crime is based on the assumption that some persons are “born criminals,” and that they are physiologically different from non-criminals (SCCJR, 2019). Proponents of this theory view crime as a product of biology and biological characteristics, which is associated with mal-developed or not fully developed brains. Though this theory has fallen out of favour, it has, in a way, informed contemporary biological explanations of crime. Biological expositions for criminal activities have thus witnessed a new dimension since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Contemporary approaches of biological theories do not solely rely on the explanation of crime from the viewpoint of physical features of the body, rather, they focus on biochemical conditions such as poor diet or hormone imbalance; neurophysiological conditions such as learning disabilities caused by brain damage; genetic inheritance and/or abnormality; and intelligence (Kevles, 1985). This theory is relevant to this study in that it explains the determinants of crime. The theory sees the effect of mal-developed brain and/or poor thinking capacity of some military personnel as the reasons for criminal activities during counter-insurgency.



### ***Cultural Transmission Theory***

This theory posits that normative systems produce varied patterns of social behaviour evident across and within societies, and that crime is shaped by factors external to the individual, that is, experiences within the neighbourhood, peer group, and family (SCCJR, 2019). Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay, are two prominent proponents of cultural transmission theories, who embarked on spatial mapping to examine the impact of residential locations on juveniles (Shaw & McKay, 1969). They found that patterns of delinquency were higher in areas characterised by poor housing, poor health, socio-economic disadvantage and transient populations, and that crime was a function of neighbourhood or environmental dynamics. They also discovered that areas settled by newly arrived settlers experienced a breakdown of social norms due to ethnic diversity and competing cultural traditions. This theory hinges on poor socio-economic background, which in some cases confines the family to a very poor settlement system. Also, the theory stresses how the financial situation of the family prevents members from having access to medical services and how this leads to poor health. Moreso, the theory suggests that crime is a by-product of the various dynamics within the immediate environment.

### ***The Multinational Joint Task Force: A Historical Appraisal***

Counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations have increasingly transcended the domestic and individualistic efforts of states. The current state of our world with respect to the surge and proliferation of criminal gangs and networks have rendered most states almost helpless in marshaling out strategies in their campaigns against them. The effective functionality of national security apparatus has almost become no match to these deadly networks of terrorists and insurgents. The realization of this have made states to increasingly shrink, limit and circumscribe their sovereignty so as to be able to find common grounds of collaboration and cooperation with other states in the fight against these heartless and callous terrorists-cum-insurgents. It is the outcomes of this collaboration and cooperation by Nigeria with her immediate francophone neighbours that have resulted in the creation and establishment of the sub-regional security alliance, christened the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), which has as its ultimate goal the creation of a security community. In other words, the Multinational Joint Task Force is to serve as the means for the ultimate attainment and realization of a sub-regional security community. (Aideloje, 2020).

The creation of the Multinational Joint Task (MNJTF) Force preceded the administration of former President Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan (2011-2015), even though one could easily agree that his reign witnessed the most lethal attacks on the country by Boko Haram insurgents. Historically, the creation of the MNJTF began during the military junta of late General Sani Abacha and was expanded by the Abdulsalami's regime both in terms of membership and operational mandate. Its present status came into being during the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan. Scholars have agreed that the first MNJTF was formed in 1994 by the regime of General Sani Abacha chiefly to police the north-east region against armed banditry from the Chadian war. However, at this embryonic stage, the force



was solely a Nigerian affair. Its initial operational responsibility was to clear the border regions from the nefarious activities of bandits, ensure and assure the free movement of persons and goods across the border. Four years after, that is in 1998, the force assumed its true multinational status when military forces from Chad, Niger and Nigeria were all brought together to collectively and concertedly deal with security challenges of common concerns situated within the Lake Chad region. By 2012, the MNJTF operational mandate was expanded to meet with current security challenges of insurgency and terrorism being perpetuated by Boko Haram and related issues such as arm trafficking, kidnapping etc. (Albert, 2017). Agreeing with Albert on the historical development of the MNJTF, Willibroad Dze-Ngwa, however added that “following increasing Boko Haran extremism, characterized by religious fundamentalism, brutal assassinations, kidnappings, hostage-takings, suicide bombings, detonations and wanton destruction of properties, the activities of the MNJTF was extended to all affected countries. Of course, this was because none of these countries could single-handedly check the excesses of the group with their national boundaries owing to the fact that they had membership, recruits and sympathizers in all the affected countries and beyond”, (Dze-Ngwa, 2018). It is necessary to state that the creation of the MNJTF during the administration of Goodluck Jonathan to include neighbouring countries did not come about quite easily. This was because the Jonathan’s administration was initially averse to allowing other neighbouring states to join Nigeria in the fight against home grown insurgency and terrorism. The administration’s belief was that allowing external forces to assist Nigeria will no doubt deal a heavy blow to the Big Brother Personality that Nigeria has seemingly assumed within the continent and sub-region over the years. It would in their thinking portray the country as incapable of dealing with her purely domestic problems alone. In addition to this was the fact that Cameroon and Nigeria have had a fractious relationship. The menace of the insurgents as long as they were domiciled within Nigeria was seen purely to be Nigeria’s problems. However, the trans nationalization of the insurgents’ activities compelled hitherto unwilling states such as Cameroon to join in counter insurgency (COIN) operations and the rising profile of the insurgents, their capacity to carry out multiple lethal attacks on regular basis and the seizure of some local governments in the north-east with effective occupation by the insurgents compelled the administration to reach out to her neighbours to join forces together to deal with their shared and common security challenges.

### ***Achievements of the Multinational Joint Task Force***

It is almost tempting to argue that no achievements have been recorded by the MNJTF in the face of the resurgent and continuous security harassments on the country by bandits, terrorists, insurgents and other criminal gangs and networks that dot the geographical landscape of the country. It is almost like the security agencies are frustrated because of their apparent inability, so to speak, to arrest and put an end to the security imbroglio that have bedeviled the country over the past fifteen years. However, a careful assessment of the



operations of the MNJTF would reveal that quite a lot have been recorded as gains, despite their criminality and the challenges that have militated against their effective operations.

One of the most significant achievements of the MNJTF was the recapture, repossession and occupation of territories formerly under the effective control of the insurgents. Prior to the recapture of these territories, Boko Haram had successfully taken over about fourteen local governments in Borno State, established an Islamic Caliphate, hoisted their flag, and even collected taxes, regulated economic activities and established its headquarter in Gwoza, implying that Nigeria had lost part of her sovereignty. President Jonathan had declared that Nigeria underestimated the capacity of the insurgents as well as their external influences and support. The 2015 general elections were postponed in part because of the need to recover and reclaim these territories seized and occupied by the insurgents. (Chasmar, 2014; BBC, 2015; Onuah 2015; Nwabughio, 2016; Nwezeh & Olugbode, 2020).

It was therefore to the credit of the then government and the Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant-General Kenneth Minimah that these territories were reclaimed and repossessed.

Reporting on this feat, the British Telegraph stated that:

The Nigerian army achieved its biggest victory over Boko Haram on Friday, capturing the town serving as the headquarters of the Islamist gunmen. An offensive mounted by the 7th Division has broken the insurgents' grip on a large area of Borno state. The gunmen captured Gwoza nine months ago and turned the town into the headquarters of their movement and a crucial operating base. Shielded by the Mandara Mountains near the border with Cameroon, Gwoza had been the capital of Boko Haram Self-proclaimed Caliphate. The area's inhabitants are from the same Kanuri tribe as Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, and most of his fighters.

The successful conduct of the 2015 general elections despite the security challenges and fears to conduct the same in areas considered to be the stronghold of the insurgents can be considered to be a major achievement of the MNJTF. The elections could have been declared to be inconclusive had the electoral umpire gone ahead to conduct the same excluding the three northeastern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. The National Security Adviser to President Goodluck Jonathan, Rtd Colonel Sambo Dasuki came out to suggest to the Independent National Elections Commission (INEC) that it will be in the country's national interest to have the elections postponed for a period of six weeks. Three major grounds were given for the need to postpone the elections according to the NSA. The first was the need to recover all illegally seized Nigerian territories from the Boko Haram insurgents so that persons from those areas can go back to their localities and participate in the elections. If these seized and controlled areas are not retaken and the residents allowed and helped to go back so that they can participate in the elections, the integrity of the election processes would have been seriously compromised. These hundreds of thousands of eligible voters would have been short-changed and disenfranchised. The second reason was that there was the need for the Nigerian army and other sister security agencies to clear the northeast from the activities of the insurgents so as to create a secured environment that was needed for the conduct of the

elections and the safety of lives and electoral materials. The NSA insisted that if the elections were allowed to go on as scheduled, the military and all other security agencies of the government will not be able to guarantee the security and protection of the lives of Nigerians and the sensitive and non-sensitive materials to be used for the elections. The third ground according to the NSA was to give INEC enough time to be able to distribute millions of biometric cards to voters. (Aideloje, 2020).

The “technical defeat and degradation of Boko Haram”, though can be contested, is seen to be another achievement of the MNJTF. Insurgency usually involves three phases. The insipient/latent phase, the guerilla phase and the war of movement phase. The extra-judicial killing (assassination) of Mohammed Yusuf in July of 2009 transformed the group he led into an insurgent-cum-terrorist movement under the leadership of his successor Abubakar Shekau, allegedly and reportedly now diseased (Hazzad, 2009 & Guardian, 2009). At the peak of their operations, the sect could successfully engage in conventional warfare with the Nigerian military with reported cases of gaining the upper hand in gun battles. Several reports showed that the Nigerian army fled in the course of battle because they lacked the requisite weapons to confront these insurgents. These insurgents-cum-terrorists were able to attack military formations, security centres and the United Nations building in Abuja. (Hazzad, 2009 & The Guardian, 2009). The sophistication of their weapons was dreaded by the men of the Nigerian army and several times the Nigerian army had to run away from them because they could not stand the superior fire power of the insurgents as even recently admitted by Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai during his working visit to Gwoza (Nwezeh & Olugbode, 2020). The takeover of fourteen local government areas and the hoisting of their flags and the declaration of a Caliphate by the insurgents with its headquarters in Gwoza (Chasmar 2014) all testified that these bunches of criminal elements were out to confront the state fire-for-fire. The argument against the technical defeat and degradation of the insurgents has been hinged on the basis of the insurgents’ continued ability to mesmerize the state, and occupy ungoverned spaces, carry out kidnapping for ransom and create fears in the hearts and minds of the locals. However, it can also not be argued against that the government has been able to some extent foil attacks, prevent the insurgents from taking over and occupying territories, and reduced their operations to the fringes of the society. Their war of movement phase has also been reversed to guerilla warfare, which is attack and run away.

In October of 2019, President Buhari reiterated his stance that the insurgent group has been substantially defeated. In a report by the Guardian Newspaper titled *Boko Haram now ‘substantially’ defeated, says Buhari*, the President was quoted to have stated that:

The nation is appreciative of the gallantry and sacrifices of the officers and men of our Armed Forces in the campaign against insurgency and other internal security operations. This has led to the return of normalcy in affected parts of the nation. The Boko Haram terrorists have been substantially defeated and degraded to the extent that they are now only daring soft targets. We shall not rest until all our displaced persons are safely resettled into their communities without fear of further attacks. The peace and security of Nigeria is non-negotiable and the security agencies must continue to do their work



diligently. The task of resettling and rehabilitating our citizens as well as the reconstruction of territories affected by the war will continue to be one of the priorities of this administration. (Erezi, 2019).

The use of soft power approach in the fight against insurgency can equally be seen as an added achievement of the MNJTF. The realization that COIN operations should not always and at all times be anchored on the use of lethal weapons (hard power) is one significant achievement of the MNJTF. If the hearts and minds of the locals must be won and the backbone of the insurgents be broken, then, there is the absolute need and necessity for the adoption of this soft power approach. Boko Haram, like all insurgent groups, thrive on propaganda in order to gain the support of the locals against the government they are at war with. The absence of the support of the local's spells doom for insurgent activities and operations. Besides, there are persons who were forcefully conscripted into the group and some others who on a second thought have become unwilling members due to the carnage being regularly carried out against hapless and defenseless civilians including women and children. Such unwilling and forcefully conscripted members can be won over through the use of soft power approach. The adoption of deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration as integral part of the COIN operations have helped the military to harvest some unwilling and forcefully conscripted members of the movement who also have contributed invaluable intelligence that will help in stemming the tide of insurgency and terrorism in the country.

In a report by The Punch titled: Deradicalised ex-Boko Haram members beg for forgiveness:

The Nigerian Army says its soft power approach in the fight against Boko Haram is gaining ground with more of the repented terrorists now embracing civil life. The camp commandant of 'operation safe corridor' Colonel Beyidi Martins disclosed this during the oath taken by the repentant graduating clients at the base camp in Malam Sidi Gombe. The individuals were formally members of the terrorist group, Boko Haram, who underwent deradicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes organized by the Nigerian army. The reformed insurgents walk up to a sitting judge, take an oath of allegiance to serve the country and become responsible citizens to the state. Their sincerity gets the attention of the sitting judge and some representatives of the states affected. Beyond this, there is a huge task of reintegration. But the Nigerian army says the war against terror in Nigeria is gaining momentum and the approach in winning the hearts of the repentant terrorists is the key.

### ***Challenges for the Multinational Joint Task Force***

The creation of the MNJTF was believed to be ultimate instrument that will immediately bring to an end the decade-plus long war against terrorism and insurgency in the country. The efforts of the Nigerian government to tame the insurgents were met with several brick walls, thereby necessitating multinational collaborations involving the member states of the Lake Chad Basin. With the benefit of hindsight, one can easily see how difficult and complicated the COIN operations have become. Even at the multinational level, the war against insurgency and terrorism is far from over. Combined efforts have not been able to deal a decisive blow on the insurgents. Rather, what we see daily now is the hydra-headedness of the war and the

mutation of the insurgents into banditry activities. There are of course challenges that have posed serious threats to the COIN operations both at the national and multinational levels.

One of the major challenges that has militated against the effective and efficient functionality of the MNJTF is the problem of mistrust between the states involved in the COIN operations. Historically, Nigeria has had not too fantastic relationship with two of her francophone neighbours - Cameroon and Chad. Between Nigeria and Cameroon, there was a contest over the oil rich Bakassi Peninsula that almost resulted to war. There was indeed a military confrontation which led to loss of lives on both sides. The same frosty relationship equally existed between Nigeria and Chad and it bothered on two things: border demarcation and the forceful expulsion of about seven hundred Chadians from Nigeria on the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 1983 during the civilian administration of President Shagari. The border demarcation almost led to an inter-state war between both countries. The Chadian government responding to Nigeria's government decision to deport her citizens led to the blockade of the Lake Chad against Nigeria's fishermen, arguing that the Lake itself entirely belong to her, reason why it was named after her in the first place as Lake Chad. These inter-state hostilities to some degree affected effective collaboration between both sides, thereby reducing the effectiveness and efficiency of the MNJTF. (Albert, 2017).

The absence of linguistic homogeneity has also been fingered to be one major challenge of the COIN operations. Combatants are required for the sake of effective communication to speak the same language. Where this is lacking or wanting, it will necessarily pose a severe challenge to effective operations in the theatre of war. Since most of Nigeria's neighbours are francophone and those involved in the security community arrangement are francophone and only Nigeria is anglophone, one can easily understand that effective communication between both sides will be severely hampered, which in turn will affect the successes of the MNJTF.

Interviews conducted with military personnel with practical experience and involvement in the COIN operations in the North-East revealed that the deployment of new recruits from the depot into the theatre of operations, the existence of moles and Boko Haram sympathizers, the ethnicization, religionization and regionalization of the military high command, the use of less efficient, old and decrepit weapons and the diversion of war funds have all in very severe measures militate against the successes of the MNJTF (Oral Interview with a military officer 'A', 2019).

### ***The Criminality of the MNJTF: An Analysis***

The MNJTF, particularly the Nigerian military forces, have in so many ways, curtailed terrorist activities within the north-east region of Nigeria. They have, in similarly senseless posture like the insurgents, committed war crimes for which the latter are being criticised (Amnesty International, 2015). Since 2012, the activities of the MNJTF have endangered the lives of innocent and protected persons, and also deprived the latter from some fundamental human



rights such as the right to liberty, freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention, right to fair hearing, and right to security (Amnesty International, 2015).

While arbitrary deprivation of liberty in international armed conflict is allowed, the case is not the same in non-international conflict (Schindler, 1979 & International Committee of the Red Cross, 2008). Arbitrary deprivation of liberty or abuse of human rights during non-international armed conflict is a serious violation of international humanitarian law. In 2013, the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court qualified the fighting in north-east Nigeria as a non-international armed conflict, and thus, states and non-state armed groups, as it is in the case of Nigeria, are bound by the rules of international humanitarian law as well as international human rights law (Schindler, 1979).

In Nigeria, while the Constitution (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999) protects the rights to liberty, subsection 35(1) allows a person to be deprived of their liberty to the extent that this is to allow them to be brought before court. Also, according to subsection 4, any individual being deprived of their liberty must be brought to a court within a reasonable period of time. However, subsection 7 removes this protection for persons reasonably suspected of capital crime. By implication, while an individual may only be arrested and detained under subsection 35 (1) for the purpose of being brought to court, there is no obligation to bring such suspect to court within a reasonable time if they are facing capital offence. It becomes glaring that subsection 7 does not comply with international human rights law as it allows suspected persons to be held indefinitely if they are accused of capital offence, without a fair hearing or the opportunity to have a lawyer to defend them at the court. Besides, section 35 does not allow purely administrative detention and stipulates that all arrested and detained suspects, in connection with a criminal offence, must be held with the intention of being brought before court. In the same vein, the Terrorism (Prevention) Act as amended allows for extended detention of people suspected of involvement in terrorist activities but does not allow the administrative detention of a person without reasonable suspicion and without oversight by the court. Therefore, elongated pre-trial detention of non-combatants and alleged Boko Haram members and supporters in the north-east, who were imprisoned without a credible proof of criminal act, cannot be held to be lawful under the Act as the procedures set out in the Act have not been observed.

Besides, it is quite understandable that the Nigerian state is currently using its military, in conjunction with the MNJTF, rather than the law enforcement agencies, to fight terrorism, basically because of the nature of the emerging dimension, sophistication, command structure and the capacity of military operations of Boko Haram group. However, to a large extent, the government, as observed and studied by Amnesty International and the United Nations Security Council, has not taken serious actions to halt the abnormal or to prevent the military from committing war crimes (Amnesty International, 2015 & Amnesty International, 2018). There seems to be, on the part of the military forces, a continuous violation of international humanitarian law in the on-going counter-insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin Commission, particularly in north-east Nigeria. The random mass apprehensions and

imprisonment of non-combatants and suspected persons or alleged supporters of terrorists with no access to the courts, usually made outside the combat zone and often without evidence, are contrary to Nigeria's Constitution and its international human rights obligations. The handling of these persons violates all fair trial and access to a judge, which by interpretation, remove the power of the court to access the legality of their detention or prevent torture and other ill-treatment. According to Amnesty International, in most cases, detainees are usually denied access to medical and legal services, and to their families.

### ***Crimes Committed by the Military***

In concluding this section, it is imperative to highlight some of the war crimes committed by the Nigerian military forces and/or MNJTF. This will reveal the magnitude of the violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and the individual and command responsibility in the violation of international humanitarian law.

Between 2012 and 2015, Nigerian military forces extra-judicially executed more than 1,200 persons; they arbitrarily arrested 20,000 people, mostly young men and boys; they committed countless acts of torture; thousands have become victims of enforced disappearance; and at least about 7,000 persons died in military detention due to starvation, extreme overcrowding and denial of medical attention (Amnesty International, 2015). These crimes are specifically discussed below:

**Extra-Judicial Executions:** Since the creation of MNJTF, cases of extra-judicial executions have increased. According to reports, on 12 February 2012 Boko Haram members attacked soldiers from the MNJTF, based in Duguri, in Kukawa Local Government Area (LGA). Three days later, on 15 February about 100 soldiers from the MNJTF Headquarters in Baga arrived in Duguri village on boats in revenge attack and killed more than 200 people (United Nations Security Council, 2017; Oral Interview 'B,' 2019). While trying to escape the attack, according to eyewitnesses, many residents drowned. In April, 2013, Boko Haram members had a shoot-out with soldiers from the MNJTF along the Baga-Malam Karanti road. In the ensued encounter, one soldier and 25 Boko Haram fighters lost their lives. The next day at about 6 a.m. during a "mop-up" operation in Baga, about 2,275 buildings were destroyed, 125 severely damaged, and 187 people killed (Odomove, 2014). The Nigerian military forces, sometimes with the support of the Civilian JTF members executed a large number of victims, at times dozens or even hundreds per day (Odomovo, 2014; Oral Interview 'C,' 2019).

As earlier indicated above, 1,200 persons in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa were extra-judicially executed. In 2015, after the recapturing of Bama territory from Boko Haram terrorists, the Nigerian military forces killed all other persons not cleared by the Civilian JTF as residents (Amnesty International, 2015). Also, in 2014, more than 640 detainees who fled following the Boko Haram attack on Giwa barracks in Maiduguri were killed by the Nigerian military (Amnesty International, 2015). These cases and several others demonstrate that the military killed people after they had been captured. A large number of detainees were shot



dead inside detention facilities, while some were either shot or had their throat cut right after being captured during cordon and search operations (Oral Interview 'D,' 2019).

### ***Deaths in Military Custody***

Since 2011, there have been thousands of cases of deaths in custody. Report has it that more than 7,000 persons, including men, women and boys, died in military detention. Amnesty International conducted interviews with nine human rights defenders who monitored and recorded the depositing of bodies at mortuaries by the military. These interviews further reveal that in mid-2013 up to 180 deaths were recorded within a few days. Also, within the first six months of 2013, about 1,000 persons died in military custody in Maiduguri. Between April and May, 2014, 20 detainees died in Giwa barracks. In the JTF headquarters in Potiskum, in Government Reserved Areas (GRA), there were also cases of death in custody (Salaam, Usman, and Lawrence, 2016; Amnesty International, 2015; & Amnesty International, 2018).

Between 2012 and 2016, deaths in military custody also occurred in the MNJTF detention centre in Baga, Borno state; the 23 Armoured Brigade barracks in Yola, Adamawa state; and Presidential Lodge in Damaturu, Yobe state. In the MNJTF detention centre, there were cases of Mala Umar Babale, Sheriff Hassana and Auwali Haruna who died in detention (United Nations, 2017). At the 23 Armoured Brigade, there were about 218 suspects who died in detention between 2 January and 30 December 2014 (Weekly Intelligence, 2013). The story of deaths in custody in the Presidential Lodge was the same as in other places. An electrified baton was always used on a person to make him cooperative or talk (Oral Interview 'E, 2019'). This pattern led to the death of many suspects. Generally, most of the deaths in military facilities were as a result of torture, thirst, starvation, suffocation and untreated diseases, and possibly due to the small size of the cells that are often congested and poorly ventilated (Mamah, Omonobi, Marama, and Agande, 2014).

### ***Mass Arbitrary Arrests and Unlawful Detention***

Since 2011, Nigerian security forces have arrested more than 20,000 people, composed of young men in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states. The number increased following the imposition of the state of emergency in the aforementioned states, though actual figures could not be obtained due to improper and non-centralised systems of documentation (Ibrahim & Saleh, 2018; & United Nations, 2013). Between January 2012 and July 2013, more than 4,500 were arrested, including another 1,600 persons arrested as part of Operation Restore Order (ORO) 1. In a document released by the Headquarters of the JTF on 30 June 2013, within the first six weeks of Operation BOYONA, precisely between 16 May and 30 June 2013, 916 "Boko Haram suspects" were arrested and detained (Joint Task Force Report, 2013; & Amnesty International, 2015). In some cases, these victims were released after families paid bribes to the military, after being prosecuted and tried, while thousands were executed or



died in detention, and the rest held indefinitely in unauthorised and unacknowledged military detention, denied contact with lawyers or relatives, and without having access to court (Oral Interview 'F,' 2019). Arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention gave credence to enforced disappearances, torture and ill-treatment. To date, some families are yet to know the whereabouts of their sons, daughters, mothers and husbands.

In addition, between 2015 and 2018, sexual exploitation especially in Internally Displaced Camps, occurred. Circumstances in which women and girls complied with the demands to become “wives” and “girlfriends” to soldiers and Civilian Joint Task Force JTF members were so coercive that consent to sex was not possible (Amnesty International, 2018). Displaced women and girls were targeted for sexual exploitation and abuse (Oral Interview 'G,' 2019). The military used starvation as a strategy for sexual exploitation. Young women and girls were starved with food and water by the Nigerian military forces who traded these items for sex. Also, there was organised system of sexual violence between the soldiers and civilian JTF (Amnesty International, 2018; United Nations, 2017 & Odomove, 2014). Here, the Civilian JTF member will chose young girls and take them to the soldiers, who thereafter relocate such girls to unknown destinations for sexual intercourse. Moreso, according to report, scores of women (and some men) narrated how soldiers and Civilian JTF members deployed force and threats to rape women and girls (Amnesty International, 2015 & Amnesty International, 2018). Hundreds of civilian women were detained in military barracks, and at least tens of thousands were confined to camps for months or years. There was detention of women and girls who were victims of Boko Haram abductions; who arrived at displacement camp without being accompanied by their husbands; and who had familial relationship with someone accused of being Boko Haram (Oral Interview 'H,' 2019). Like their male counterparts, young women and girls were tortured and ill-treated, and several too died in military facilities.

### ***Implications of the Criminality of the MNJTF***

The war crimes committed by the MNJTF has, in some ways, impacted the nation negatively. Members of the JTF have, through their obnoxious activities, further enmeshed the Nigerian state, particularly the north-eastern part in a more critical security abyss.

War crimes committed by the military forces are major challenges to the whole idea of counter-insurgency in that civilian citizens that should collaborate with the MNJTF and other security agencies, were, directly or indirectly, targeted or earmarked for destruction through torture, ill-treatment, starvation and unlawful detention. This may boost support for insurgents and thus affect the course of counter-insurgency, as well as hinder reconstruction activities.

The collateral damage strategy or enemy-driven approach of the MNJTF of not actually protecting civilian citizens has a negative effect on information and intelligence gathering and sharing in mapped out conflict zones. Sharing of useful information is a risky venture in



situations where arbitrary arrest and unjustified revenge operations against villages and/or LGAs, where Boko Haram terrorists had previously used as points of attack are prevalent. War crimes against innocent persons hamper civilian-military relations, as such dealings are fraught by suspicion and lack of trust, which also constitute the challenges of counter-insurgency initiatives.

The criminality of the MNJTF has immeasurably undermined the long-desired peace and stability and/or security being sought for in the north-east. It is glaring to discerning observers that peace and security are elusive in the north-eastern part of the country. So far as the MNJTF continues to commit war crimes, a state of armed conflict will thus remain in perpetuity, and the issue of insecurity will continue, as it is with Boko Haram. In the wake of fear and insecurity, not just from Boko Haram terrorists alone but also from the MNJTF, socio-economic activities in the north-east continue to decline, as both national and international business owners find the region to be a dangerous environment for any meaningful activities.

More importantly, the MNJTF's war crimes which manifest in diverse ways such as torture, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detention, death of civilian citizens in military facilities, enforced disappearance of people, and gender-based violence, infringe on the nation's democratic values, and this trend continues to threaten the country's budding democracy.

### ***Curbing the Criminality of the MNJTF***

Curbing the war crimes of the MNJTF is fundamental if the Nigerian government sincerely wants to achieve holistic success which entails the defeat of Boko Haram insurgents, a more secure north-east region and more importantly, respect for and promotion of human rights. The defeat of terrorism, even, if achieved in the nearest future, cannot be said to be complete, if the civilian citizens continue to experience brutality and abuse of their human rights. Therefore, to curb the war crimes of the MNJTF, the following measures are suggested:

It is critical that the Nigerian government and other participating countries in the MNJTF system embark on a campaign and enlightenment programme on the need to comply with the African Union's (AU) human rights standards, the AU's Regional Stabilisation Strategy for the area, international humanitarian law and international human rights law. The Nigerian government and other countries providing military forces should expand training on such compliance in the MNJTF headquarters and national sectors.

Moreso, there should be a deliberate attempt on the part of the Nigerian government and its military to organize and execute operations in a manner that will reduce collateral damage to the barest minimum, and safeguard the security and human rights of civilian citizens. The military forces should be charged to strictly stick to obviously defined 'rules of engagement' and avoid any extreme use of force that may account to violation of human rights. The rule of engagement should unambiguously state when the use of force is necessary and the control of the use of force (Odomovo, 2014).

Monitoring and oversight by civilian-led organizations, non-governmental organizations and other relevant agencies are critical for meaningful crime reduction in any context. There is therefore the need to put in place procedures for monitoring the behavior of troops and other MNJTF officials, as well as the use of sanctions against offenders, which are almost non-existent at present. Both monitoring and the use of sanctions will serve as a deterrent, which can, in a way, prevent criminality, and by extension, promote human rights and security in north-east Nigeria.

More importantly, the government should set up a Public Protection Service Commission to provide a unified but flexible interagency cooperation mechanism for the Nigeria Police Force, the Military, Civil Defence Corps, CJTF, and other non-state security outfits, to create a single coordinated service for community stabilization and policing.

In addition, the Nigerian government should set up special body, comprising of legal experts, medical practitioners and social workers, whose responsibility will be to visit, either weekly, monthly or quarterly, military facilities or detention camps, with the aim of interrogating detainees or suspects and to provide opportunity for legal and medical attention, particularly for detained innocent citizens. In lieu of the above, the Nigerian government should ensure that the armed forces hand over suspects to civilian authorities and also boost the capacity of such authorities to provide suspects a conducive platform for due process.

Since available reports (Amnesty International, United Nations Security Council, and et al.) have shown that military forces in IDPs camps hoarded and traded food and water for sex, the government should rethink the method of food distribution in such camps. It is suggested that women within the military forces or civilian agencies should, as a matter of policy, be designated for food distribution to displaced women, girls and children. That apart, women could be made to be in charge of general food distribution to both displaced male and female. This stratagem will significantly curb the prevalence of gender-based violence, particularly sexual exploitation and abuse in IDPs camps.

Enemy-centric approach to counter-insurgency promotes the violation of international humanitarian law and human rights because it entails the use of military action or aggression against civilians not participating in terrorism. Population-centric approach is a tested practice in India, which the Nigerian government should adopt in its fight against terrorism. Apart from encouraging intelligence or information dissemination from civilians to military officers, which is germane in counter-insurgency, population-centric approach is citizen-friendly, as this can influence positive relations between suspects and military forces, and invariably promote and protect human rights.



## **Conclusion**

The MNJTF has achieved some successes in the fight against Boko Haram terrorism, even though they have not in visible and practical manners, achieved enduring peace within the north-east region. Civilian population, for more than a decade, lived in fear and state of insecurity, masterminded by the security structure itself. To fleeing innocent citizens and survivors of terrorism, peace and security in the north-east is illusive, as the supposedly custodian of security – MNJTF, epitomises terror.

Like Boko Haram terrorists, the MNJTF is guilty of war crimes against civilian citizens as, under the period of study, both were involved in arbitrary arrests, detentions and/or abductions, enforced disappearances, corruption, extra-judicial killings and gender-based violence. Unlike the terrorist group, the military forces used government resources such as funds, equipment and structure to perpetrate war crimes against citizens, which should have been protected or safeguarded. The use of resources belonging to and the insouciance of the government are indicative in that, the form of silence, non-reactiveness and lack of punishment for offenders, demonstrates that not only foot soldiers committed crime but that military commanders and other high-ranking officers were involved in war crimes against vulnerable citizens. Since the MNJTF were involved in war crimes and the lives of civilian population and their properties are endangered in the north-east, the need arises for a rethink on peace and security education and the operations of the MNJTF in the course of counter-insurgency.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

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*Interviews with serving military personnel who were part of the MNJTF COIN operations in the Northeast and have now been redeployed to the Nigerian Army School of Supply and Transport (NASST), but however pleaded anonymity, Benin City, 22 January 2020.*



# Here there be Dragons: Evolution, Potentials and Mitigation Opportunities of Cybercrime in Nigeria A Review, Analysis, and Evaluation

Attila Máté Kovács<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract:

The world is becoming increasingly interconnected due to advancements in technology and the adoption of the internet. The once widely used traditional forms of communication such as parcels have become unpopular. The development of computers and the internet has become the primary mode of communication. Internet is now widely used across businesses, government departments, and individual mobile connectivity. However, the increased internet use has posed modern threats attributed to cybercrime. Nigeria is experiencing growth in population and internet connectivity, with an internet penetration of 33.6%. With an estimated population of just over 205 million people, the impacts of cybercrime will continue to increase. Nigeria is now regarded as the cradle of cybercrime activities in sub-Saharan Africa. Cybercrime is estimated to cost the economy of Nigeria \$649 million annually. Besides, cybercrime activities have other impacts, such as impersonation and plagiarism. Due to the scale of these impacts, it is imperative that an adequate capacity to handle emerging issues in cybercrime be developed. The study investigated cybercrime preparedness in Nigeria. Research findings indicate that Nigeria has inadequate legal and educational preparedness to help mitigate the rising incidences of cybercrime in the country. The country has only one cybercrime act passed in 2015 and five universities that offer cybercrime-specific courses.

## Keywords:

Cybercrime, cyber threats, education, information technology, policy, Nigeria.

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## **1. Introduction**

The world is facing increasing globalization and the adoption of technology across all sectors of the economy. It is now virtually impossible to find traditional forms of communication, with many people, businesses, educational entities, and not-for-profit organizations adopting technology. As a result, the world has increasingly become a global village. The challenges attributed to communication across borders in the 90s have been overcome, making contact across regional boundaries a near reality. However, an attempt to solve communication challenges has led to one of the most significant modern challenges. The adoption of technology has led to unprecedented concerns about the threats of technology to individual, organizational, and government privacy.

The title also refers to the unknown and sometimes vague perceptions about cybercrime. Medieval mapmakers supposedly inscribed the phrase “Here Be Dragons” on maps showing unknown regions of the world (Van Duzer, 2013). Today, one of the most significant challenges that are now facing the world as a whole is the threat of privacy attributed to cybercrime. Although Western countries have made massive steps towards adopting measures to detect and prevent cybercrime, African countries still lag.

Almost all African countries do not have elaborate technological frameworks to handle the threats posed by cybercrime. The dangers posed by cybercrime were estimated to cost African countries an average of \$3.7 billion in 2017 alone (Kshetri, 2019). The author notes that Nigeria lost an estimated \$649 million to cybercrime activities in the same year alone. The financial implications of cybercrimes in Nigeria will become more complex in the coming decade. As Nnanwube, Ani, and Ojatorotu (2019) notes, cybercrimes in the country will keep evolving with new dimensions taking shape as the perpetrators encounter new systems. Besides, the growing adoption of technology across the different sectors of the economy and a rapidly growing population will continue to add to its complexity. Given the significant impact of cybercrime in Nigeria, this paper reviews, analyses, and evaluates cybercrimes in the country to make recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

The concept of cybersecurity has undergone a massive transformation over the past two decades (Garba and Bade, 2021). Initial cybersecurity efforts focused on protecting the user’s computers and operating systems. However, cybersecurity has emerged as a transition of the adoption of computers and the internet. The term cybersecurity encompasses the methodologies of protecting entity assets by identifying threats that have the potential to compromise important information stored within the organization's computer systems (Alese et al., 2014). The authors note that cybersecurity encompasses identifying, protecting, and responding to threats. Due to the significant adoption and penetration of mobile telecommunication, the impacts of cybersecurity crimes have become a significant source of



concern in Nigeria. The country is facing unprecedented challenges in combating cybercrime. Cybersecurity challenges facing the country can be traced as far as the 1990s.

The growth in mobile interconnectivity and increased internet penetration has coincided with increasing global cybersecurity concerns. Research shows an increase in the cost associated with cybercrimes. The annual cost of cybercrime is estimated at over \$1 trillion (Ajayi, 2016). In Africa alone, cybercrime costs are estimated at just over \$375 billion. In a country with a rapidly growing population, the impacts of cybercrime in Nigeria are bound to have significant economic implications for the country. The government is reportedly losing over \$649 million annually to cybercrime-related activities. The losses have been linked to massive internet penetration buoyed by the increasing number of mobile subscribers. Nigeria is now regarded as the tenth-largest user of the internet, which exacerbates the threats associated with cybercrime. The number of internet users in Nigeria has been expanding continually since 2012. In 2009, the country had about 44 million internet users (Doyon-Martin, 2015). In contrast to cellphone adoption, the country had about 112 million, relative to the country's population estimated at 177 million. The ratio of the number of cellphones to the population indicates an impressive number of subscribers, which ranks above the top 20 in the world.

As a developing country with the highest population density in Sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria is among Africa's top sources of cybercrime. Besides, developing countries are considered the leading grounds for hacking (Kshetri, 2010). According to the authors, 92% of global trojans have origins in developing countries. In 2002, the country was ranked the top sixth country in the number of attacks per 10,000 internet users. One of the major contributors to increasing incidences of cyber-attacks in Nigeria is unemployment rates. Nigeria is experiencing an increasing number of techno-savvy youths, often referred to as yahoo boys. This group of individuals were born and educated in the technological era and possessed potent specialized skills (Ebenezer, Paula, and Allo, 2016). Unfortunately, upon acquiring education and skills, there are very few employment opportunities. The country recorded unemployment rate of 23% in 2018, which renders many skilled youths into cybercrime activities. The other factors that have been blamed on the rising rates of cybercrimes in Nigeria are desperation to make wealth, inadequate cybercrime laws, few forensics experts, urbanization, and negative role models.

In a bit to save its face, Nigeria is now directing its efforts toward combating cybercrimes and their impacts (Odumesi, 2014). Most of the steps to fight cybercrime in the country are towards the sources and channels through which the crime is perpetuated. Consequently, the government has identified several common cybercrimes. The most prevalent types of cybercrimes identified and targeted include fraud-identity (Ogunleye, Ojedokun, and Aderinto, 2019). Online identity fraud is the most common form of cybercrime in Nigeria that is perpetuated for financial gains (Iorliam, 2019). The vice is committed through cloning websites that act as baits to unsuspecting individuals, prompting them to share their personal information. The other common forms of cybercrimes in Nigeria are hacking, cyberterrorism

(Besenyő, Sinkó, 2021), web jacking, cyberstalking, ransomware, and software piracy. The increased incidences of cybercrime have led to suffering across different sectors of the Nigerian economy.

The impacts of cybercrime in Nigeria are widespread across the different sectors of the country's economy. Although confidentiality is so important for financial and healthcare information, this is hard to guarantee in Nigeria (Iorliam, 2019). When the accuracy and trustworthiness of information are secured, it increases integrity. However, confidentiality and integrity of data in Nigeria are largely compromised. According to the author, the lack of privacy and privacy of information in the country can be attributed to factors such as network design, communication channels, software, that are exploited by cybercriminals for financial gains or victimization purposes. The FinTech sector, for instance, has expressed the need to push "suspicious transactions" and investment in cybercrime (Gaillard, 2021). Besides the FinTech sector, the other sectors affected by cybercrime in Nigeria are the social media, education sector, and the e-commerce sector.

The most rampant forms of cybercrimes in Nigeria occur within the banking sector. Although the banking sector has continued to improve its banking security measures, the fraudsters have equally improved their attack skills (Omodunbi et al., 2016). The author notes that several lucrative attacks aimed at the banking sector have been perpetuated with success. The majority of these attacks are undertaken with the goal of obtaining the funds from the bank accounts of the victims without their express authority. However, some bank attacks have been undertaken to destroy the reputation of the affected banks. Some of the leading cyberattacks that have affected the banking sector in Nigeria can be categorized as phishing, bank verification number (BVN) scams, the theft of bank cards, and attacks that target vulnerable banks accounts. Despite different types of banks attacks, what is expected in most of such attacks is financial gains. Fraudsters that target the banking sector employ various strategies such as cloned websites and keyloggers in cybercafes to steal important information that is later used to perpetrate banking frauds.

Besides banking fraud, the development and increased use of social media have increased cybercrimes that target social media users. Omodunbi et al. (2016) outline that the use of social media in Nigeria has gained pace across different sectors of the economy. The continued increase and use of social media expose people to hackers and possible loss of personal information (Agara et al., 2021). Omodunbi et al. (2016) note that the most prominent social media sites in Nigeria that are avenues for cybercrime attacks are Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. According to the authors, these social media platforms have been the target grounds for cyber-attacks. The ability of social media to remove the barriers such as social, economic, and geographic barriers make it a fertile ground for the perpetuation of crime. Some of the renowned cyber scans that have been carried through social media platforms include the Nigerian-Prince scam and the charity funds fraud. Besides, other common social



media cybercrimes that have been reported are blackmailing, harassment, cyber-stalking, and social-hijacking.

Moreover, cybercrime in the education sector is another rising form of cyberspace attack in Nigeria (Omodunbi et al., 2016). The author notes that the education sector in the country has experienced massive cyberattacks that originate from students in higher institutions of learning. Many of the cases that result from students in polytechnics and universities occur because of inefficient management and inadequate resources. The authors point out that cyber-attacks in the education sector have resulted in massive financial, intellectual property, and social losses. In addition to the education sector, e-commerce faces massive impacts of cyberspace attacks in the country. Nigeria enjoys a vibrant economy with a booming business sector that is rapidly adopting technology. However, cyberspace attacks have been recognized as one of the country's leading threats to e-commerce providers. According to the author, e-commerce entails the use of technological devices, applications, and the internet in the purchase, sale, and marketing of services and goods. Since e-commerce employs technological platforms, it is prone to attacks such as hacking, phishing, impersonation, and scams. Despite growth in crimes in e-commerce, the author notes that fewer reports are made, with entities and individuals preferring to safeguard their integrity. Some affected entities and individuals fear making reports because of fear of losing business that would result from negative publicity. Besides, as technology continues to be integrated across Nigeria, the other sectors that continue to experience growth in threats are healthcare, public service, agriculture, law enforcement and crime control, trade and commerce, media and communication, and politics and governance (Nwankwo and Ukaoha, 2019).

The impacts of crimes attributed to cyberspace are enormous and amount to about 0.08% of the GDP of Nigeria (Nwankwo and Ukaoha, 2019). In a country that is facing serious and growing unemployment rates, the impacts of cybercrime will continue to be felt across all the sectors of the economy. Besides, the rapidly growing population, increasing internet connectivity, a growing mobile base, and increased technology integration in all sectors, cybercrime continues to be a major source of concern.

Legislation itself is a key area. When it comes to finding ways to reduce different types of cybercrime, politicians, the general public, security professionals, and other academics should look to the research conducted by cybercrime scholars as the primary source of knowledge. Regrettably, there is a dearth of evidence-based research that examine the efficacy of legislation regarding cybercrime. In the article titled "Enhancing the Effectiveness of Cybercrime Prevention through Policy Monitoring" (Dupont, 2019), the author argues that countries all over the world have spent massive sums of money to invest in cybersecurity, but that these countries have not spent the resources to develop tools to assess the effectiveness of government interventions in reducing cybercrime.

According to Dupont, policy monitoring would result in a more robust knowledge base regarding the efficacy of cybercrime policies because it would lead to the systematic collection

of data, rigorous evaluations, and widespread dissemination of the evaluation results. This is why policy monitoring would lead to a more robust knowledge base regarding the effectiveness of cybercrime policies. In his examination of eighteen different policy surveillance platforms, he describes the most important aspects of each one and explains how each one might be utilized in the fight against cybercrime. He contends that the development of a cybercrime preventive surveillance tool has to be regarded as a priority in light of the negative effects that are associated with cybercrime. Dupont writes as follows: 'It is now up to cyber-criminologists to determine the relevance of this framework, its feasibility, and the collaborative resources that would be need to translate it into reality.'

### **3. Methodology**

The historical method of research and analysis was employed in this research article. The main goal of this research was to perform a critical analysis of the cybersecurity measures that have been enforced in Nigeria. The research began with a comprehensive review of the general published literature on cybersecurity in the country. Besides, additional published materials from other jurisdictions were considered in the article. Once the literature review was completed, a systematic and in-depth review of the existing policies that govern cybercrime in Nigeria were examined. In order to ensure adequate and appropriate published literature was obtained, several keywords were employed. The keywords that were employed in the research were cybercrime, cyber threats, education, information technology, policy, and Nigeria. These keywords yielded over 8,500 published articles. However, not all the published content was relevant to the topic under the study.

In order to narrow down and ensure that only appropriate research papers were examined, inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The inclusion criteria that were established was that the publications should have been dated 2016 or earlier. Besides, only credible research articles were chosen for the research article. Moreover, additional research articles that analyzed policies in the U.S were considered for the purposes of enriching the evaluation. Since the report analyzes the cybercrime policies in Nigeria, published government policies were also considered. The government publications provided primary sources for counterchecking with information obtained from the published research articles.

The study data collected through the documentation of the secondary information was later analyzed. Some other sources of information from which the basis of the article was developed included newspapers, videos, photographs, and other sound recordings. These additional sources were analyzed for the contemporary development of the research paper. All the primary and secondary data collected was then collated, and findings were represented in the form of themes that were identified. An in-depth analysis was then undertaken, followed by an evaluation that considered other jurisdictions that have made decisive steps in cybercrime prevention. Finally, the article draws on the study findings to conclude the status of cybercrime in Nigeria.



#### **4. Typology and prevention**

Today's major cybercrime trends and risks include: (1) ransomware; (2) other malware threats; (3) data breaches and network assaults; (4) phishing; (5) spearphishing (targeting specific individuals in order to distribute malware or collect sensitive information); and (6) attacks against key infrastructure.

Phishing is one of the most common types of cybercrime and involves perpetrating computer fraud in order to steal sensitive information from an unsuspecting victim. This information can include credit card numbers, usernames and passwords for online banking platforms, personal information about the victim, and other sensitive information. "[i]ndividual cybercrime victimization is much greater than for "traditional" criminal types," states the Comprehensive Study on Cybercrime that was conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). The percentage of the internet population that falls victim to crimes such as online credit card fraud, identity theft, responding to a phishing effort, or suffering illegal access to an email account ranges from 1 to 17 percent (UNODC, 2013).

These types of changes create new issues both at home and abroad, such as indiscriminately damaging targets, increasing existing low levels of reporting to authorities, and legislative challenges, necessitating new policy solutions. Other trends that should ideally continue to be considered by law enforcement and policymakers involved in the fight against cybercrime include the growing links between cybercrime and malevolent state activity; IoT/future cities and smart meters; cloud security; emerging technologies; third party vendor risks and supply chain attacks; widespread public and commercial availability of tools and techniques as well as "Darknet" concerns; and poor security cultures.

#### **5. Cybercrime overview in Nigeria – social and legal context**

The Nigerian government has prioritized the prevention of cybercrime for a number of years. In Nigeria, multiple government agencies, including the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offenses Commission (ICPC), the State Security Services (SSS), and the Nigerian Police, all play significant roles in the fight against the rising tide of cybercrime. In particular, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) has been conducting investigations into many aspects of cybercrime related to fraud. Despite the fact that the Evidence Act was amended in 2011 to permit the admission of electronic evidence, until 2015, effective criminal justice procedures were hampered by the absence of a legal framework for cybercrime. This was the case despite the fact that the Evidence Act was revised in 2011 to allow for the admission of electronic evidence.

The Nigerian government gave its approval to the National Cybersecurity Policy and Strategy in February of 2015. This policy and strategy were developed by the Inter-Ministerial Committee and is handled by the Office of the National Security Adviser.

It is predicated on the idea that threats to information and communication technology pose a risk to the national security of Nigeria and have an impact on the "economic, political, and social fabric" of the nation. The most significant problems that have been identified are cybercrime, cyberespionage, cyberconflict, cyberterrorism, and the abuse and exploitation of children who use the internet. Its mission is to mitigate cyber security threats in a manner that is consistent with the overriding objective of ensuring national security. The implementation of this policy has thus far resulted in significant benefits for boosting Nigeria's cyber resilience.

Legislation regarding cybercrime and electronic evidence is required to fulfill a variety of conditions, including the following:

- It is imperative that it be sufficiently (technologically) neutral in order to handle the ongoing evolution of both technology and crime; otherwise, there is a chance that it will become obsolete before it ever goes into operation.
- For example, to fulfill the dual criminality criteria, it must be sufficiently harmonized with the laws of other nations, or at the very least consistent with those laws, in order to permit international collaboration.

The significant commitment of the member states of the African Union to the establishment of a secure and dependable foundation for the information society is demonstrated by this treaty. It involves a wide range of different measures, including electronic transactions, the protection of personal data, the prevention of cybercrime, and cybersecurity.

The current study makes reference to the Budapest Convention on Cyber Crime because of its widespread applicability as well as the fact that it is a relatively new convention that has not yet been validated in actual practice (Council of Europe, 2001). This Convention, which is being implemented throughout Africa at a growing rate, focuses on cybercrime and electronic evidence in addition to international cooperation.

The Nigerian officials who are crafting the country's cybercrime law may look to a range of sources for guidance. Malabo, in the country of Equatorial Guinea, was the location where the African Union Convention on Cyber Security and Personal Data Protection was ratified in June of 2014.

## ***6. Specific results and underlying details***

Analyzing the published literature, primary sources, and other relevant cybercrime publications revealed several themes. The study identified two main themes: the country's regulatory framework, education, and readiness. The most dominant theme placed is the cybercrime regulatory framework in Nigeria. The government first created The Cybercrime Advisory Council in 2016, whose responsibility was to formulate modalities for implementing

the Cybercrime Act of 2015. Table 1 summarizes the regulation that governs cybercrimes in Nigeria and the types of crimes that the regulation covers.

Cybercrime Act	Types of Crimes Governed by the Laws
Cybercrimes Act of 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Crime against critical national infrastructure.</li> <li>-Unauthorized access to protected systems.</li> <li>-Illegal registration of cybercafes.</li> <li>-System interference.</li> <li>-Interception of electronic messages, emails, and electronic money transfers.</li> <li>-Willful misdirection of electronic messages.</li> <li>-Unlawful interceptions.</li> <li>-Computer-related forgery.</li> <li>-Computer-related fraud, electronic cards fraud.</li> <li>-Identity theft, impersonation, tampering with computer sources.</li> <li>-Cyberstalking, cybersquatting, cyberterrorism, breach of privacy and confidentiality.</li> <li>-Phishing, spamming, spreading of computer viruses.</li> <li>-Publishing false electronic signatures and certificates.</li> </ul>

*Table 1: Laws that Have Been Passed in Response to Cybercrimes in Nigeria*

In addition to the regulatory framework, the institutional framework in terms of capacity building was analyzed. Nigeria has a total of 160 universities located in different states, offering various courses. Table 2 below summarizes the universities in Nigeria, including their zoning and the nature of ownership. While narrowing down the focus of the study, only the accredited universities were analyzed, and the results were presented. As a result, the study found that only sixteen accredited universities offer cybercrime-related education in the entire country (Samphina Academy, 2019). Table 2 summarizes the findings of the institutional analysis of cybersecurity in Nigeria.



Location/Ownership	Federal	State	Private	Total
<b>North Central</b>	6	5	7	<b>18</b>
<b>North East</b>	6	7	2	<b>15</b>
<b>North West</b>	9	7	1	<b>17</b>
<b>South East</b>	5	6	13	<b>24</b>
<b>South-South</b>	6	9	13	<b>28</b>
<b>South West</b>	8	12	38	<b>58</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>160</b>

Table 2: The Location and the Number of Universities in Nigeria

University Name	Year the University was Established
<b>American University of Nigeria, Yola</b>	2004
<b>Oyo State Technical University, Ogbomoso</b>	2012
<b>Bayero University</b>	1975
<b>Federal University of Technology, Akure</b>	2011
<b>Federal University of Technology, Owerri</b>	1980

Table 3: The Number of Educational Institutions that Offer Cybercrime Education

## 7. Discussion

About a billion people in Africa will have access to the internet by 2022 (Kshetri, 2019). However, experts point out that significant cybercrime impacts that attract attention occur once an internet penetration threshold of 10-15% is achieved. In Nigeria, the current penetration threshold stands at 33.6%, boasting 108 million users (Statista, 2017). The authors note that industry projections indicate that internet penetration will increase and reach about 143.26 million people in Nigeria by 2026. Despite the increasing threats of cybercrimes due to growing internet penetration, the findings show that Nigeria is still lagging in capacity development.

Nigeria has a limited legal framework to deal with the rapidly changing trends in cybercrimes. As cybercrimes continually evolve, similarly, the legal, regulatory framework must be proactive. Although table 1 indicates that Nigeria has some legal framework governing cybercrime, the laws were enacted in 2015. These legislations seemed reactive in the first place since the country existed without cybercrime laws up to 2015, when the Cybercrime Act of 2015 was passed. Comparatively, developed jurisdictions such as the United States of America have passed different legislation about internet crimes. The US, which has different states similar to Nigeria, has passed federal cybercrime laws and 51 other related



laws across its 51 states (Hill and Marion, 2016). For example, as businesses moved online, the country developed the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998. The act extends the long-standing copyright act that seeks to protect copyright owners against piracy. Thus, it can be argued that whereas cybercrimes evolve continuously, Nigeria exhibits a reactionary and static approach towards cybercrime and emerging developments.

Although Nigeria has established laws governing cybercrime, there is a lack of specific rules that handle major cybercrimes in the modern era. The United States became the first country to enact laws that criminalized cybercrimes (Hosani et al., 2019). The early adoption of rules governing cybercrime in the U.S could be attributed to the country's early adoption and use of the internet. Although Nigeria is a relatively young democracy, the growing population, increasing internet penetration, and concerns of growing cybercrimes must be reflected in its cybercrime law. However, the Cybercrime Act of 2015 fails to capture these growing concerns as the internet penetration in Nigeria grows, the incidences of cyberbullying are similarly increasing in the country (Adediran, 2020). For instance, the FBI ranks the country 16th in the world regarding the number of cybercrime cases. Besides, there are growing concerns that the Cybercrime Act of 2015 may not be adequate for dealing with emerging cybercrime cases (ISSAfrica.org, 2020). Moreover, despite the existing laws, many entities continue to experience increased incidences of cyber-attacks. Although some cases may be attributed to a lack of adequate cybercrime preparedness, forms of cybercrimes such as disinformation and impersonation are directly dealt with through existing legal frameworks.

Besides an inadequate legal framework, Nigeria lacks adequate education dealing with cybercrime. As indicated in the research findings, only five accredited universities provide education on cybercrimes. Despite a rapidly growing population and evolving cybercrime network, the education center is not expanding appropriately. Although the country has over sixty universities, most of these institutions do not provide education that directly addresses cybercrime. This means that fewer professionals that provide cybercrimes expertise, relative to other fields, graduate into the job market annually. Numerous studies have indicated the significant role that education plays in preventing cybercrime. Back and LaPrade (2019) notes that cybercrime technology that can fight cyberspace crimes continues to be developed. However, the authors point out that this may not be adequate because it cannot impact human behaviors. The authors note that we cannot rely only on technology such as software to halt cybercrimes. Humans will continue to be vulnerable, with other forms of cybercrime such as phishing, impersonation, and bullying inadequately solved by emerging technologies. Technological and cybercrime education remains the best alternative to augment technical solutions towards cybercrime.

Whereas education remains a critical step in fighting cybercrime, Nigeria lags in infrastructural development. The lack of increased investment in cybercrime courses coupled with increasing growth in incidences of cybercrime presents a bleak future for internet users in Nigeria. In terms of increasing the number of colleges that offer cyber security-specific courses, capacity building is one of the critical steps in the fight against cybercrime. For

example, In the United States, California, with about 40 million people, has over 25 schools that offer 54 cybersecurity courses (Cybersecurity Guide, 2021). Although other factors such as economic potential and the presence of skilled workforce play a role, comparatively, Nigeria needs to invest more in cybersecurity courses. The economy of California dwarfs that of Nigeria, which has allowed it to have the capacity to support in cybercrime courses. However, Nigeria could improve its ability to fight cybercrime if it increased the number of studies in universities relative to its population. In a country with over 100 million people and 60 universities, having only five accredited cybercrime-specific courses indicates underinvestment.

## **8. Conclusion**

The adoption of computers and electronic communication is rapidly evolving. Many people are now connected to the web more than a decade ago, with increasing mobile connectivity bound to increase the number of internet users. In developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa, internet penetration continues to expand. More and more people are now adopting mobile banking, electronic commerce, and social media communication. While these innovations improve communication and efficiency of conducting business, it comes with unprecedented challenges of increased cybercrimes (Besenyő, Gulyás, 2021). Countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Nigeria, continue to struggle with rising incidences of cybercrimes. Whereas developed countries such as the United States boast adequate counter-cybercrime measures, Nigeria lags in all aspects of its responses. The government is facing a growing population and increasing internet penetration, yet little has been done in capacity building to cope with cybercrime threats growing. The country must invest more in its legal framework and education that offers cybercrime courses. As the world moves into the next stage of technological advancement, Nigeria must adopt a proactive approach to enhance its capacity to respond to cybercrime activities.

## **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## **Notes on Contributor**

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# Is Nigeria Ripe for Break Up?

## The Mitigating Importance of Cameroon and France in the Survival of Nigeria's Territorial Integrity

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### Abstract:

The major challenges which threaten the territorial integrity of Nigeria, black Africa's political and economic giant are very unsettling but appear insufficient to predict the country's imminent balkanization. Mindful of the threat from inside Cameroon and the vested role of France, there seems to be an uneasy reprieve that could make Nigeria the sick man of the West Central African region in the near future. This paper analyses how Nigeria's successful manipulation of her relations with Cameroon and France may help forestall the country's breakup. It argues that the support and friendship of other countries may not cure Nigeria's woes but plunge it into prolonged instability. The emergence of armed separatist movements known as "Ambazonia" in the northwest and southwest regions of Cameroon some of whom seeking alliances with their Nigerian as a result of their ideological and geographical proximity has potential fateful consequences. On the other hand, French economic and strategic interests which expose the marginalization decried by Nigerian secessionist groups sustain the disintegration agenda. How does Nigeria react in the face of outreach initiatives by Cameroonian separatist movements? How does Nigeria exploit France's privileged relationship with Cameroon to save itself from disintegration? This contribution concludes that Nigeria's relationship with other countries may not solve its problems but transform the country into a long-term theatre of instability.

### Keywords:

Balkanization, separatist movements, Ambazonia, Biafra, Nigeria, Cameroon, France.

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## *Introduction*

Secessionist movements are a major threat to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the post-independent state in Africa. From a historical perspective, secessionist movements in Africa can be identified as originating from three perceptible periods. There are cases of secessionist movements created by or during colonial rule, post-colonial secessionist movements, and thirdly the case for retrieving self-determination (Bereketeab, 2012). For the purposes of this paper, our reflection is based on the second, which is the post-independent secessionist movement. In the case of Nigeria, such movements are fundamentally identity-based with the desire to achieve full self-determination on the grounds of differential identity.

During the first decade following its accession to independence, the Federal Republic of Nigeria was confronted with a secessionist movement that cropped up in the south-east of the country. In 1967, the Ibo people declared secession from the Federal Republic of Nigeria and proclaimed their independence by creating the Republic of Biafra. The immediate reaction was a deadly war opposing the Federal government and the armed branch of the Biafra Republic. The war which lasted from 1967 to 1970 ended with the defeat of the Biafra. Of the estimated one to three million Biafrans that lost their lives, only 10 percent died in military action and the rest as a result of famine (Norman and Ueda, 2017).

Today, separatist and or secessionist movements are spotted in all corners of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. In south-eastern Nigeria, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), which aims to establish an independent state of Biafra to the south-eastern part of Nigeria finds in its trail an increasing call by the Yorubas for the creation of a breakaway state known as the Oduduwa Republic. To south-south Nigeria are the Ijaws located precisely in the Niger Delta. The Ijaw complain that most of the oil wealth extracted from their land goes elsewhere, while oil production has severely damaged the Delta environment and destroyed traditional livelihoods based on fishing and agriculture. As such, a movement known as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has been very active in its bid to defend the rights of the Ijaws.

The MEND carries out attacks on oil infrastructure, but it is more criminal than separatist. However, research studies have revealed that any balkanization of Nigeria would likely see an upsurge in Ijaw separatism. In the north, there are intermittent demands for the Arewa Republic, while some talk of the "north" as if it was a country within a country. Other groups are also emerging in the news including but seemingly not limited to the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDPVE), O'odua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), Oduduwa and Niger Delta Republics, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) under the leadership of Nnamdi Kanu (see annex) (Musah, 2021). In fact, this already murky situation is further complicated in north-eastern Nigeria by the Boko Haram terrorist group that seeks to create a caliphate covering northeast Nigeria, that would include the Far North region of Cameroon, part of Niger, and Chad.



Specialists in Nigerian politics have attributed the causes of the emergence and proliferation of secessionist movement in the country to structural and institutional challenges such as ethnic marginalization, bad governance, poverty, and excessive centralization of political power, ethnic-religious rivalries, insecurity, and the violation of human rights. Yet, Nigeria has still managed to conserve its authority and territorial integrity in all parts of the country. If internal structural and institutional challenges have not succeeded in breaking up Nigeria, could the break-up be stirred by external factors?

Against this background, this paper examines the question of Nigeria's relations with Cameroon and France, and how the nature of this relation could mitigate or exacerbate the rapid balkanization of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is argued here that Nigeria's successful manipulation of her relations with Cameroon and France may help forestall the country's breakup. The paper suggests that the support and friendship of other countries may not cure Nigeria's woes but plunge it into prolonged instability. The growth of "Ambazonian" separatist movements in neighbouring Cameroon who find refuge in Nigeria and seek collaboration with like-minded groups has fateful consequences. French economic and strategic interests which expose the marginalization decried by Nigerian secessionist groups sustain the disintegration agenda. In light of this, the paper concludes that Nigeria's relationship with other countries may not solve its problems but transform the country into a long-term theatre of instability.

This article is divided into six parts. The first presents the background to the study; the second presents the conceptualization of secessionist agitations in Nigeria. A third section addresses the Franco-Nigerian relations nexus in the possible break-up of Nigeria. Section four examines Cameroon-Nigeria relations and their effects on the separatist movement in Nigeria. The last section presents the conclusion to the reflection.

## ***1. Socio-Political Overview of Nigeria***

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populated country and without much doubt the largest and arguably the strongest economy in sub-Saharan Africa. As of 2020, the country's population was estimated at more than 200 million inhabitants which is equivalent to 2.64% of the world population (Worldometer, 2022). In terms of total GDP, in Africa (World Bank, 2021), Nigeria ranks second after Egypt with a total of \$1.14 trillion in 2021 (World Bank, 2021). Nigeria is a lower-middle-income, mixed economy focused upon petroleum and (to a lesser extent) agriculture. It is also an emerging market with growing financial, service, communications, and technology sectors (AFDB, 2021).

Unlike other African countries, Nigeria is one of the most ethnically and religiously diversified countries in Africa with more than 250 ethnic groups, more than 500 languages with English being the official language. The most populous and politically influential being Hausa-Fulani 29%, Yoruba 21%, Igbo (Ibo) 18%, Ijaw 10%, Kanuri 4%, Ibibio 3.5%, Tiv 2.5%



(USCIRF, 2016). As for religious diversity, the majority of Nigerians are (mostly Sunni) Muslims or (mostly Protestant) Christians, with estimates not very agreed about which religion is larger. There are a significant number of adherents of other religions, including indigenous animistic religions. Summarily, Nigeria can ethnically and religiously be broken down between the predominantly Hausa-Fulani and Kunari, in the Muslim northern states, the largely Igbo, and Christian south-eastern states, the predominantly Yoruba, and religiously mixed, central and south-western states, and the predominantly Ogoni and Ijaw, and Christian, Niger Delta region (Mustapha, 2005). This ethnic and religious diversify makes Nigeria a country that is potentially conflict-infested and secession-prone if inclusive and equitable development policies are not implemented by the central government.

African states are by their very nature multi-ethnic communities that were grouped by colonial rule. Before the grouping of communities to constitute what is known as today's modern state, (understand also what is known as a nation-state), pre-colonial sovereign communities known as chiefdoms, kingdoms, empires, and other variants existed under the authority of political authorities such as kings, and chiefs. These political authorities made laws, rules, and decisions, and enforced such within their communities (Nkwi, 1985). Cordial diplomatic relations existed among communities as is the case among nation-states today. Conflict and rivalry also existed among nations. The advent of colonial rule witnessed the merging of numerous sovereign communities under the canopy of colonies and eventually new nation-states at independence. The inter-community relations which understandably could be conflict-prone could only get worse because of the negative effects of colonial rule in what was emerging as the nation-state in the new Federal Republic of Nigeria. This situation did not characterize Nigeria alone, in fact many African new nations witness such at the dawn of independence.

According to Abdul Raufu Mustapha (2005), post-independent Nigeria today is characterized by a highly intense inter-ethnic division. Out of the more than 250 ethnic groups found in Nigeria, numerically – and politically – major ethnic groups are the composite Hausa-Fulani of the north, the Yoruba of the southwest, and the Igbo of the southeast. These three 'hegemonic' ethnic groups are popularly referred to by the generic term "wazobia" (Mustapha, 2005). Ethnic competition and claims for political, economic, and social privileges have generally been manifested by the Wazobia. The negotiation of alliances with less numerically strong ethnic groups and the instrumentalization of secessionist threats constitute some of the main strategies used by Wazobia to consolidate their ethnic rivalry. Inter-ethnic tensions have gradually been ideologized giving the impression among communities that their own culture is not respected within the post-colonial dispensations or is dominated by others (Keller, 2007).

The main cause of tense inter-ethnic rivalry in Nigeria has been attributed to the confiscation and privatization of political positions, nepotism, and unbalance development, corruption engineered and fuelled by the neo-patrimonial elite. The outcome has been the



emergence and proliferation of community-centred identity groups claiming to fight for the interest of their communities. In such situations, threats of secession are generally used as political instruments to obtain favours from the government or ruling authorities. In situations where the government has not responded to the demands of the community, violent armed groups have emerged as is the case in Nigeria today.

## **2. Conceptualizing Secessionism in Nigeria**

At the creation of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) in 1963, most African states that had obtained their independence before and after 1960, proclaimed the sacrosanct nature of territorial boundaries inherited from colonial rule. The territorial integrity of African states was consecrated and enshrined in Article III, Paragraph 3 of the OAU charter (Amate, 1986). This principle was affirmed in a resolution of the OAU heads of state at the 1964 summit in Cairo. The principle of *uti possidetis juris* was invoked, reaffirming the inviolability of colonial boundaries. This affirmation was seen as a guaranteed hedge against the potential emergence of self-determination and secession. What African leaders did not fully appreciate, or master was the fact that the law in itself was not sufficient to stop self-determination and secessionist tendencies in Africa.

A multi-ethnic state characterized by corruption, nepotism, inequalities, and marginalization will certainly see the cropping of ethnic identity groups and claims for self-determination and even separation from the state. That is why just after four years after the Cairo summit of 1964, the Federal Republic was rocked by a secessionist war that lasted nearly four years with the central government finally gaining the upper hand and maintaining the country's territorial integrity. That notwithstanding, and ever since then, Nigeria has been confronted with secessionist agitations in nearly all parts of its territory.

### **2.1 Ethnic-plurality as fuel to secessionism**

The multi-ethnic nature of most African communities at the moment of state formation constituted a major challenge to the survival of the modern state. With ethnicity as one major characteristic of independent African states, these nation-states seemed to have been born with their germ of destruction. Some scholars on African politics have affirmed that the inclusivist notion of citizenship that motivated the grouping of diverse ethnic communities into a nation-state and based on individual rights has been problematic in Africa not only because virtually all the countries on the continent are "ethnically split," (Balandier, 1970; Jinadu, 2007). The partition of Africa and the eventual carving of nation-states did not consider the fact that before the advent of colonialism, Africa was characterized by ethno-plural societies. The inter-ethnic relations among some of these societies were more or less conflictive. Even though traditional diplomatic relations among these early African communities were generally in the form of kingdoms and chiefdoms, conflict was not

excluded. Grouping communities that were not at peace with each other could not produce anything short from ethnic conflict at independence. This is not to say that inter-community differences were not resolved.

In contemporary times, ethnic conflicts have become pervasive and salient dimensions of political and social conflict in several countries and has tended to threaten the territorial integrity of some African states as is the case in Nigeria and Cameroon. Ethnicity itself can be managed with good governance and inclusive integration policies. Unfortunately, that has not been the case in most African countries. Rather, the neo-patrimonial elite has exploited and heightened the volatile ethnic-plural nature of African states. Evidence of this is the increasing ethnic agitations to bargain for power and access to increased state resources in the name of respective communities. Ethnic agitation has become a new method for political ascension for some politicians who secretly fuel and finance ethnicity and position themselves as the representatives of the community just in case the central government called for dialogue and negotiations. In many a case, secessionism is brandished as a threat to the central government in the case ethnic demands are not met or remain unfulfilled.

Even with the advent of multi-party elections in Africa in the 1990s, and since then, most political parties were and are still constituted on ethnic than ideological basis. In Nigeria for example a close look at the main ruling party indicates that the majority of its militants and sympathizers are from the same region or state of origin as the ruling president. This situation is not peculiar to Nigeria alone, but have become an African trademark. In fact in this period of multiparty competition ethnic and regional political interests have brought to the fore the viciousness of ethnicity and reawakened secessionist agitations.

## **2.2 The colonial factor**

Colonial attitudes and policies in Africa contributed tremendously in laying the foundation of secessionist agitations in post-independent Africa. In the colonization process, colonial powers mounted tribes against others in order to better control them. The Germans were known for the use of the divide-and-rule policy. Ethnic communities were made to detest each other as a means of avoiding collaboration against the colonial authorities. This policy was further amplified with indiscriminate and unbalanced socio-economic and infrastructural development. For instance, in Nigeria, which was under British colonial till 1960, the British adopted and implemented policies that later created problems at independence. According to Ayatse and Iorhen, the British colonial authorities in Nigeria deliberately introduced and propagated ethnic sentiments to attain political and economic imperialist objectives (Ayatse and Iorhen). In its administrative organization of the Nigerian territory, the British forcibly grouped ethnic groups to govern them in their diversity. Ethnic rivalry in the form of subservience to colonial authorities became a strategy inculcated by colonialists to use ethnic diversity as a factor of social intolerance.



Most infrastructural developments carried out in Nigeria were only geared at exploiting the country. That is why most infrastructures were only developed in areas where raw materials were found. As such areas witnessed rapid urban development, equipped with good roads, railways, hospitals, and schools. This of course created ethnic sentiments in other communities in Nigeria. At the same time, privileged communities started feeling superior to other ethnic groups. Disparity was also seen in the geographical locations of communities. In the case of Nigeria, communities that lay in the hinterland were further disfavoured as most “development” was carried out in the south to the detriment and disappointment of northward inland communities.

### **2.3. Post-independence Governance in Nigeria**

At independence, poor governance was one of the major ills that characterized the new African states. The "inheritance elite" took over after the colonial administrators gradually privatized the state for their interests. Corruption, embezzlement, nepotism, dictatorship, violation of human rights became the order of the day. Most especially the governance surrounding natural resources has been the main source of conflict in Africa including Nigeria.

Among the numerous causes of conflict in Africa since independence, is the question of the rational exploitation of natural resources (Aloa, 2007). Historically, natural resources have also been a source of conflict among political entities, even before the advent of colonial rule in Africa. Early states in Africa such as empires and kingdoms were known to have risen or fallen because of their victories or defeats in wars that were heavily laden with natural resource considerations.

According to Aloa (2007), the formation of modern nation-states, however, introduced more complex dimensions into the nature of resource politics, with issues such as disagreements over newly drawn geographical boundaries, protests over the forceful incorporation of hitherto autonomous units into new nation-state structures, creation of new national identities, and several other considerations, all becoming crucial factors that consequently changed the nature of the conflicts surrounding natural resources (Aloa, 2007).

Africa is one of the richest continents in natural resources on this planet. Paradoxically, the exploitation of these natural resources has not contributed to the development of African nations and specifically communities harbouring these resources. It is commonplace in Africa to observe that communities richly endowed with natural resources such as gold, crude oil, timber, and many others lack basic social infrastructures such as roads, hospitals, schools, potable water, just to name a few. The absence of development in communities endowed with natural resources in Africa has largely been attributed to poor governance (Ngayap, 2001). It is exactly on this premise that the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has constantly sabotaged petroleum infrastructures because they claim the exploitation of crude oil in their land has not benefitted them in any way.

From a general perspective, the main determinants of secessionist conflicts in Africa and specifically the case of Nigeria are internally motivated. Does it mean that if the problems of governance, ethnicity, underdevelopment, democracy are resolved, can this suffice to stop the propagation of secessionist movements and its eventual threat to the disintegration of the territorial sovereignty of Nigeria? The answer is obviously in the negative because if Nigeria's foreign diplomacy does not weigh in, the threat can be realized. When foreign diplomacy weighs in, the dangers could hibernate or give a semblance of having been halted. Yet, they remain and looking for opportunities to show their ugly head again. It is important to note that most secessionist leaders are generally based abroad and at times exploit the poor diplomatic relations with the home governments to accentuate their pressure on the home government. Consequently, the prevention of Nigeria's break-up threatened by secessionist movements does not only necessitate an internal strategy, but also a strategic diplomatic approach with some partners such as Cameroon and France.

#### **2.4. France and Cameroon: Visible counterforce to Nigeria's territorial disintegration**

From a balance of power point of view, an internal armed or civilian movement may not sufficiently threaten the survival of a state without external support. Most African states for example despite structural and institutional weaknesses have the military and operational capacity to neutralize internal movements hostile to the governing authority, talk less of threatening the territorial integrity of the State. Nearly all African constitutions give the government the legitimate right to ensure the territorial integrity of the state and respond with the strongest force possible against secessionist agitations or movements. This will be enshrined in Article III, Paragraph 3 of the OAU charter (Amate,1986). This explains why the African Union which replaced the OAU will not accept any action directed towards the dismemberment of an African state. However, the highest threat to the break-up of a state can be influenced by other foreign political entities like states and international organizations or what Morgenthau refer to as the "international government" (Morgenthau, 1985).

Narrowing down to the situation in Nigeria, the question arises as to the extent to which France and Cameroon can contribute to facilitating the break-up or consolidation of Nigeria's territorial integrity, especially in the face of multiple secessionist agitations.

### ***3. Franco-Nigerian Relations: Friends for Convenience***

Historically, the relationship between the Federal Republic of Nigeria and France has been characterized by tension and friction. The tense Franco-Nigerian deteriorated to a point whereby threats to the break-up of Nigeria have been blamed on France (Aloa, 2006). The differences between Nigeria and France are founded on the Biafra war and regional control over West Africa.



### **3.1. Nigeria's condemnation of French nuclear imperialism in the Sahara**

France since 1945 became one of the privileged members of the five nations that make up the Security Council with veto power. Also, France was one of the founding members of the European defence organization otherwise known as the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization. In order to affirm her military authority as a superpower, the French decided to test the atomic bomb in the Algerian Sahara on the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 1960 (Allman, 2008). Even though Algeria was still a French colony, many pan-Africanist and African states saw this act as a form of intimidation and excessive demonstration of force. Among the African countries that strongly condemned the French imperial move was Nigeria, which was more or less considered the African giant.

During the Casablanca Conference of 4-7 January 1961, many African states proposed and encouraged their fellow African states to break (diplomatic) relations with France, but no one did except Nigeria who was not an attendee of the Conference (Akinteriwa 1990:280). According to Ibe and Okpalaeke not even Ghana or Ethiopia could muster the courage and support Nigeria in her action against France. The entire continent of Africa left Nigeria to do the dirty job alone while they sat back and observed. Nigeria's warning to France over the testing of the atomic bomb in the Saharan Desert was perceived as a challenge to French expression of her power in Africa. To express her disdain for Nigeria, France decided to meddle in the Nigeria civil war that started in 1967.

### **3.2. France in the Nigerian Civil War**

During the Nigerian civil war of 1967, France meddled itself in the war by supporting the Biafra that had declared their independence from the Federal Republic of Nigeria. On 31 July 1968, the French government "officially declared its support for the separatist province of Biafra even though she categorically refused to officially recognize Biafra, a possibility President Charles de Gaulle ruled out as early as 14 December 1968," (Griffin, 2015) Phillip Effiong noted that Ojukwu the leader of the Biafra separatist province masterminded what was reported as French recognition for Biafra to help Biafra attract recognition from other countries around the world (Effiong, 2000). In fact, the goal was to create an enabling structure from whence to build further support.

To amplify support for Biafra, France instructed her West African colonies in the likes of Gabon and Ivory Coast to recognize Biafra (Ibe and Okpalaeke, 2019). Achebe posits that large arms shipments from France got to Biafra through Ivory Coast and Gabon, which were French colonies and still loyal to France (Achebe, 2012:100). Ivory Coast further demonstrated the depth of French support for Biafra when she granted Ojukwu asylum after the end of the war. To accord Biafra recognition as an independent state was the only thing France did not do for Biafra since France was in total support of Biafra, knowing that Biafra held the key for Nigeria to be weakened in the arena of international politics.

According to Ibe and Okpalaeke France's role in Nigeria's Civil War was no doubt enormous and critical (Ibe and Okpalaeke, 2019). To justify France's support for the dismemberment of Nigeria, Joe Garba opines that:

There is scarcely any area of our external relations, whether in Africa or in Europe, where we do not line up against the interference of the French. From the time of the French nuclear test in the Sahara in 1961, we have had the constant challenge of the French factor... France has at every turn frustrated Nigeria's attempt to draw close to her Francophone neighbours (Garba, 1991).

France's negative implication in the Nigerian civil war strained the relations between the two nations.

### **3.3. Struggle for control over ECOWAS**

Besides the sour relationship between France and Nigeria as a result of her support for its disintegration, another factor that degenerated the diplomatic relations between France and Nigeria was the fear for Nigeria's economic domination over the Economic Community of West African States, (ECOWAS) largely made up of former French colonies. France was determined to ensure control over the affairs of these countries, even after their independence. As a demographic and economic giant in West Africa, France feared they are colonial influence in West Africa was at stake. It perceived Nigeria as its main 'rival' in this objective, especially because Nigeria was intent on achieving a form of regional integration that would exclude erstwhile colonial masters. This ultimately resulted in Nigeria championing the cause of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

### **3.4. France as the *Robin Hood* to Nigeria's territorial Integrity**

Given that in international relations, states do not have permanent enemies or friends since friends of today could become enemies tomorrow and vice-versa depending on the interest at stake. The relationship between France and Nigeria in the past decades has witnessed some détente and materialized through a series of politico-diplomatic, economic, and security actions. This detente started in the 1970s following the politico-economic dynamics witnessed in international politics. In these politico-economic changes, Nigeria emerges as one of the richest oil-producing countries in Africa.

According to Jean-Pierre Cot, the petroleum boom of the 1970s was important as a catalyst in the economic and commercial relations between Nigeria and France (Cot, 1984). France discovered in Nigeria a reliable source of petroleum which is very far away from the turbulent Middle and the Far East. At the same time, Nigeria became a huge market for French products such as French cars. It is important to note that between 1973 and 1985, Nigeria occupied an important position among France's commercial partners in Africa, south of the Sahara. The



commercial exchange between the two countries grew from 1.2% to 1.7 percent of French external trade between 1975 and 1980, and from 14.3 to 22.3 percent of French external trade with Africa.

Franco-Nigeria relations have continued to ameliorate to a point that on no account will France wish the dismemberment of Nigeria. Economic prosperity cannot function in a destabilized country. France is capable of using its position at the Security Council to counter a move by a secessionist movement in Nigeria seeking international recognition or intervention. As of now, France has become the second-largest bilateral creditor to Nigeria, after China, through the *Agence Française de Développement*. It has invested more than €2bn (\$2.4bn) in the past 10 years, financing 35 development projects, according to Nigerian government officials (Olurounbi, 2021).

In December 2018, the French oil giant Total's Egina platform began production with a 200,000 barrel-per-day facility. In 2020, French energy company Axens signed a deal to help on the multibillion-dollar refinery being built for Nigeria's BUA Group 2020. Given all these economic interests with Nigeria, France will continue to maintain a strong security presence in Nigeria and its neighbours through sharing of security information, troop deployments, and engagement in regional security bodies.

### 3.5. Politico-diplomatic Interest

In the past years, anti-French sentiment has been witnessed in former French colonies in Africa. This is the case with some West African countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso. The population in these countries has often called on the French to quit their country accusing France of their misery and underdevelopment. Furthermore, the increasing presence of Russo-Chinese companies and investors in some West African countries has seriously threatened France's grip on her former colonies. This can be explained by the claimed presence of a Russian mercenary armed group known as the "Wagner" in Mali. In such a situation, France can count on Nigeria as the strongest economic giant in Africa and the most influential member of the ECOWAS to exercise her control over her former colonies. This explains why Nigeria's diplomacy has been very active in West Africa, especially in a crisis country. Good Luck Jonathan and Olusegun Obasanjo (two former Nigerian presidents) have frequently been mandated by ECOWAS to mediate in some West African countries stricken by political crisis. This is the case with Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea Conakry.

Diplomatically, Nigeria can count on France as an influential member of international organizations such as the United Nations, European Union, and partner of the African Union not only to legitimate Nigeria's fight against secessionist movements but to delegitimize secessionist movements in Nigeria. In summary, the normalization of Franco-Nigerian relations undermined French interest in wishing Nigeria's break-up. Rather given the huge



politico-economic stakes and interest France has in Nigeria, the continued sustenance and consolidation of Nigeria's territorial integrity cannot be in doubt.

#### ***4. Cameroon-Nigeria Cooperation: Bound to cooperate or disintegrate***

Many scholars and researchers on Cameroon-Nigeria relations agree that both countries have cordial and amicable relations (Funteh, 2015; Familugba and Ojo, 2013; Baliredum and Udeoji, 2020). Officially French Cameroon and Nigeria established diplomatic relations in 1960 when both countries accessed their independence. It was only in October 1961, after the plebiscite that British southern Cameroons after joining French Cameroon to form a federal state was integrated between the already independent Nigeria and French Cameroon. It was thus at this moment that Nigeria and Cameroon officially shared boundaries. As neighboring countries, Cameroon and Nigeria share a common border, people, and history (Funteh, 2015). Corroborating this assertion, Omede (2006:17) opines that despite the existence of Cameroon and Nigeria as two sovereign political entities, they remained a common people, particularly those in the border towns. Both nations have exploited the geographical and historical proximity to mutually benefit from each other economically, politically, and socially (Funteh, 2015a).

Many accords and agreements govern Cameroon-Nigeria relations. These include the Agreement of Friendship and Cooperation of February 6, 1963; the Memorandum of Understanding on the control of movement of persons and goods of February 6, 1963; the Cultural, Social and Technical Agreement of March 22, 1972; the Trade Agreement of February 6, 1963, revised on January 13, 1982 and April 11, 2014 in Yaounde; Air Services Agreement of May 19, 1978; the Agreement on Police Cooperation of March 27, 1972; Mutual Cooperation Agreement of March 27, 1972; the Memorandum of Understanding on the transnational highway project to facilitate transportation between Cameroon and Nigeria on March 29, 2006 in Yaounde; the Green Tree Agreement of June 12, 2006; the Cameroon-Nigeria Electrical Interconnection Agreement, signed on February 18, 2011 in Yaounde; Cooperation Agreement in the field of Sports and Physical Education, signed on February 18, 2011 in Yaounde; the Agreement Establishing Cameroon-Nigeria Border Security Committee signed on February 28, 2012 in Abuja, and these are by no means exhaustive.

However, the relationship between both nations shifted from friendly to a hostile one. According to Funteh (2013), the number of conflictive incidents that have occurred between both nations within a certain short period in the past could push Cameroon to wish for the break-up of Nigeria (Baliredum and Udeoji, 2020; Familugba and Ojo, 2013).

The main cause of this disharmony was the Bakassi peninsular question. Bassey (2010) remarked that unconducive and long but ill-defined colonial border (1680 kilometers or 1050 miles) constitute the conceptual and historical issues that engaged the attention of scholars since independence in the Nigeria-Cameroon diplomatic relations. The claims over the Bakassi



peninsular escalated to a serious armed conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria. Thanks to long diplomatic relations, and because Cameroon took the claim to the International Court of Justice which on 10 October 2002 ruled in favor of Cameroon, both countries decided to peacefully resolve the difference by signing the Green Tree Agreement which ceded the area to Cameroon. Historically, the claim over the Bakassi is the only misunderstanding between both countries since independence. But at the same time, Cameroon potentially served as a threat to Nigeria's break due to Cameroon's proximity with France.

#### **4.1. Franco-Cameroonians Relations as a threat to Nigerian Integrity**

According to Familugba and Ojo (2013), the deteriorating relations between Cameroon and Nigeria were largely influenced by Germany, Britain during the colonial period and largely dominated at the post-independent era by France. Among the European colonial powers that colonized Africa, France is the only colonial power that established very strong links with her former colonies even after the former independence of the latter. Since independence, France has maintained a strong grip and influence on most of its former colonies. France has virtually been able to make and unmake African leaders at their guise even with unorthodox means.

According to Charbonneau, (2008) "decolonisation did not mark an end, but rather a restructuring of the imperial relationship", and this is manifested through *Françafrique*; the political, security, economic and cultural relations that, though diminished somewhat, remain today. France has sought to maintain its interests by influencing African internal affairs, whether it be helping the likes of Cameroon, Gabon, and Senegal to avoid coups thanks to security guarantees (McGowan 2003, p.357), or when in 1993 France, via state-owned oil company Elf-Aquitaine, sought to influence the Congo parliamentary elections by denying essential loans needed to pay civil servants (Martin, 1995).

Former French African colonies had the obligation to support French international actions be it legitimate or not, and this was explicitly though discreetly enshrined in the infamous accords signed between France and her ex-colonies at independence. That is why Cameroon's position vis-a-vis the Biafra war was more or less ambiguous as she maintained a neutral position while former French colonies supported the Biafra movement. This was because France was in support of the Biafra secessionist movement as a revenge against Nigeria's opposition in her nuclear test in the Sahara. Musah (2021) remarks that Cameroon's position in response to the Nigerian Civil War was that of neutrality at the beginning when the war broke out. As events unfolded however, the Cameroon government for strategic internal and security reasons was against the secessionist tendency of the Biafrans (Musah, 2021). Contrary to former French colonial African states, Cameroon under President Amadou Ahidjo severely criticized individuals and nations that supported the Biafran secessionist war. To manifest his support to the Nigerian federal government, Ahidjo banned the shipment of arms, medicine, foodstuffs, and other vital supplies to the Igbos via Cameroon soil, prompting the French Ambassador to observe that 'Ahidjo had become more Nigerian than Nigeria

(Amin, 2020; Torrent, 2012). Ahidjo's position on the Biafra war was among the numerous causes that strained his relationship with the French until his resignation in 1982.

Some scholars have posited that Ahidjo's support against the Biafra war was because the President of Nigeria Yakubu Gowon, was a Northerner from Northern Nigeria, a region that is geographically, religiously, culturally, historically and linguistically attached to Ahidjo's Northern Cameroon.

#### **4.2. Two patients suffering from the same syndrome; Secession and Terrorism**

Besides the geographical, historical, and cultural ties binding Cameroon and Nigeria, both countries are suffering two major vices most African modern countries are confronted with; secessionism and terrorism. Historically, Cameroon just like her neighbor Nigeria has been confronted with secessionist tendencies. Secessionist manifestations in Cameroon started as far back as 1961 following the establishment of a Federal Republic to reunite British Southern Cameroons and French Cameroon that had separately evolved under two different, political, economic, and social cultures, those of Britain and France, their Mandate and Trusteeship Powers. Secessionist agitations in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Cameroon have almost the same causes and threatened their territorial integrity.

Just a few years after independence was obtained in 1960, Nigeria was confronted with secession when the Igbo people one of the most dominant ethnic groups declared her independence with the name Biafra Republic in 1967. In response to this declaration, the federal government waged war against the Biafra Republic. The motivation for the declaration of the Republic of Biafra was justified by the differences in socio-economic developments, the *Tiv* riots of 1964, the flawed federal elections of 1964, the structural imbalances of the Nigerian federation, the 1965 Western regional crisis, the military coups of January 15<sup>th</sup> and July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1966 compounded by the killing of Igbos living in the North between May to September 1966 coupled with the asymmetric distribution of powers among the various ethnic geopolitical groups. The immediate cause of the war was the Igbo declaration of the independent Republic of Biafra named after the Bight of Biafra on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1967 by Lt. Col. Odumegwu Chukwuemeka Ojukwu who was the Governor of the Eastern Region (Oyeweso: 1992). The war was principally between the Igbos and the Federal Military Government (FMG) of General Yakubu Gowon. The Federal military government determined to maintain the unity and integrity of the state responded by attacking the declared secessionist republic on July 6<sup>th</sup>, 1967.

on February 11, 1961, British Northern Cameroon decided to gain her independence by a plebiscite to join the independent Federal Republic of Nigeria, while on the same date, the Southern part of British Cameroon voted to obtain her independence by joining French Cameroon that had earlier gained independence in 1960 with the appellation as the 'Republic of Cameroon'. As the two Cameroons came together, the political elites of former British and



French Cameroons decided to adopt federalism as the form of the new state based on two equal states. The new country was baptised the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

The reunification and putting in place of the federal system of government in 1961 was principally geared towards preserving the accepted colonial legacies from British and French Cameroon. Dubbed an African experiment in nation building, it was extolled and greeted with much euphoria. However, just some few years after the reunification of British and French Cameroon, socio-political, and cultural problems linked to the colonial legacy of both territories and discernible attempts by the Francophone majority in the new Republic began to create cohabitation difficulties. Among the several factors responsible were the modification of the federal constitution of 1961 to transform Cameroon to a unitary state and the change of the name of the country.

In 1972, President Ahmadou Ahidjo abrogated clause 1 of article 47 of the federal constitution which reads: “any proposal for the revision of the present constitution, which impairs the unity and integrity of the Federation shall be inadmissible” (Kaze, 2021, Konings and Nyamnjoh, 1997.) As if that was not enough, on January 25, 1984 the Government under the leadership of President Paul Biya changed the official name of the country from the ‘United Republic of Cameroon’ to simply the ‘Republic of Cameroon’ despite strong protests that this was what independent Francophone Cameroon had been called by Ahidjo before reunification (Kaze, 2021). These politically symbolic acts were considered by some Anglophone elites as an attempt to complete assimilation, which in the long run led to the breakdown in many aspects of the political cementing across the French/English divide. As at today and spanning over a period of six years, there has been the outbreak of a violent armed conflict between the government and armed separatist movements in the North West and South West regions since 2016. The two regions are basically “ethnic” Anglophones, in the sense that it is the region where British administration was found during the period between 1916 and 1961. That is what is at the heart of the Anglophone Problem in Cameroon.

The Anglophone Problem which was more or less a pacifist confrontation transformed into a violent one in 2017. In October 2017, some Anglophone activists hoisted flags in major cities of the North West and South West regions to symbolize separation from The Republic of Cameroon and the regaining of their freedom and sovereignty. The explicit declaration of independence and hoisting of the ‘Ambazonia’ flag was perceived by the government as an act of subversion and destabilization of the State. Government security forces were deployed in the two English-speaking regions to normalize the situation, but unfortunately, the situation degenerated into a confrontation between government forces and the demonstrating populations. The outcome was fatal. Scores of people died in the early days of the conflict. Since then numerous deaths continue to be recorded as well as injured and arrested persons some of who were duly registered (ICG, 2017). It is very difficult to ascertain the number of people injured, killed or arrested as the area has been under conflict for close to six years. Also, most eyewitnesses and potential informants have fled out of the area. The hidden hand

of government in prosecution this war has been seriously decried by many groups including Human Rights Watch and the International Crisis Group.

In the course of the confrontation, some government forces were killed in the South West region of Cameroon by non-state armed groups. This has sparked huge military intervention in the North West and South West regions. A noted development is the emergence and propagation of numerous separatist groups claiming secession from the Republic of Cameroon.

Geographically, the secessionist groups in Cameroon and Nigeria are close to each other. The North West and South West regions of the Republic under secessionist claim share boundaries with South East Nigeria which is the stronghold of secessionist movements like Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM), and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).

In 2021, some Cameroonian and Nigerian secessionist leaders based abroad held a meeting on how to cooperate to attain their objectives. According to Jess Craig, in early April 2021, Cho Ayaba, the leader of the Ambazonia Governing Council, one of two major Cameroon Anglophone separatist groups, and the well-known Biafran leader Nnamdi Kanu appeared in a press conference, live-streamed on social media, to announce a strategic and military alliance (Foreign Policy, 2021). The scope of the alliance will include joint operations and training bases, as announced by Capo Daniel, the deputy defense chief of the Ambazonia Defense Forces, the military wing of the Ambazonia Governing Council (Foreign Policy, 2021). The groups will work to secure their shared border and ensure an open exchange of weapons and personnel, representatives of both the Ambazonia and IPOB movements.

#### **4.3. Nigeria and Cameroon: Mutual Cooperation against Secessionism**

Faced with the growing security threats posed by the increasing agitations of secessionist movements in southeast Nigeria and Northwest and southwest Cameroon, the Nigerian and Cameroonian governments have been collaborating against fighting secessionist movements. During an audience granted by Cameroon's Head of State to Nigeria's High Commissioner Designate to Cameroon on 7 December 2017, the Nigeria High Commission to Cameroon, Lawan Abba Gashagar has declared that his country was categorically against pro-secessionist activities.

To materialize this declaration, in 2018, Nigerian security forces located, arrested, and extradited ten Cameroonian separatist leaders residing in the country. The previous year, Nigerian security forces arrested more than 30 other Anglophone activists who were extradited to Yaounde, judged, and sentenced to life imprisonment. It worth noting that this extradition was condemned and considered illegal and unconstitutional by the Nigerian court, however the deed was already done and this move only reinforced Cameroon-nigeria's political cooperation. Since the beginning of the Anglophone in Cameroon, Nigeria has



frequently allowed Cameroonian security forces to pursue military operations against secessionist groups seeking refuge in Nigeria territory.

The increasing fatal attacks using sophisticated weapons like rocket-launchers in the past years have triggered a heightened response from both Cameroonian and Nigerian armed forces, which already work together to counter a Boko Haram insurgency in the northern regions of both countries.

## **Conclusion**

The foundations of secessionist agitations in some African states today have their roots from colonial rule. In a bid to achieve their colonial interest, the colonial administration did not hesitate to adopt and implement variations of divide-and-rule policies to enhance the control of their colonies and ensure a more profitable exploitation of the colonies. In Nigeria for example, the British colonial authorities favored the traditional elite of the Northern region that was not quite enlightened but ruled over large populations. The colonialists gave them important positions and duties in the politico-administrative apparatus of British colonial administration in Nigeria. Historically, the Yorubas and the Igbo who were very relatively more educated and economically more dynamic were marginalized by the British in the build up to the post colonial state dispensation. It even emerged that the northern elite was not in favour of Nigerian accession to independence in 1960 for fear of losing political control over the state. Meanwhile, the South made up of the Yorubas and the Igbo clamored for independence as it was one way for them to access political control in the emerging dispensation of democratic national politics. That is why parties that were created prior or in the early years of independence were ethnically based and thus a potential justification for secession.

There is no gain saying that a secession movement will find it tremendously difficult to defeat the central authority in any country without external support. This simply means that secessionist causes in Africa appear like lost wars before they are unevenly fought given the strength of the military and the diplomatic capacity of the central authority. The debate on the eminent break-up of Nigeria is as old as the Federal Republic of Nigeria itself. However, if up till now no secessionist movement has been able to carve out and successfully control a part of Nigeria's territory, it may be surmised that to a large extent this is a reflection of the diplomatic dynamics of the Nigerian central political or government authorities where even enemies of yesterday have become friends today.

To completely neutralize and mitigate the proliferation of secessionist movements in Nigeria, the Federal Republic of Nigeria beside her seemingly practical and reality-based diplomacy and her military capacity will need to put in place an inclusive governing policy that ensures equal development and fair political participation. For now, Cameroon and France in the current posture of their diplomatic considerations vis-a-vis Nigeria will continue to be important in the fight against the breakup of Nigeria. France for its economic benefits and

Cameroon for fear that the secessionist virus could be upgraded in the Southwest and Northwest Regions of the country. For as long as mutual interests remain assured, on the part of each of these two “partners”, Nigerian secessionists will keep Nigeria destabilized with all the consequences that can be discerned. The duration of this destabilization cannot be ascertained. In fact until Nigeria’s friends of today walk away from the diplomatic friendship, it will be difficult to find destabilizing allies from within Nigeria.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### **Notes on Contributors**

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*From the table above, two typologies of movements can be identified; the first category is the economic-orientated movements and majority situated in the Niger Delta. Their objective is to constitute a nuisance to the government and multinational oil companies who have monopolized exploitation and profits. The second category is politically orientated with the finality of break-away to form a sovereign socio-political entity. This is the case with most groups in East-Central, South-Eastern, and Rivers states of the present Federation of Nigeria. The main revendication of the second category concurs with claims of separatist movements in the Northwest and Southwest regions of the Republic of Cameroon. The common denominator responsible for the emergence and proliferation of these movements is that of poor governance and lack of sincere national cohesion policies.*



Name of Armed group	Date of Creation	Current Leader	Territorial claim	Revendication
<b>Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB)</b>	2012	Nnamdi Kanu, a British Nigerian political activist	East-Central, South-Eastern, and Rivers states of the present Federation of Nigeria	To restore an independent state of Biafra in the Old Eastern Region of Nigeria, comprising mainly today's South-East and South-South Regions of Nigeria; and also parts of the Middle Belt states of Nigeria such as Benue State and Kogi State, through an independence referendum.
<b>Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA)</b>	1990s	Alleged as Dokubo Asari. (chief priest of the Egbesu shrine)	Six southeastern states of Nigeria's Niger Delta Region	It is committed to the political goals of the Ijaw people
<b>Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVPF)</b>	2003	Alhaji Muhajid Dokubo-Asari	Delta State	To force oil companies out of the Niger delta or otherwise compel the Nigerian government to cede its control over the area to the local authorities.
<b>O'odua People's Congress (OPC)</b>	1994	Dr. Frederick Fasehun	Southwest region of Nigeria in the states of Lagos, Ogun, Osun, Kwara, Ondo, Oyo, and Ekiti	To protect and promote the interests of the Yoruba people
<b>Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND, a fractured group from the NDVPF)</b>	2005	Shadow leaders	Niger Delta	The group's efforts are directed towards knocking down oil production in the Niger-Delta region and claims to expose exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger-Delta and devastation of the natural environment as a result of public-private partnerships between the Federal Government of Nigeria and corporations involved in the production of oil in the Niger Delta
<b>Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)</b>	1999	Ralph Uwazuruike	East-Central, South-Eastern, and Rivers states of the present Federation of Nigeria	The recreation of an independent state of Biafra.
<b>Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM)</b>	2010	Benjamin Onwuka (In detention)	East-Central, South-Eastern, and Rivers states of the present Federation of Nigeria	For the restoration of Biafra and its independence from Nigeria
<b>Niger Delta Avengers (NDA)</b>	2016	Mudoch Agbinibo	Niger Delta	To cripple Nigeria's economy

Source: Author, May 2022.

# Toxic Elite Consensus and Leadership Gaps as the Main Driver of Nigeria's Crisis of Nationhood

Tosin Ososona<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract:

The 61 years of Nigeria's post-colonial political history has been one of different unending experiments to create a sustainable political and economic order that serves the Nigerian people. During this period, Nigeria has witnessed violent and unconstitutional political changes, long periods of military dictatorships, persistent cycles of electoral violence, inter and intra ethnic conflicts, and persistent economic and social policy reversals that have worsened Nigeria's performance on almost all socio-economic indicators and the latest security challenges that have created doubt about the viability of the Nigerian state.

Against this backdrop, this paper undertakes a historical analysis of the composition and capacity of the different elite clusters in Nigeria and how these clusters have impacted governance and the sustainability of Nigerian statehood. The paper also investigates the link between Nigeria's current security crisis and the failure of governance that is underpinned by a toxic and extractive elite consensus and failure of leadership across the board. The paper adopts qualitative historical analysis and recommends the creation of a positive and developmental elite governance pact as one of the sustainable ways of addressing the looming implosion of the Nigerian state.

## Keywords:

Nigeria, elite consensus, state failure, corruption.

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## *Introduction*

Nigeria stands imperilled more than before by a quartet of security crises driven by the activities of armed non-state actors; economic failures worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic; unwieldy demographic growth; and the weaponization of ethnic and religious differences by a political elite that is more fixated on power retention than the welfare and economic prosperity of the Nigerian people. The composite of these threats is a permanently unsteady state, marked more by disarray and the burdens of its internal contradictions.

Nigeria in the last decade has performed poorly on almost all indicators benchmarking public safety and security. On the 2021 safety and security sub-index of the Global Prosperity Index, Nigeria ranked 143 out of the 167 countries polled (Legatum Institute, 2021). On the World Bank's political stability and absence of violence component of the Worldwide Governance Indicators, Nigeria scored 4.72 out of the 100 gradable scores (World Bank, 2020). In a decade of measurement, Nigeria witnessed a decline on the Security and Rule of Law component of the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2020).

The real-life impact of these quantitative indexes is no less atrocious. Boko Haram, in a decade of fundamentalist insurgency, caused between 20,000 to 30,000 deaths and displaced more than 2 million Nigerian citizens (Omenma et al., 2020). Banditry is the latest addition to Nigeria's long growing list of public safety and security concerns. In 2019, bandits were reportedly responsible for more Nigerian deaths than Boko Haram, armed robbers, kidnappers, and gangs combined: 47.5% of all violent deaths in 2019 (Daily Trust, 2019). The ongoing conflict between farmers and pastoralists across Nigeria costs at least \$14 billion dollars in potential revenues, annually (Ogundipe and Oluwole, 2016) and between 2011 and 2020, Nigerians paid at least \$18.34 million dollars as ransom to kidnappers (Kabir, 2020).

## *Elite Theories in Perspective*

Understanding the roles and position of elites in governance and power relations in contemporary society has been one of the fundamental areas of interest for sociologists and political scientists. This interest is heightened by the concentration, in the last five decades, of economic and social resources in the restricted circle of few individuals. The world's richest 1%, who are those with \$1million and above, own 45.8% of the world's wealth (Credit Suisse, 2021). Also, the richest 10% of adults in the world own 85% of global household wealth, while the bottom half collectively owns barely 1% (Davies et al., 2006).

Vilfredo Pareto's (Pareto, 1991) Circulation of Elites, Gaetano Mosca's theories of Ruling Class (Meisel, 1962), and Robert Michel's theory of the Iron law of Oligarchy (James, 1995) are the seminal treatises on which the scholarship of elite theory is built. Pareto advanced the position that elites – except for short interregnums – have always governed societies and framed cultures. Pareto further conceptualised history as: “[H]istory of men is the history of

the continuous replacement of certain elites; as one ascends another declines, such is the real phenomenon, though to us it may often appear under another form” (Pareto, 1991).

Essentially, there are three groups of governing elites. The first categorisation comprises leaders who directly or indirectly hold positions in government. The second class is the non-political leadership cluster that wields economic, social, and cultural influences, and the third are the non-office holding political elite with major influence on the exercise of political power. These elite groups are neither hermetic nor homogeneous, as class circulation and mobility is a dominant feature of elites in modern societies, with constant changes in the membership structure and composition of elite groups. This is a phenomenon that is tagged: the law of the circulation of elites (Pareto, 1963).

Mosca, building on Pareto’s earlier works in the ‘Theory of Ruling Class’ posits that there are, at every point in history and in almost all human societies, two classes of people – a class ruler and a class that is ruled. Central to Mosca’s elite theory is the principle of the organisation strength and superiority that an organised minority class have over the unorganised majority. This organised minority consists of ruling classes, however, this does not mean that the interest of ruling class and subject classes are always exclusive (Mosca, 1939).

Adding a different dimension to the classic theories of elites, Michels theorised that organisations are the sole method of creating a sustainable and functional governance system and that they all work under the ‘Iron Law of Oligarchy’. In advancing the indispensability of oligarchy from governance, Michels argues that: “It is organisation which gives birth to the domination of the elected over electors, of the mandates over the mandators, of the delegates over delegators; who says organisation, says oligarchy”. According to him, social and political organisations are managed and run by few individuals and that all organisations are elitist.

The works of these pioneer scholars on elite theory have been deepened by a succeeding generation of scholars – William Domhoff, Elmer Eric Schattschneider, C. Wright Mills, James Burnham, Thomas Dye, George Gonzalez, and Martin Gilens, among others, who have extended the boundaries of elite theory. However, there is little disagreement among them about what the theory entails: the dominance of a small minority, consisting of economic elites, political elites, social elites, and policy planning networks in governance and the power held by this exclusive group is independent of democratic processes (Yamokoski and Dubrow, 2008).

While most theories on elites agree on the conceptualisation and group classification of elites, framing the concept of elite consensus is a bit more contentious, as the definitions and meaning of elite consensus is imprecise, with the concept used more descriptively of social and political processes. Gould and Szomolanyi (2000) described elite consensus as indicators that show whether elites share similar values and beliefs systems and their access to crucial decision-making.



Building elite consensus is a complex task that is an outcome of systemic incentives associated with participation in a formal alliance (Kreps, 2010). Elites as rational actors balance the cost and benefit of alliance formulation by exploring benefits from historical perspectives, the prospect of future returns as well as the punishment costs of abstaining (Akinbode, 2017). The basics of decision-making is straightforward; a negative response when the costs outweigh the incentives to form an alliance and vice versa.

### ***Characterisation of Nigeria's Ruling Elites***

Nigeria's 61 years of political independence can be condensed into a sentence – unending social and political experiments to create a sustainable political and economic order to replace a burdensome colonial inheritance. Nigeria has witnessed violent and unconstitutional changes in government, decades of military dictatorships, predictable cycles of electoral violence, inter and intra ethnic conflicts, unbelievable levels of public corruption, persistent economic and social policy reversals and the last two decades have seen the rise of armed and violent non-state actors which have resulted in Nigeria's poor performance on almost all development indexes.

These manifest calamities of governance are underpinned by questions of Nigeria's elite composition and nature of agreement between the various elite clusters that have shaped the economic and political outlook of the Nigerian state in the last six decades. Neither exclusive nor hermetic, governing elites in Nigeria can be aggregated into five clusters, namely: the socio-cultural, religious, military, economic, and political and these composite elite groups influence the functioning of social networks, state institutions and political structures (Ani Kifordu, 2011a).

An analysis of Nigeria's recent political and social history reveals that knowledge, resources, psychology, networking, and organisational capability form the basis of the cohesion, visibility, and continuous hold of Nigeria's elite class on the political system. In each of the above listed elite compartments, certain names and personages have come to be identified as embodying the class *essentials*. For instance, Alhaji Aliko Dangote, Abdul Samad Rabiu, and Mike Adenuga, who have a joint net worth of \$27.6 billion, are the quintessential faces of Nigeria's economic elites (Oluwole, 2022). The same way President Obasanjo, General Babagida, and, to a large extent, former governor of Lagos State, Ahmed Tinubu emblemises the political elite and access to political office in Nigeria.

While the Nigerian constitution does not give preference to any religion, the practice of every successive government in Nigeria gives the impression of a country whose government has an inclination towards Islamic and Christian faiths. This official leaning towards the two faiths have created a powerful and distinct elite group who hold great influence on governance in Nigeria (Magbadelo, 2003). The Pentecostal Christian movement has had great influence on electoral outcomes in Nigeria, particularly since 1999. Pastor Enoch Adeboye,

together with the Redeemed Christian Church of God that he leads, a denomination with more than five million worshippers, was adopted by President Obasanjo between 1999-2007 as his spiritual leader and his church to legitimise his government, which further highlights the influence the clerical elites have over governance in Nigeria (Obadare, 2007).

Looking at composition and character of the Nigerian elite – especially the political elite – that have historically held and currently hold offices across Nigeria, it can be stated that the usurpation of political power and diversion of development from the citizenry is one of the fundamental elite consensuses in Nigeria. One factual manifestation of this consensus to divert and hold economic and political power is the failure of successive governments to stop corruption despite the various measures and approaches to address corruption in the polity, some of which include constitutional and legal approach, institutional approach, media campaigns, aggressive policing, and political education approach. Despite these measures, the country has consistently performed poorly on almost all corruption measurement indexes.

There is an age-long and widely held perception of public office in Nigeria as a legitimate and primary source of wealth accumulation and redistribution (Enweremadu, 2013). Nothing exemplifies this than the number of political office holders that have been accused of corruption related offences in Nigeria from 2007 till date. James Ibori, former Governor of Delta State, was arrested by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and was charged with 170 counts of corruption related offences; he was acquitted by a court in Nigeria (Eboh, 2009), only for him to plead guilty for the same offences in the United Kingdom in 2012 (BBC, 2012). Former governors Lucky Igbinedion of Edo state, Ayo Fayose of Ekiti state, Peter Odili of Rivers state, Chimaroke Nnamani of Enugu state, Saminu Turaki of Jigawa state, Orji Uzor Kalu of Abia state, Jonah Jang of Plateau state, James Ibori of Delta state, Diepreye Alamieyeseigha of Bayelsa state, Jolly Nyame of Taraba state, Sule Lamido of Jigawa State, and Ikedi Ohakim of Imo state have all been accused by the Economic and Financial Crime Commission of misappropriating public funds and have been charged to court. Around 22 former governors are being investigated currently and six former governors have been convicted of corruption related offences (PM News, 2019).

Another manifestation of Nigeria's elite is the substantial reliance on state power and institutions for *survival* rather than on the feedback from the Nigerian social structures whose diverse members clamour for elite responsiveness and responsibility. Scholars on political leadership in Nigeria have unanimously concluded that electing the right political leadership is one of Nigeria's great failings. According to Imhonopi and Ugochukwu (2013): "Nigeria has not had the good fortune of being governed well since it gained its political independence in 1960". Also, Ebegbulem (2012) described leadership in Nigeria in uncharitable terms by stating that: "The Nigerian society has never been well governed since independence from the British in 1960 because good, strong leaders have never been in charge".



Another feature of the Nigerian elite class is the continuous circulation and recurrent appearances of members in spite of the many structural changes in the Nigerian polity. Nigeria's latest round of democratisation process has seen domination of the political system by former military leaders and their acolytes at the national and sub-national levels. This elite circulation and replication are not limited to the political elites alone: religious and economic elites have also kept the organisational leadership *within the family*. Religious leaders have been succeeded by their wives and children as heads of religious organisations (BBC, 2021).

According to Ani Kifordu (2011b), there is a certain relationship between historically entrenched value systems and interests that informs the political conduct of the core political executive elite and the denial of opportunities to new groups. The greater the influence of a small number of individuals or groups in society, the more the rights of others – and the openness of the political system, inclusiveness, and the rule of law – may come under pressure. The outcome is the cyclical reproduction of elites in Nigeria across clusters and this is done majorly by exploiting common backgrounds and social networks.

Essentially, the main drivers of the five Nigerian elite clusters are personalised individual and group benefits rather than nationalistic motives. Elites in Nigeria collaborate across institutional and political lines whenever their vested and collective interests are threatened. Nigeria's religious and ethnic diversity has had little impact on existing implicit consensus among Nigerian elites; an elite pact that is built around a set of negative, anti-development, extractive, rent seeking rules (Ojukwu and Shopeju, 2010). Diversity is most weaponised by excluded elite groups as a tool to access power but never as an impediment to collaboration where interests align.

### ***Crisis of Leadership as the Driver of Insecurity***

Across the world, governments – irrespective of their nomenclature – have the primary mandate of providing critical public goods and services that private individuals and private networks cannot and are not expected to effectively provide. These goods and services would include: regulatory enforcements, provision of security and safety services, infrastructural development, revenue mobilisation, and budget management, among others. The degree of the efficiency of a government in providing these essential public goods and services determine where it sits on the development spectrum. This efficiency in delivery of public goods and services is referred to as *government effectiveness* in literature and global indexes for measuring performance of governments, and the quality of leadership is always a constant component (Kaufmann et al., 2010). The quality of leadership is essential and central to any discourse on effectiveness of government.

The concept of leadership is multi-disciplinary and one of its distinguishing characterisations in literature is the lack of a uniform definition, with each discipline defining leadership from a subjective perspective. There is a catalogue of definitions, each relevant to



a given situation and purpose but all lacking the cross-discipline quality that makes it usable in all contexts for which leadership is required.

Definitions of leadership can be subsumed under at least eight different categorisations and will include definitions that consider leadership as the focus of group processes, which sees the leader as the centre of a group. The secondary categorisations are those definitions that consider leadership as personality and its effect in framing outcomes. The third class of leadership definitions conceptualise leadership as the art of inducing and enforcing compliance and loyalty. The fourth class of definitions consider leadership as the exercise of influence and focuses on how leaders influence the actions of their followers. The fifth grouping defines leadership as an act or behaviour and examines the concrete actions taken by leaders, rather than character traits of office holders. The sixth takes leadership to be persuasion, a moulder of consensus and the seventh, which realistically mirrors political leadership, puts leadership as power relations and the eighth conceptualisation considers leadership as structural and emphasises that the role of the leader is setting patterns of relationship (Dion, 1968).

In the context of this essay, 'leadership' connotes political powers vested in office holders by the electorate and the demanded natural qualities and requisite intellectual preparations expected from a person that would lead in a political entity. This would include abjuring sectional divisive interests for national good, dispensing justice fairly and not with political expediency, respecting and protecting the essential democratic norm of decent competition and opposition, abstaining from co-opting the security and state for personal ends, taking the observance of the dictates of the rule of law beyond the mouthing of convenient platitudes, and a thorough understanding of the immensity of the Nigerian challenge of development.

Scholars on political leadership in Nigeria have unanimously concluded on the failure of leadership as the primary challenge to economic growth and development in Nigeria prior to 1999 (Achebe, 1983). The same verdict of incompetence, sectionalism, and abysmally poor leadership skills have been given on succeeding class of political leadership since 1999, Nigeria's longest span of democratic governance. One of the critical outcomes of this leadership failure is the current worsening security crisis that has put Nigeria in the global list of failing states.

Whether Nigeria will completely fail and implode is debatable. However, a country imperilled by weak state capacity, ecological and climate emergencies, weakening – and in some instances total collapse –, informal conflict resolution mechanisms, endemic poverty and widening inequality, intractable conflicts around access to natural resources, ethnic fissures and religious intolerance, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illiteracy, public corruption, and a youth bulge that has been described by a former Nigerian president as "Driven by frustration and desperation in relation to their unfulfilled aspirations and dreams" (Coffie-Gyamfi, 2017) is one that is failing.



Nigeria has a long history of violent conflicts dating back to the 1960s and the return to democratic governance in 1999 saw a rise in violent non-state actors and their domination of national and sub-national security agendas. Today, these armed non-state actors include ethnic militants, gangs and cult groups, political thugs, and others: almost all geopolitical zones across Nigeria are affected (Ososona, 2021). In the northeast, ongoing Boko Haram carnage have devastated communities for more than a decade, banditry is raging in the northwest, cult and gang violence in the southwest and Niger Delta, farmer-pastoralist in the northcentral and secessionist violence in the southeast, and a thoroughly militarised state but nonetheless insecure.

The roles that critical gaps in leadership have played in triggering and aggravating these security challenges is enormous. In 2020, Nigeria emerged as the poverty capital of the world. Northeast Nigeria, the region most affected by the Boko Haram insurgency, is very poor, even by Nigeria's low standards. The region is blighted by unbelievable poverty; states in the region have as much as 71% of their respective populations living below the poverty line (NBS, 2020), and health outcomes are ghastly across the seven component states in the region. The region has the highest number of schoolchildren in Nigeria, with an average adult literacy rate of 29.7%. Youth unemployment in the region is one of the highest in Nigeria (Premium Times, 2019). These poor socio-economic outcomes highlight the direness of responsive and accountable governance systems in the region.

In Northwest Nigeria, the geopolitical zone at the edge of the Sahara and the current epicentre of banditry, is the poorest region in Nigeria. States in the region have as much as between 74% to 87.7% of their respective populations living below the poverty line (NBS, 2020), and health outcomes are extremely brutal across the seven component states in the region. 10.5 million children, which is a full one-third of Nigerian children, are out of school; the highest out of school rate in the world (UNICEF, 2022). These poor socio-economic outcomes are driven by failure of leadership across all strata of public life.

Urban centres across Nigeria are blighted by cultism and gang violence, which is largely driven by Nigeria's abysmal socio-economic indexes – high urban youth employment, high incidence of poverty, lack of opportunities, and a dysfunctional criminal justice system, among others. Added to that is a lack of coherent national strategy for disrupting and dismantling violent gangs in Nigeria, and there is no visible national policy on school-based violence, leaving individual schools and communities to respond uncoordinatedly to a national tragedy (Ososona, 2019).

### ***Elite Consensus and Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria***

Elites are a prominent feature of the governance landscape in functional democracies, where the electorates have a wide influence on policy decisions. Democratic governance is built on popular support as well as elite support in order to sustain their legitimacy, preserve stability,

and perform vital functions. A certain level of support for political and social institutions is important in established democracies, especially in states transiting from authoritarian rule and state economic planning to democracy and a free market economy (Gulbrandsen and Engelstad, 2005).

Even in democratic systems that inherently promote equality and universal suffrage, elites do not disappear; they at best acquire a new outlook. Elites in a democracy remain institutionally distinct, although socially disparate and politically diverse groups of national leaders. Mutual accommodation, compromises, and consensus between these elite groups are seen as preconditions for the continuance and stability of democracies (Higley and Michael, 1989).

The impact of positive compromise and consensus is heightened by the social interconnectedness and interdependencies between the various institutions of governance in a democracy that make governance akin to an ecological system, where component parts are connected. The effective and efficient functioning of each institution of governance depends on the functioning of other reinforcing institutions, which in part elevates the rationale why elites must create a framework that transcends their immediate institutional interests and values. Largely, elites have a duty to develop and shoulder responsibilities for deepening institutional capabilities.

The centrality of elite consensus looms larger in Nigeria where the impact of informal institutions is elevated and indispensable to governance outcomes. Informal institutions in Nigeria are often “invisible, irregular, parallel, non-structured, backward, underground and residual and yet these are structures, mechanisms and processes as well as rules and norms that govern and bind social interactions” (Magbagbeola, 1996). These institutions and their schematics are based on mostly unwritten codes of conduct whose enforcement relies heavily on fiduciary relationships, networks, enlightened self-interest, and other mutually reinforcing mechanisms of responsibility. These institutions would include aspects of traditional culture, personal networks, religious organisations and practices, clientelism and godfatherism, ethnic organisations, criminal networks, civil society, and a wide variety of legislative, judicial, and bureaucratic norms (Effiom and Ubi, 2015). More importantly, these institutions have been no less influential in moulding policy choices than formal institutions, like the security apparatus, judicial establishments, and statutory organisations.

From the foregoing, one can observe that the importance of elite consensus is a critical factor to moving the Nigerian polity away from suboptimal social, economic, and political paradigms. It needs to be understood that elite consensus in Nigeria exists, but it *prioritises* extraction, exclusion, rent seeking, and conspicuous consumption to the detriment of the development of the state – development here, being the strengthening of institutions, reduction of inequality and improvement of the quality of democracy, etc. The need for an elite consensus – a meeting of minds – is crucial because they possess a level of concentrated social capital that has the capacity to influence the apparatus of government and even social



consciousness. This does not presuppose a complete disappearance of governance problems, of course, but the emergence of a consensus among elites – who are powerful, wealthy, and influential – would mean that there would be a potential for the transformation of institutions. In this context, institutions are the formal and informal rules, codes, and norms that govern human interaction, and it is these institutions and their emergent properties the latter that are the driving forces of change. For instance, a competent and professional Civil service is the knife point of a government, as they execute the policy of Political officeholders. Where this bureaucracy is set within a culture of extractive tendencies, the result will be a state unable to carry out basic functions. The ability of an elite to unite along developmental norms could influence a Civil service in very noticeable ways.

The Vice President, Yemi Osinbajo, in recognising the indispensable nature of harmony among elites, took the position that the lack of a socially responsible pact that recognised the principle of “*noblesse oblige*” among other things, was the cause of the rise in insecurity. This is premised on the understanding that there are norms of compromise and consensus that ought to guide elites to forge a stable and egalitarian society (Osinbajo, 2021). This means that a pact exists, but it is anti-developmental. Awoyemi noted that this state of affairs was not new but had precedent in Nigerian history with the emergence of the Macpherson Constitution, which was based on a consensus but ultimately implemented by elites that did not trust each other (Awoyemi, 2021). History, as it has been said, often repeats itself.

## Conclusion

The last two decades of democratisation in Nigeria has shown that economic growth and development is not necessarily a natural outcome of democratic governance, because the link between the two is not linear. The political system in and of itself does not determine the growth prospects of an economy; economic growth is a product of different mechanisms translating preferences of decision-makers into policy designs that reflect the subtleties of each system. History shows that nearly all poor countries in the 1960s were autocratic, some leaders managed to steer their states to prosperity, while others remained poor. This evidence suggests that it is the choices made by political leaders, rather than the structural constraints, that have enabled nations to move from poverty to prosperity. This particularly emphasises the importance of leadership in addressing national challenges be it developmental or existential.

In the context of this article, unless political leadership in Nigeria manifested in practice the proper use of political powers vested in office holders by the electorates and leaders possessed the requisite natural qualities and needed intellectual preparations – expected from a person that would lead in a complex political entity –, socio-economic failures would continue to threaten national security. Leaders at all facets of public life must avoid sectional divisive interests for national good, dispense justice fairly and not with political expediency, respect and protect the essential democratic norms of decent competition and opposition,

not co-opting the security and state for personal ends, taking the observance of the dictates of the rule of law beyond the mouthing of convenient platitudes, and a thorough understanding of the immensity of the Nigerian Challenge.

Except Nigeria's governing elites produce a governance pact that prioritises this governance ethos, socio-economic development and security would only be aspirational, because these concepts are unfortunately not accidental accomplishments, unlike the Darwinian conjecture of order and beauty out of pure fortuitous arbitrariness.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### **Notes on Contributor**

Tosin Osasona is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Public Policy Alternatives, a public policy think-tank based in Lagos, Nigeria. As a lawyer and a development professional with crosscutting experience in legal practice, public policy analysis and security sector governance, he is interested in policy-centered interventions focusing on effective, efficient and accountable service delivery by Nigeria's security and justice agencies. He holds a Master of Laws degree in International Crime and Justice from the University of Turin, Turin Italy.

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## Boko Haram Insurgency and Environmental Degradation in the North-East Region of Nigeria, 2009-2021

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### Abstract:

The Boko Haram (BH) insurgency has attracted global attention because it has lingered for over ten years now and gory news of serial killings, ambushes of security personnel and convoys, abductions, internal displaced persons/refugee crisis, among others made the headlines. The BH insurgency has a devastating impact on the economy and society particularly in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States where the security problem had been more pronounced. Bauchi, Gombe and Taraba States in the Northeast region of Nigeria and the neighbouring Republics of Niger, Chad and Cameroon have also been affected, having accommodated people fleeing the insurgency. While many displaced persons have settled in states other than that of their origin and may not go back, others with government support have started returning to their ancestral homes to start a new life. The BH insurgency, as with different aspects of the society, seriously affected the environment of a region that has been experiencing ecological degradation over time. The insurgency-induced environmental degradation in the Northeast region does make the headlines; little or nothing is reported or written about this aspect of the crisis. This paper attempts to examine the environmental impact of the insurgency in relation to the violent military engagements and the lifestyle of the displaced persons in and outside camps. The content of the paper is based on information generated largely from written material and some oral data.

### Keywords:

Boko Haram, insurgency, environment, degradation, internal displaced persons.

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## *Introduction*

The issue of environmental degradation has received deserving attention from scholars who offer conceptual clarification of varying value to explain the phenomenon. Barau (2004) defines environmental degradation “as the reduction or deterioration in the quality of natural and socio-economic variables including a decline in or loss of bio-diversity”. Ahmad (1997) views environmental degradation as the tempering with the state and quality of the surrounding objects of land, water and air as an interdependent component of nature. Without belabouring on conceptual clarification, the environment is degraded if natural resources are depleted, ecosystems destroyed, leading to wildlife extinction, and pollution. Environmental degradation is the process in which the ecosystem, the aesthetic landscape and other physical structures that support the lives of humans, animals and plants in different ways through the ecological value chain are disrupted resulting from natural and anthropogenic factors.

Environmental degradation as a process of ecological change has local and international dimensions. A number of factors trigger environmental degradation in different places around the world. War is one of the factors that destroy the environment. Local, regional and international wars have often caused environmental change with negative consequences on humans and animals, plants and the vegetation cover, water and food sources, among others. The environmental degradation induced by wars, for example, in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Burma, Philippines, Chechnya, Bosnia, and Northern Ireland, can only be imagined given the wars’ local and regional implications, moral and ethical dimensions (Ahmad, 1997). Though there have been rules of engagement in a war situation, little or no regard is given to the environment in the course of the wars. War actors knowingly or unknowingly destroy the environment in their effort to win a war or cause maximum damage on the opposing side, mostly considered as the “enemy”. The environmental damage caused by wars has more often than not been limited to the war period but lingers for a while as the affected people continue to grapple with environmental problems in the aftermath of the wars.

Environmental degradation is not only noticed in the theatre of war, but also manifested itself in refugee or displaced persons’ camps. People displaced as a result of the wars or insurgencies mostly ended up in internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps. The unpleasant lifestyle of the IDPs taking refuge in makeshift shelters and camps raises issues of environmental and health concerns. It is within this context that this paper discusses the BH insurgency-induced environmental degradation in the Northeast region of Nigeria, 2009 to 2021. Though the insurgency is not yet over and the degrading of the environment is ongoing, the ecological disruption resulting from violent military engagement is, to say the least, disturbing, as the insurgency not only accelerated the process of the environmental degradation, but actually widened its scope in a region already known for its environmental crisis (Daily Trust, 2021). Several IDPs’ camps had been established across the region and beyond to accommodate the people displaced from their homes as a result of the insurgency.

The environmental, social and other problems associated with the IDPs' camps, especially in Borno were such that the government decided to close down the camps and support the IDPs to go back to their homes (Daily Trust, 2021). The insurgency-induced environmental degradation in the region will therefore be examined on the basis of pieces of available information and data generated from people directly and indirectly involved in the events under consideration, and the reading of published materials on the subject matter.

### ***The Northeast Geographical Landscape***

Geographically, the Northeast region is one of the six geo-political zones in Nigeria. It comprises of six States of Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe. The region is located within the Savanna zone of Nigeria with a large part of its northern section lying within the Sahel region, while the middle and southern parts are within the Sudan and Guinea Savanna regions respectively. Borno and Yobe are classified among the most vulnerable desert prone areas in the region while Bauchi and Gombe also have their fair share, being threatened by desert conditions. With an estimated 21,637 million hectares (216,370 km<sup>2</sup>) land area, the region accounts for 30 per cent of the country's landmass (Akko, 2013). According to the 2006 National Population Census, the region had a total of 18,984,299 population made up of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups. In 2016, the projected population of the region stood at 26,263,869 (based on the data available on the website of the National Bureau of Statistics).

The Northeast region has a long history of environmental crisis induced by natural and human factors as its climate and physical landscape have undergone changes over time. From the early period, the progressive desiccation of the Sahara and drying up of the Lake Chad had influenced the peopling of the region, just as human colonization of space has affected the environment. Mohammed (2017) has shown that human activities contributed to environmental degradation through series of wars of expansion from the fourteenth to the nineteenth centuries and the Borno rulers' application of scorched earth strategy, "in this process all food and tree crops were razed to the ground" which sometimes led to famines. Not only wars "accentuated man's harmful effects on the environment" but also hunting expeditions "undoubtedly affect the animal and bird population" (Mohammed, 2017).

Other environmental issues manifested in trees and crops being destroyed through depredation by birds. Bashir (2014) has observed that the Northeast in the past was one of the well-endowed parts of Nigeria in terms of human and ecological resources, but in recent time the land has become dry and thus its natural resources depleted in the quest for development resulting in the region being gradually pushed onto the fringes of the desert with the attendant consequences of decline in rainfall and periodic occurrence of famines and droughts, soil impoverishment, and sharp decline in the agricultural production (Bashir, 2014). Based on a number of empirical studies, Shehu and Molyneux-Hodgson (2014) have opined that "the region suffers from severe environmental degradation in the form of rapid



desertification, encroaching at a rate of 0.6 kilometre per year; excessive deforestation, estimated at 0.4% reduction per year; severe erosion, seasonal flash floods, garbage accumulation in urban areas and so on". Consequently, the inhabitants of the region became highly vulnerable to the impacts of environmental change in the face of "increasing poverty, population growth and natural resources depletion" which is said to form the basis for the "rise of violent conflicts in various parts of the region" (Shehu and Molyneux-Hodgson, 2014).

### ***Boko Haram Insurgency and the Government Counter-Insurgency Operations***

The BH insurgency which started in 2009 is one of the major security challenges in the Northeast region, fuelled by high element of religious fundamentalism as expressed by the pioneer leader of the movement, Muhammed Yusuf and his successors and followers (Mohammed, *The Message and Methods of Boko Haram*, 2014). The BH started as a crisis but soon transformed into a full-flown terrorist insurgency that has last for nearly 12 years now. Numerous lives had been lost and properties worth billions of Naira destroyed over this period. The insurgency has become a nightmare to three different Nigerian Presidents: Umaru Musa Yar'adua, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari who individually committed so much resource to end it but to no avail. Without delving into the history of the emergence, philosophy, methods and messages of BH, a subject that has been adequately handled by experts (Harnischfeger, 2014; Mohammed, 2014; Mustapha, 2014; Da'wah Coordination Council of Nigeria, 2009), it will not be out of place to give a brief historical account on the Nigerian Government's efforts towards tackling the BH security challenge in the form of counter-insurgency operations over the years.

The insurgency started in 2009 during the Umar Yar'adua administration, and the government violent military crackdown on the BH members and their local collaborators was thought to have ended the problem and the military returned to their barracks. Not long after, the BH members regrouped in villages and forests far away from the capital cities and after a period of recruitment of more members and gathering of resources, including ammunitions, they launched a major offensive against government security forces and killed any person who seem to associate with government. It was during the Goodluck Jonathan administration the insurgency reached a horrendous level, when the insurgents took control of about 27 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Borno, Yobe and Adawama States (Mustapha, 2014). They made Gwoza the headquarters of their imaginary caliphate, having decimated lives, destroyed government buildings, disgraced the Nigerian flag and hoisted their flag with jihadist symbols and imposed their laws on the people in the areas they had occupied.

The failure of the Jonathan administration to effectively deal with the insurgency situation, among others caused him his seat in 2015. The Buhari administration came in with full force. With high level of determination, the military ably reclaimed the LGAs earlier taken by the insurgents and then declared that the backbone of the BH insurgents has been broken and thus "degraded" (Daily Trust, 2015). In 2015, BH pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq

and the Levant (ISIL) and took the name of Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP). In 2016, there was fallout among the group and consequently Abubakar Shekau led a faction at the sometime Abu Musab El-Barnawi and later from 2019 Abu Abdullah El-Barnawi led another faction. Both Shekau and El-Barnawi were killed in 2021 (Omirin, O. and Isamotu, I., 2021). This made some of their followers to come out of the bush and surrender to the Nigerian army. The BH leadership crisis has to a considerable degree slowed down the insurgents' aggression against the Nigerian state and its citizenry.

In the course of engaging the insurgents and their collaborators, the government used kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. The kinetic approach involved "hard-knock" military engagements through Operation Lafiya Dole with the support of the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Region and local vigilante known as Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). The non-kinetic is the "soft-slap" Operation Safe Corridor which provides BH abductees, terrorist suspects and members that have surrendered to be de-radicalized, rehabilitated and reintegrated back to the community after passing through a "safe corridor" programme. Thus, in 2016, the Federal Government, based on the recommendation of the international organizations, commenced the de-radicalization, rehabilitation and reintegration of BH members, fighters, and abductees in the Operation Safe Corridor Camp at Mallam Sidi, Gombe State. Three batches had been successfully hosted and trained at the camp since 2016 when the programme started. The effectiveness or otherwise of this programme on the ex-BH members is outside the scope of this paper. But there were some complaints about the "repentant" BH members going back to the field, taking arms against the state, and coordinating violent attacks on communities and the peoples either on the highways or in the bush (Daily Trust, 2021).

The effort so far made by the Nigerian army in dealing with the insurgents has yielded some positive result as peace is gradually returning to region, but sadly over the years a lot of lives and resources had been wasted, and areas affected by the insurgency have experienced serious destructions. Populous towns had been destroyed and deserted, people displaced and their means of livelihood destroyed or abandoned to waste. This further widened the scope of poverty and hardship among the people in the region, especially in Borno State, most hard hit by the insurgency. According to official account, "the total cost of destruction in the Northeast is about 9 billion naira and Borno took the lion's share of 6 billion naira". It is further reported that "35,000 people" had been killed and "2 million displaced" from Borno alone (Terzungwe, S., 2021).

## *The Issue of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Rebuilding and Resettlement Efforts*

Among the most disturbing aspects of the insurgency is the displacement of thousands of people and their communities in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa States. People had to run for their lives; hence many internally displaced persons (IDPs) sought refuge in different parts of Nigeria and beyond. IDPs' camps mushroomed in many towns and cities, including the Federal Capital Abuja. The state capitals in the Northeast accommodated thousands of displaced persons, with Maiduguri having the highest concentration of displaced persons camps. In the neighbouring countries, Minawao Camp, Mokolo in the far Northern Region of Cameroun; Des es Salam Camp, Baga Sola Western Chad and Diffa Camp in Southeastern Region of Niger hosted Nigerian refugees displaced by the insurgency. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR):

The Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorism has displaced nearly 3.2 million people in the Lake Chad Basin, forcing the region to grapple with a complex humanitarian emergency. Of the 3.2 million people that are displaced, over 2.9 million are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Northeast Nigeria. Out of this number, there are about 778,000 IDPs in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

The situation has exacerbated conflict-induced food insecurity and severe malnutrition in the refugee and IDPs camps. Despite the efforts of governments and humanitarian aid, some 12.5 million people remain in need of assistance in the Lake Chad Basin region, with 5.3 million people remaining food insecure (Daily Trust, 2021).

The socio-economic situation of the people in the region has been very dire, thereby attracting the attention of governments and international organizations. Federal and state governments have been mobilizing the much-needed resources from within and outside Nigeria to restore peace and stability in the region. In the wake of the massive destruction occasioned by the insurgency, the Federal Government established in 2017 the North-East Development Commission (NEDC) saddled with responsibility for mobilizing, coordinating and distributing interventions from governments and development partners in the process of rebuilding devastated parts of the region and resettling displaced persons. This is aimed at bringing succour to their life and creating an enabling environment for meaningful development to take place.

With peace gradually returning to the states most affected particularly Borno, efforts have been made by the governments with the support of the development partners to return displaced persons living in various camps in Nigeria and refugee camps in the neighbouring countries to their ancestral homes in order to start a new life of dignity. This has been made possible through the dynamic leadership of Borno State Governor, Babagana Umara Zulum, who since 2019 had several times visited the neighbouring countries to ensure that displaced persons come back home. Already the government initiated the rebuilding of destroyed communities and resettlement of displaced persons. Houses for government officials and

private individuals, markets, schools, hospitals, road, water and power supply infrastructure had been provided in the communities badly affected by the insurgency and the returnees have started coming back to resettle in their homes they were earlier forced to flee by the insurgents. The Borno State Governor had severally visited different rebuilt and resettled towns on humanitarian mission to support the people with cash and life-supporting items and programmes to improve their conditions. Among the reasons for the governor's humanitarian interventions are stated in few lines below:

The governor's sustained strategy of ensuring food and cash support reaches displaced persons is aimed at denying Boko Haram opportunities to entice affected persons through social and economic incentives which the insurgents had used where their victims were frustrated with lack of livelihood, coupled with losing their homes and loved ones (Daily Trust, 2021).

In the course of humanitarian visits to Marte, Dikwa, Gamborun Ngala, Baga, Banki, Monguno, Kukawa, Bama, Magumeri, Gubio, Damasak, Gwoza, Pulka, Chibok, Konduga, to mention a few, the Borno State Governor had interfaced and supported displaced persons in "government-controlled camps" and returnees generally. Social protection packages, foods, wrappers and cash grants had been given to vulnerable female returnees and soft loans given to small and medium scale traders, while farmers had been given seeds, fertilizers, water pumps, chemicals, among others to commence dry season farming (Daily Trust, 2021). For safety, travellers and returnees had to be escorted by soldiers while several security checkpoints had been mounted on the road. The roads linking the settlements had been constantly patrolled by security forces and local vigilante to ensure safety of life and properties (Daily Trust, 2020).

It is commendable that apart from isolated returns by the victims themselves, the government organized the return of displaced persons from neighbouring countries, who had been repatriated back to Nigeria and given houses and relief package comprising of food and non-food items: mattresses, blankets, and even cash to start a new life (Daily Trust, 2021). Many buildings have been completed and being allocated to returnees, while others are at various stages of completion. Besides houses, healthcare, education and worship centres, security outposts, markets and adjoining farmlands had been provided in the rebuilt settlements for the returnees (Daily Trust, 2021). Not only that the government ensure that displaced persons are resettled, there has been aggressive but pleasing drive to enrol many out-of-school children into school whose curriculum broadly covers western and Islamic education syllabus. It has been reported that "the schools had been reopened and children enrolled. Combined curriculum of Islamic and western education is used for teaching pupils who the government will support to actual their dreams in life" (Daily Trust, 2021). The government has also demonstrated sincere determination to reform the traditional *almajiri* school system as some had been converted into higher Islamic colleges designed to serve as Islamic research centres in addition to teaching and learning. This is to "provide opportunities

for eligible adults with adequate Islamic knowledge to acquire diplomas in western education (Daily Trust, 2021).

### ***Boko Haram Insurgency-Induced Environmental Degradation***

The scale of the insurgency-induced environmental degradation in the Northeast region can only be imagined considering the mass destruction of human and material resources perpetrated by the BH insurgents. It is difficult to assess the level of environmental degradation related to the insurgency in statistical terms as the data on that aspect of the insurgency is scanty if not completely lacking; only oral evidence from participants, observers and victims shades some light on the nature and dimension of the insurgency-induced environmental degradation. The destruction of the environment has been the result of direct and unintended consequences of military measures taken by the key players in the war. Environmental degradation manifested at different levels from the forests to the rural and urban centres and displaced persons camps. For obvious reasons the BH targeted specific facilities and persons just to cause maximum damage. According to Mustapha:

Since 2009 Boko Haram has used targeted assassinations, drive-by shootings, suicide bombings, improved explosive devices (IEDs) and vehicle-borne IEDs to spread death and destruction across northern Nigeria. The targets have been individuals with whom they disagree on their doctrinal or political grounds, schools, churches, mosques belonging to their perceived opponents, the police, the military, traditional authorities, political leaders, symbolic targets like the Police Headquarters in Abuja, and the United Nations (UN) Building in Abuja, bombed in 2011. (Mustapha, 2014).

Markets, motor parks, hospitals, barracks, prisons and banks had also been targeted by the insurgents. Every person familiar with orthodox Islamic teachings, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs abhorred Muslim fighters to destroy certain category of structures and persons even in a war situation. This has been articulated again and again by Muslim leaders following the teachings of the Prophet. Caliph Abu Bakr is reported to have directed Yazid bin Abi-Sufyan, the leader of the Muslim army on expedition to Byzantium in Syria that: "Do not cut fruit bearing trees nor injure palm tree or burn them with fire. Do not kill children, women and old people neither harm a priest, nor desecrate buildings. Never butcher a goat or camel except for you to feed on" (Al-Suhaimi, 2015). This golden rule is binding on all right-thinking Muslims during war and peace. In brazen violations of Islamic teachings and values, the BH insurgents attacked all kinds of persons and destroyed structures and everything on sight in order to achieve maximum damage.

Being ruthless and destructive, BH attacks had been characterized by arson, wholesome sacking of towns and villages, torching of public buildings and private companies' facilities, slaughtering and beheading of their victims in the most gruesome way (Mustapha, 2014). The insurgents had also been found wanting for blowing off electric towers and putting affected communities in difficult situation of being cut off from having power supply and thus living in



total darkness for several months (Daily Trust, 2021). Dori (2021) has succinctly captured difficulty faced by the people of particularly Maiduguri, Borno State Capital when he said: Maiduguri had been without electricity for several months when the insurgents deliberately incapacitated the transmission line from Damaturu. The Transmission Company of Nigeria (TCN) made efforts to repair and restore electricity to the city but the terrorists that destroyed the transmission lines gloated that Maiduguri would never see electricity again (Dori, 2021). In December 2021, however, power was restored in Maiduguri after several months of living without electricity supply (Dori, 2021). Telecommunications installations had also been blown off as “the insurgents cut off two major communication networks in the area, belonging to Airtel and MTN”, thereby making the people suffer resulting from lack of mobile network coverage (Daily Trust, 2021).

In their violent attacks of communities, the BH insurgents used IEDs, suicide bombers, or physically attack in broad day time or at night. The report of their recent attack on Maiduguri captures the devastating environmental effects of their insurrections on communities as narrated by an eyewitness of the sad event. They used trunk-mounted guns and motorbikes from outskirts of Maiduguri and fired several rockets into the city which not only damaged properties but also killed and wounded many residents of Maiduguri. Part of the eyewitness account reads:

The exploded shells also released smoke and power that caused itchy eyes and skins, it also caused swellings and rashes on the skin of some children who also needed medical attention... Pieces of the metal that injured the children after the weapon had exploded were actually poisonous (Daily Trust, 2021).

In communities they occupied through the use of instrument of violence, they either set on fire educational, health, institutional and residential facilities or destroyed/vandalized bridges and other valuable infrastructure. They left most of the communities taken in ruins. The bodies of those people they killed mostly in a horrific way were either buried in an undignified manner, or dumped in rivers, streams and wells or left in open space to decompose, thereby causing environmental pollution. Those that escape being killed ended up in the displaced persons' camps. The environmental conditions in most if not all the camps are unattractive if not appalling. Among the reports carried on print media the one by the Aljazeera is quite vivid in terms of proper coverage of the pitiable lifestyle of the displaced persons, mostly women and children in IDPs' camps in the Northeast region. The degrading living conditions in the camps as narrated by interviewed victims and the reporter's on the spot assessment of the situation is paraphrased below:

In the flat, colourless landscape of the displacement camp – the miles of sand interrupted only by rows of identical tarpaulin tents and huts – a common arrangement in camps across North-East, Nigeria, where women and children make up 80 per cent of the population. During the course of the decade-long armed conflict between armed groups and Nigeria's military, nearly two million people have been forced from their homes.

In Dalori camp in Maiduguri, beyond sandy alleyways and rows of identical makeshift structures are hey fences, children playing with empty cans and plastic bottles ... The scenery is dominated by subdued lives.... To survive, women mostly depend on meagre earnings from daily labour, and on humanitarian aid... because this is not enough, every single day one goes to the bush to collect and sell firewood. It is a hard labour and it can be dangerous, but they still go... in order to get money and buy the necessities of life.

In Bakassi and other camps in Maiduguri, sunlight pierces through the holes in the tarpaulin ceiling above their heads, and women sit barefoot on the plastic mat,... during the Harmattan season, clouds of white dust hover above the scorched, naked earth.

With her voice barely audible, one of the displaced women (Aishatu) whose husband was killed by the insurgents, recounts how she then fled the village on foot with her children, running past dead bodies decomposing by side of the road, and the explosions. There are long silences between her words as she recalls the horrors of the journey (Daily Trust, 2021).

The above Aljazeera report highlights the displaced persons' experience and lifestyle in Maiduguri camps. The situation may even be worst in camps outside Maiduguri considering that those in Maiduguri had been closely monitored as so much resource had been committed by the government and NGOs to improve the life of the displaced persons in the "government-controlled camps". Apart from those housed in the Maiduguri camps run by the government, many displaced persons had been accommodated in uncompleted and abandoned buildings or makeshift shelters elsewhere. The resilience of the displaced persons in the camps is amazing, but the social and environmental abuses have been widespread. The problems of anti-social behaviour, sexual exploitation, and sharp practices have been reported among the displaced persons in camps (Daily Trust, 2021). Lack of observance of safety measures and negligence in camps sometimes led to fire outbreak with high cost on human life and properties (Daily Trust, 2021). Unhygienic practices, open defecation and littering of the environment have featured in many camps, thereby posing a challenge for urban sanitation and waste management (Ukomadu, et al., 2019).

Even with humanitarian interventions, lack of good jobs and poor living conditions caused great frustration, psychological nightmares and insurgency related traumatic mental health problems (Asaju, 2021). Thus, in and outside the camps there had been ever growing interest to find something to do for a living. Many wanted to return to their ancestral homes because, as one of the displaced persons pointed out "our living condition as displaced people is pitiable even though we get humanitarian support" (Daily Trust, 2021). Many IDPs in the camps and even those returnees with not enough resources engaged in works that require little or no skill or capital to do. Selling firewood/charcoal being among the small-scale businesses done by the IDPs. The felling of trees for fuel wood and charcoal has serious environmental consequences but who cares since one is struggling to survive (Daily Trust, 2021). The collection of firewood and the making of charcoal for cooking by households and selling to others had been a common money-fetching business for many of the displaced persons in

camps and returnees in resettled communities (Daily Trust, 2020). There are report and photos of women cooking with firewood at the IDPs' camps (Daily Trust, 2021). In the face of continuous desert encroachment, more and more trees needs to be planted than felling the existing ones at a great ecological cost. Other menial jobs done by the displaced persons include manicure, cap making, tailoring, embroidery, carpentry, masonry and painting, riding motorcycle or tricycle among others to sustain their life.

The insurgency-induced environmental degradation is not only visible in the urban centres but also in the rural areas and forests of the region. Having been flushed out of the major towns and cities, the BH fighters took refuge in rural areas and forests particularly in Sambisa. It has been observed that "For a decade now, Borno's Sambisa Forest has been the redoubt for Boko Haram because of its dense, mined and booby-trapped forest, which is nearly impregnable to ground forces" (Jega, 2020). The BH operated from Sambisa and hilly areas of Gwoza and Mandara from where they launched offensive attacks on government forces and several communities (Mustapha, 2014). The military encounter in the theatre of war, especially the forests being the hideout of the insurgents has had a negative effect on the environment. In the Nigerian army's unshaken zeal to eliminate the insurgents, they had taken the fight to them deep in the forests. The insurgents dug ditches and planted landmines. Through the use of IEDs and landmines the insurgents had killed, maimed and fatally wounded several soldiers, local vigilantes and other unsuspecting civilian farmers and herders doing something in the bush. A number of times, moving vehicles and people trekking or using beasts of burden stumbled on landmines which exploded to cause maximum assault and damage. Several incidences of landmine attacks have been reported in the region (Daily Trust, 2021).

In addition to the destruction of lives and properties, the explosion of massive bombs, IEDs and landmines also caused incalculable damage on the flora and fauna species in the region. The military activities endangered wildlife as some had been killed, their habitats destroyed. As the vegetation cover is denuded through the war situation, very useful fruit-bearing trees, medicinal and value-adding plants had been indiscriminately destroyed, thereby affecting the ecosystem in an adverse way. Land degradation has been a major issue here. The insurgency has a deleterious impact on the environment considering that not only the natural vegetation is destroyed, the aesthetic landscape is being tempered with, grazing areas and farmlands are also adversely affected. From the bush, the insurgents periodically visited farming communities to attack, obtain food items and, or destroy their farm produce out of sheer cruelty. Since the insurgents were dislodged and chased out of Maiduguri in 2015 and other towns in the ensuing flush out follow-ups, "they faded into the anonymity of the countryside. They then regrouped and returned to take vengeance and stock up on foods and women, whenever it pleased them". Dori (2021) went further to say that:

Many at times it would seem like a return of peace. The village would be prepared for the return of the displaced persons. As soon as the displaced persons returned and settled



with all fanfare, the insurgents would return to inflict more mayhem. Resources and efforts spent, hopes dashed (Dori, 2021).

The insurgents' destruction of farmlands and farm produce of communities within their range is another disturbing environmental issue associated with the insurgency. After so much labour and deployment of scarce resources in agricultural production, the insurgents visited the farms at the brink of harvest and destroyed everything and snuffed the hopes of the local farmers, thereby posing serious challenge of food insecurity and environmental ruination in the region.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the devastating impact of the BH insurgency on different aspects of the environment in the Northeast region of Nigeria. It has been pointed out that the region has a long history of environmental crisis, but the insurgency accelerated the process of environmental degradation as manifested in the military activities which led to displacement of thousands of people and destruction of hundreds of settlements, the torching of private properties and public infrastructure, particularly schools, given the BH ideological opposition to western education, and the modern state policies and programmes. The losses suffered in terms of human and material resources in the course of the insurgency are great and the environment had been degraded beyond repair. Besides the farmlands and grazing areas, the flora and fauna resources destroyed, the problem of the displaced persons in and outside the camps come with high environmental cost. With no or paltry resources at their disposal and in their quest to earn a living through personal struggle, many displaced persons felled down trees get to firewood and/or made charcoal for sell and domestic use. The lifestyle of those in displaced persons' camps had been characterized by environmental mess as they live in relatively crowded shelters with little or no running water and good healthcare service. Lack of proper sanitation and observing personal hygiene are also among the issues of health and environmental concerns in the areas.

It is pleasing, as Dori (2021) has narrated, that:

The Boko Haram terrorists have largely been degraded and in the last many weeks, droves of them have given themselves up to our troops. Many towns and villages that had been no-go areas are now safe for their citizens to return. This was a big relief for Maiduguri as IDP camps are now closing up and their occupants are being directed back to their towns. (Dori, 2021).

The cut-throat rivalry between the BH factions and the killing of their two infamous leaders (Shekau and Al-Barnawi) in 2021 had seriously weakened the BH terrorists' capacity. However, some members of the groups have continued to attack rural communities and abduct persons; ambush security personnel and private individuals on highways and in the bush, using both military confrontation and hit and run tactics. The BH members' continuous terrorist's

insurrections in the region and beyond is still a source of concern. The government policy of de-radicalization and rehabilitation of BH members that surrendered is a good initiative, but concern has been raised about the reintegration of the ex-BH members back to the communities they earlier terrorized and killed their residents. Community leaders, civil society groups and security experts have complained that some of the “repentant” BH members might be tempted to provide intelligence report to their friends hiding in the bush or even go back to the bush themselves and continue to attack communities, civilians and security personnel in the region. The government should be careful how it goes about reintegrating the de-radicalized, rehabilitated and repentant BH members. On the whole, “security experts had called for a sustained offensive towards decimating [the group] to have a lasting peace after twelve years of uncertainty and carnage” (Daily Trust, 2021).

### **Conflict of Interest**

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### **Notes on Informants**

*My informants include men working for NGOs (USAID, Red Cross, and other groups) involved in humanitarian activities in the Northeast region; displaced persons and victims of the insurgency; and people having something to do with de-radicalization and rehabilitation of repentant BH members in the Operation Safe Corridor Camp at Mallam Sidi, Gombe State.*

*I am indebted to my informants but those in uniforms do not want their names mentioned here for security reasons. The following are civilian informants working for NGOs: Ishiaku Ibrahim Babayo (USAID); Muhammed Bello (Red Cross); Usman Isa Gwoza, Isa Haruna and Mal. Ado Abubakar (the Mahadi Foundation); Aliyu Rabi’u (Community and Youth Development); Murtala Siraj (Gombe State University Muslim Ummah); Mal. Auwal Ibrahim, Mal. Usman Ibrahim, Malama Kaltum Sadiq (displaced persons and victims of the insurgency); and Sati K. Sheik (a PhD student working on the Operation Safe Corridor Camp, Mallam Sidi, Kwami Local Government Area of Gombe State).*

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# The Role of Religious Leaders in Fostering Inter-Faith Dialogue Amid Boko Haram Insurgency in Kano, Northern Nigeria

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## Abstract:

This paper examines the role of religious leaders in forging interfaith dialogue in Kano. It argues that religious leaders have been framed for mobilizing and instigating their followers for collective violence in response to other faiths in Kano over the years. However, the eruption of the Boko Haram onslaughts on Christians in the Northeast region and planned attacks on Christians in Kano created space for local religious leaders to mobilize their followers to forge inter-faith dialogue aimed at de-escalation of insurgency's extremist ideology. The consensual efforts of inter-religious leaders culminated in the formation of the Kano Covenant in 2012. The peace pact cemented the fissures between the two faiths and entrenched the novel harmonious relationship beyond faith in the social, political and economic spheres. The paper explores the pedigree and credentials of the religious leaders, their motivations and convictions for fostering the interfaith dialogue. The pact transformed religious extremism into peacebuilding unprecedented in Kano's history. The paper adopts the ethnographic method of data collection through the distribution of semi-structured interviews to religious leaders and adherents. Focus group discussions and oral interviews were held with community and opinion leaders and stakeholders. Others include close reading of secondary works including media reports.

## Keywords:

Boko Haram, interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, Muslims, Christians.

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## Introduction

A combination of religion, ethnicity, political, and economic crises are identified as the drivers of violent conflicts in Nigeria. However, religion is unarguably considered a major cause of violent conflicts in the country. Nigeria is divided into two major religious groups, the predominantly Muslim north and Christian south. Relations between the faiths have over the years have oscillated between peace and violent conflicts that had led to many deaths and wanton destruction of property. Available data estimated that 13, 000 people have lost their lives in violent conflicts in Nigeria (United States Institute of Peace, 2011, 38-39) Religion has played an ambivalent role as one of the major causes of violent conflicts, and also a veritable resource for peacebuilding particularly in conflict-prone areas in Northern Nigeria and elsewhere. This ambivalent role of religion as captured by Appleby (2000) has produced mixed feelings about the role of religious leaders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in many countries (Ehrhardt (2016) in his seminal work narrates the *Janus* voice of the religious leaders in mobilizing their followers for both harmonious relations and instigating violent conflicts in two riotous cities of Jos and Kano (Ehrhardt, 2016). To this end, this paper presents a novel, ground-breaking intervention of Muslim-Christian religious leaders in coming together irrespective of their difference to mobilize their adherents to sign and establish the Kano Covenant interfaith dialogue in the mix of insurgency in Kano and the Northeast region of Nigeria.

Before the Boko Haram insurgency, Kano has been known as a site of ethnic and religious conflicts from 1953 to the post-presidential election violence in 2011. The outbreak of the Boko Haram insurgency in 2009 in Maiduguri in the Northeast region and its spread to Kano in the Northwest region in 2012 led to the loss of many lives and wanton destruction of property. It was in the wake of the Boko Haram siege on Kano on January 20, 2012, and afterwards that the Muslim and Christian leaders came together to form the inter-faith dialogue tagged the "Kano Covenant" for the promotion of inter-faith cooperation, peaceful co-existence and harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kano. It was meant to enable Muslims and Christians to have a formidable platform to dislodge Boko Haram in Kano.

Historically, relations between Muslims and Christians in Kano since the colonial period have oscillated between conflicts and peace. Kano's reputation as a hotbed of ethno-religious conflicts over the past six decades is well known and documented in the works of Albert Olawale (1993 & 1999), John Paden (1973), Eghosa Osaghae and Rotimi Suberu (2005), Haruna Wakili (2005 & 2011) and (Ahmed Bako, 1990) among others. The extant literature that dwells on violent conflicts and conflict resolutions in Kano and other parts of Northern Nigeria include the works of David Ehrhardt (2007) work which gives primacy to the concerted roles of informal authorities comprising the traditional rulers, religious authorities, ethnic and community leaders in conflict resolution in Kano.



Shedrack Gaya Best and Carole Rakodi's (2011) work examines the protracted inter-religious conflicts and their aftermaths in Kano and Jos and maintains that cycles of conflicts in Kano were ethno-religious, while the incessant conflicts in Jos were caused by the quest for the control of Jos-North Local Government Area, competition between Muslims and Christians, and the host/settler issues. Thaddeus Umaru (2013) in his study of incessant interreligious conflicts in northern Nigeria contends that neither religion nor politics are comprehensive enough to foster inter-faith dialogue. He advocates the adoption of multi-faceted approaches involving theology for the sustenance of inter-religious dialogue and peacebuilding in Northern Nigeria. Apart from David Ehrhardt's work, no comprehensive study of the responses of religious leaders to the violent conflict in Kano has been done. Religious leaders of both faiths have been perceived as sponsors, mobilizers or instigators of violent conflicts in Kano and other cities in Northern Nigeria. Imam Muhammad Ashafa's (1999) work is a narrative of how two religious leaders, Pastor James Wuye and Imam Ashafa, suffered losses in the religious conflicts in Kaduna in the 1990s. It discusses how Imam Ashafa lost family members and a mentor, while Pastor James Wuye lost his right hand and some of his friends and followers. The work also looks at the processes of their transformation, leading them to renounce violence and become enamoured with reconciliation and the subsequent establishment of interfaith dialogue in Kaduna. It looks at how the two hitherto religious enemies began to work to advocate for peace between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna and other parts of Northern Nigeria through the establishment of the Interfaith Mediation Centre, which both of them jointly administered. In his work, Ignatius Kaigama (2012) narrates how religious leaders and the government's interventions led to the restoration of peace and peacebuilding after a decade of ethno-religious conflicts in Jos, Plateau State. It explores how his collaboration with Alhaji Abdullahi Haruna Wase, the Emir of Wase, and the Plateau State chairman of Jamaatu, Nasril Islam, led to the establishment of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Plateau State (Kaigama, 2012).

The extant literature has dwelled on the permanence and intractability of violent conflicts in Kano and other parts of Northern Nigeria; however, this paper draws our attention to the roles of local religious leaders in peacebuilding that contribute to inter-faith cooperation, peaceful co-existence, and security in Kano. This paper is predicated on the need to investigate this paradigm shift like the relationship between the two faiths which is markedly different from the earlier inter-faith peace pacts in Kano and other conflict areas such as Kaduna and Jos in Northern and North-central Nigeria respectively. Against this backdrop, this paper examines how the Muslim and Christian religious leaders have responded to the Boko Haram attacks and instigations to cause an inter-religious crisis in Kano. The overarching argument of this paper is that, although religious leaders have been framed for mobilizing and instigating their followers for collective violence in response to other faiths in Kano over the years (Ehrhardt, 2016). It is the view of this sweeping generalization of the casting of religious leaders as instigators of violent conflicts in Kano that this paper seeks to establish the fact that they have been agents and/or promoters of inter-religious co-existence, harmonious relations and peacebuilding particularly in the wake of insurgents' bloody campaigns in the city and the

Northeast region. It is based on this postulation that this paper examines the role of religious leaders in forging interfaith dialogue in Kano from the perspective of mutual collaboration between the religious leaders in the de-escalation of Boko Haram extremist ideology, contracting a new form of inter-religious co-operation between Muslims and Christians in Kano.

The Boko Haram onslaughts on Christians in Maiduguri in Borno State where insurgents originated and later spread to other parts of the Northeast and Northwest regions led to the death of many people and the burning down of churches and mosques. The spectre of Boko Haram's further attacks on Christians caused fear and trepidation among the Christian community which engendered mutual suspicion, distrust and polarized Kano residents along ethno-religious lines. The tense security situation caused the mass exodus of some panic-stricken migrant Christians from Kano to their home states in the North-central and Southern Nigeria which had grave implications for inter-faith relations in Kano. It was in the wake of this scenario that local Muslim and Christian religious leaders met and mobilized their followers to forge inter-faith dialogue. The consensual efforts of the religious leaders culminated in the formation of the Kano Covenant interfaith dialogue on January 15, 2012, aimed at forming a united body to confront Boko Haram's violence and extremist ideology.

In an attempt to build peace and ensure harmonious inter-religious relations, Kano Muslims under the aegis of Concerned Citizens of Kano State led by Engineer Bashir Ishaq Bashir signed the Kano Covenant pact with the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN), Kano State chapter led by its president, Bishop Ransom Bello (Kano Covenant, 2012, 1). The Muslim group used the peace pact to empathize with the Christians and reassure them of their safety and protection in the face of palpable fear caused by the Boko Haram attacks. The Kano Covenant helped in countering Boko Haram's extremist threats to Christians by appealing to Christians not to harbour deep grievances against Muslims in Kano.

### **Methodology**

This research relied mainly on primary sources derived from oral information, focus group discussion, and ethnography. The research employs ethnography in its data collection in which semi-structured questions were administered to one hundred and twenty informants in three local government areas of Gwale, Fagge and Kano Municipal in Kano metropolis. In-depth oral interviews were held with the key religious leaders and co-founders of the Kano Covenant, Engineer Bashir Ishaq Bashir and Bishop Ransom Bello and selected adherents. Informal discussions were held with selected opinion leaders, community leaders and ordinary people who are knowledgeable on the nature of inter-religious relations in Kano and the formation of the Kano Covenant. This is to provide reliable and valid information on the subject matter. Primary sources constitute a vital source of data collection because of the paucity of written works on the Kano Covenant. Secondary sources comprised articles in academic journals, chapters in collected volumes, dissertations, theses and media reports. The varied sources



scrutinized to obtain metropolitan voices that narrate the new phenomenon of Kano Covenant inter-religious dialogue that is yet to receive academic investigation and documentation. This research is a modest attempt to present new refreshing voices and perspectives of the local people on the novel inter-religious co-operation and harmonious relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kano. The fieldwork spanned a period of three months from August to October 2017.

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This paper employs conflict transformation theory developed by John Lederach as its theoretical framework in analyzing the inter-religious peacebuilding amidst insurgency in Kano. According to Lederach, Conflict transformation “seeks to create a framework to transform the content, context and the structure of...relationship” (Mutillah, 2016, 135). Conflict transformation is concerned with the deeper matters of building peace and changing the relationships which brought about the violence in the first place. It connotes “fixing the problems, which threaten the core interest of the parties; changing the strategic thinking; and changing the opportunity structure and the ways of interaction” (Lederach, 1997 and 2003). It implies a deep transformation in the institutions and discourses that produced violence, as well as in the conflict parties themselves and their relationships (Albert, 2007, 14).

Lederach adopted an integrative, comprehensive method of conflict transformation and sees leadership as a pyramid with three levels comprising top-level, middle-level and grassroots-level (Miall et al., 1999, 29 as cited in Akaji, 2011, 45). The apex of the pyramid comprises top-level leadership which represents the fewest people who are very visible and influential in society. They are usually the highest representative leaders of the government and opposition movements in conflicts. They may include military, political and religious leaders who are the main voices for their constituencies in both conflict generation and resolution. In peacebuilding, these persons focus on high-level negotiations and at times singlehandedly serve as mediators. They are experts in procuring cease-fires and providing an immediate remedy for conflict situations. The middle level represents the Middle-Range leadership of the society with more people than the top level, but certainly, less than there are at the base of the pyramid. They usually include highly respected individuals such as educationists, religious leaders, and people of prestige in society. They are generally connected to both the top and the grassroots levels. In peacebuilding, they are involved in problem-solving, peace commissions and training in conflict resolution (Albert, 1993, 42).

The base of the pyramid encompasses the largest number of people from the grassroots of the population. The leaders here include people involved in local communities on face-to-face and day-to-day levels. Each of these three levels of actors is expected to be concerned with peacebuilding functions at its level and across the levels from the top to the bottom. However, Lederach emphasizes the unique significance of mid-level leadership which integrates both the top and grassroots levels of leadership in peacebuilding. The fact that the mid-level leaders

have links to parties across the conflict, they are said to have the greatest potential for taking immediate actions and serving in long-term transformation programmes. Religious leaders belong to this category. (Ehrhardt, 5) Lederach's conflict transformation theory aligns with the thrust of this paper, and therefore, is best suited for our understanding of the role of both Muslim and Christian leaders in forging the Kano Covenant pact in the wake of insurgency in Kano.

### *Interfaith Dialogue in Kaduna and Jos in Northern Nigeria*

The aim of interfaith mediation, dialogue, and cooperation according to (Omotosho, 2013) is to "create harmony (not unity) among religious and spiritual communities, with the goal of creating a more just, peaceful and sustainable world". The focus of most of the interfaith bodies in Nigeria is on how to facilitate understanding and maintain peaceful co-existence among the adherents of the various faiths in the country (Isola, 2014)

Relations between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria have been conflictual and turbulent, but there have been some elements of interreligious dialogue, cooperation, and mutual understanding between the two faiths. The history of the formation of interfaith dialogue by civil non-state actors (Bah, 2013, 313–36) and state authorities began in the 1990s when the Nigerian government took some measures to manage both intra- and interreligious conflicts (Iweze, 2021, 39). These measures included the promotion of interfaith cooperation and dialogue through the establishment of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) in September 1999 by Christian and Muslim leaders aimed at dialogue to understand the true teachings of Christianity and Islam; create a permanent and sustainable channel of communication and interaction, thereby promoting dialogue between Christians and Muslims; provide a forum for cooperation between Muslims and Christians and to address issues of conflict violence; and serve as a platform to express cordial relationships among various religious groups and the government (Constitution of the Nigeria Interreligious Council 2001, quoted in Umaru 2013, 396). NIREC serves as a strong advocate for dialogue and peacebuilding, and it promotes regular interfaith and inter-communal meetings. It also collaborates with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and *Jamalat-ul-Nasril* Islam to check recurring ethno-religious conflicts. It collaborates with government and security agencies to intervene in crises to restore peace and order in conflict areas in northern Nigeria (Umaru, 2003, 396).

Another non-state institution is the Interfaith Mediation Centre (IMC) in Kaduna, established by Pastor James Wuye and Imam Muhammad Ashafa in 1995. The IMC aims to "create a peaceful society in Nigeria and beyond through non-violence and strategic engagement" (IMC Pamphlet). The two religious leaders had instigated, mobilized, and executed interreligious conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Kaduna and Jos in the 1990s. However, the centre is aimed to promote interfaith dialogue, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence between the two faiths (Iweze, 2021, 39-40). The establishment of the



organization was inspired by their losses. Imam Muhammed Ashafa, a Muslim cleric lost members of his family, while Pastor James Wuye lost his right arm during the religious conflict in Kaduna State in 1995.

Bishop Ignatius Kaigama the Archbishop of Jos had been involved in inter-religious peacebuilding, especially after the outbreak of inter-ethnic conflicts in the area since the 2000s. He engaged religious, traditional leaders, politicians and other stakeholders in peacebuilding in Plateau State (Kaigama, 2012, 172-173). He was a former chairman of the Plateau State Christian Association of Nigeria and co-chairman of Plateau State Inter-Religious Council. Drawing from his experiences in forging the interfaith dialogue in the aftermath of the crises in Plateau State, Bishop Ignatius Kaigama succinctly notes that:

This form of dialogue demands an attitude of honesty, mutual respect, esteem and acceptance. It requires prudence, forgiveness, truthfulness, meekness, openness on the part of those involved. (Kaigama, 2012, 126).

Alhaji Haruna Abdullahi, the Emir of Wase was the chairman of Jama`tu Nasril Islam, the mainstream Muslim organization in Plateau and also the Vice-President in Nigeria. The Emir of Wase being the Chairman of Jamaatu Nasril Islam (JNI) in Plateau shared common values of peace, reconciliation and harmonious co-existence. Alhaji Dr Haruna Abdullahi had worked together in the task of fostering peace among people of diverse identities and religions in conflict areas of Northern Nigeria. He partnered with Archbishop Kaigama in the search for sustainable peace between Muslims and Christians in the state, especially in the aftermath of the Yelwa conflicts in 2004. Both religious leaders had collaborated in several peace initiatives and programmes using the media-television and radio to preach peace to their adherents and wider audience. They exchanged visits and were often seen together preaching at mosques and churches because of their closeness and bonds of friendship; they were referred to as brothers or twins. In recognition of their unalloyed commitment to peacebuilding in the state, the Plateau State Government appointed both religious leaders as co-chairmen of the Plateau State Inter-Religious Council for Peace and Harmony (Kaigama, 2012, 174). Despite their efforts in peacebuilding, some of their adherents who believed in perpetual enmity and inter-religious conflicts between the two faiths were sceptical about their propagation of the message of peace. Kaigama captured the scepticism of followers of both religious divides this way:

...some of my priests thought I was wasting my time, energy and resources by working with a Muslim. The Emir too was doubted and suspected by his Muslim brothers as a sell-out (Kaigama, 2012, 136).

The obstacles and seeming reservations of some of their followers did not deter the two religious leaders from forging ahead in ensuring peaceful co-existence among the faith communities in Jos and other conflict areas in Plateau State.

## *The Formation of the Kano Covenant Interfaith Dialogue Amid Boko Haram Insurgency*

The earlier interfaith dialogue initiatives in Kano began in 1996 when the Catholic Diocese of Kano established a Centre for Comparative Religions, later renamed Centre for Religious Coexistence in 2004. It was aimed at fostering better understanding through Christian-Muslim dialogue. Between 1996 and 1997, the centre held many seminars, workshops and conferences. It achieved little and its operation was short-lived. It was marred by misunderstanding and mistrusts between some fanatical Christians and Muslims which almost resulted in violent riots and later became moribund (McGarvey, 2009, 258). From then on, inter-religious relations between Christians and Muslims were not cordial but oscillated intermittently between peace and conflicts before the insurgents' siege on Kano in 2012.

The processes that led to the formation of the Kano Covenant began in 2011 when Boko Haram attacked Borno, Yobe, Bauchi and other states in the Northeast region. The extension of insurgents' attacks in Kano on January 20, 2012, left over 250 people dead and wanton properties destroyed. The sect's leader, Abubakar Shekau gave Christians a three-day ultimatum from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> January 2012 to leave Northern Nigeria. The expiration of the deadline on January 6, 2012, was followed by waves of attacks on Christians in Borno, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Bauchi and Niger States. Boko Haram's coordinated attacks were specifically targeted at Nigeria's ethno-religious fault-lines in a bid to destabilize the country. The insurgents' spate of attacks on churches and businesses of Christians in Kano and other parts of Northern Nigeria, it seems, suggests "a strategy of provocation" through which the sect seeks to "spark a large-scale inter-faith conflict that will destabilize the country" (Center for Justice and Peacebuilding Eastern Mennonite University, 2012, 16)

This period of heightened threats in Kano also coincided with the ultimatum given to Christians by the Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau to leave Northern Nigeria. The bombing of churches and killing of Christians by the sect was its push to Islamize the country and this generated strong condemnation from both Christians and Muslims. Christians perceived the insurgents' attacks as a Muslim jihad against the non-Muslims. The threats, hate speeches and pronouncements instilled fear and made panic-stricken Christians flee Kano en masse to their home states in Southern and North-central Nigeria. The situation in Kano was too serious for both the Federal and Kano State authorities to handle. The state government was helpless given the Boko Haram's claims that it attacked Kano because the state government reneged to pay "the money for (the) peace deal" it had with the state authorities.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Boko Haram claimed that the major reason it attacked Kano was that some of its members were detained in prison in Kano, in addition to the Kano State government under Musa Rabiu Kwakwanso's refusal to pay the money for the peace deal it signed with Malam Ibrahim Shekerau's administration.



Whether Boko Haram's claim is true or not, the fact remains that Kano State did not refute and/or deny or affirm the claim.

The immediate impulse for the formation of the Kano Covenant arose when text messages sent by persons suspected to be members of Boko Haram insurgents circulated in Kano and subsequently went viral on Facebook and other social media outlets threatening Christians in Kano to leave Kano because of the imminent "*jihad*", that is, holy war (Kano Covenant, 2012, 1). Faced with threats of attacks and religious extremism, the forging of interfaith dialogue by the Muslim and Christians religious leaders became imperative. In a swift response to the Boko Haram imminent attacks on Christians in Kano, the Muslim group under the auspices of the Concerned Citizens of Kano motivated by the spirit of proactive solidarity, empathized with the minority Christians in Kano and felt that they should be protected from insurgents' attacks.

The Kano Covenant was formed on January 15, 2012, between the Muslim group under the auspices of Concerned Citizens of Kano, (CCK) led by Engineer Bashir Ishaq Bashir and Bishop Ransom Bello, the president of the Kano branch of the Christian Association of Nigeria, (CAN) aimed at promoting inter-faith co-operation, mutual tolerance, understanding and harmonious relations. The two religious leaders jointly issued a press statement when they declared:

In the last several months, the peace and tranquillity of Kano State has under severe strain occasioned by the threat as well as the actual eruption and escalation of ethnic and religious tension and violence in parts of Nigeria, especially in the Northeast. Some of this violence has been claimed by fringe groups that masquerade as defenders or promoters of religion to terrorize and harm innocent Nigerians, Muslims and Christians alike (Kano Covenant, 2012, 1).

The two religious groups exchanged solidarity visits by visiting some churches and providing security to the congregation during Sunday service in the neighbourhoods of Sabon-Gari and No-Man's Land where churches are located in Kano. Similarly, Christians reciprocated the visits by providing security to Muslims at the mosques during Friday prayers. The demonstration of solidarity by both faiths tended to strengthen the resolve of the religious leaders and followers in de-escalating extremism in Kano. The Muslim group used the interfaith pact to assure Christians of their security as well as stem the tide of their mass exodus from Kano to their home states. The Muslim group perceived Boko Haram terrorism as a desecration of Islam and formally declared their rejection of Boko Haram's ideology and violent mode of operation. The two religious leaders' primary aim was to secure Kano from Boko Haram attacks and prevent the Muslim adherents from embracing the Boko Haram's radical and extremist ideology. Five days after the signing and formation of the Kano Covenant pact, Boko Haram struck on Kano in highly coordinated attacks targeting eight security formations and paramilitary institutions on January 20, 2012, leading to the death of over 250 people, most of them wounded and property destroyed. Although the Boko Haram incessant violent campaigns in Kano from 2012 onward disrupted the activities of the religious leaders



for some time as the two religious leaders and the top members came under constant threats of being killed by Boko Haram sect members but failed to upset the nascent and fragile inter-faith dialogue.



*Muslim-Christian Religious Leaders and their adherents after Signing the Kano Covenant (Source: Picture obtained from Bashir Ishaq, 28 October 2017).*

### ***Pedigree and Credentials of the Two Religious Leaders***

The pedigree of co-founders of the Kano Covenant was significant in the forging of the interfaith peace pact. Bashir Ishaq, the initiator and co-founder of the Kano Covenant was born to a Kano Shari'a Court judge, Justice Ishaq Bashir. He received both Islamic and western types of education. He studied Engineering at Kaduna Polytechnic and a Post-graduate study in the United Kingdom. He also studied Comparative Religion which imbued him with a vast knowledge of the Quran, Bible and the Jewish Torah (Bashir Interviewed, 2017). His education, exposure and cosmopolitanism shaped his liberal religious convictions. Despite being a scion of a Sharia judge, his extensive networks of friends, business partners, neighbours of different ethnic and religious backgrounds and well-established social networks clearly define his worldview which is an uncommon trait in the predominantly Muslim North to initiate and pursue inter-religious cooperation and peacebuilding during the insurgency in a city that has over the years experienced waves of ethno-religious violence.

Bashir Ishaq Bashir had a great collaborator and partner in Bishop Ransom Bello, the General Overseer of Calvary Life Assembly in Kano. He is the current President of the Christian



Association of Nigeria, (CAN) Kano branch and a co-founder of the Kano Covenant. Bishop (Dr.) Born into a royal family in Ondo State, Ransom Bello attended the Ansar-u-Deen College, Isolo-Lagos and studied Accounting at the University of Lagos. He also holds a Bachelor degree in Biblical Studies and Master and Doctorate degrees in Theology from Slidell Baptist Seminary, Louisiana in the United States of America. He is one of the revered bishops in the Pentecostal denomination whose humility, simplicity and unassuming personality have endeared him to many people of various ethnic and religious divides. He was formerly the National Vice President of Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN), overseeing the Pentecostal churches in the North-west region of Nigeria. Bishop Bello has occupied many leadership positions with several international Christian organizations, among them were the International Communion of Charismatic Churches, International Ministerial Council of Great Britain and United Council of Christian churches. He shared common values of peace and reconciliation and harmonious co-existence of Muslims and Christians (Bello Interviewed: 2017). He has been a strong advocate of peace and inter-religious cooperation in Kano and Northern Nigeria for several years.

It should be noted that the religious leaders share the same uncommon traits of religious liberalism, forthrightness and accommodating and sterling credentials that made the peace pact possible. The display of honesty, forthrightness, non-partisanship and unalloyed commitment to the peacebuilding project by the religious leaders were veritable traits that made the peace pact to work. The pedigrees of the religious leaders align with Lederach's Middle-range leadership model that comprises highly respected individuals including religious leaders who are interestingly related with prominent individuals in the society and grassroots made up of ordinary people and their adherents. Lederach's theory is relevant in analysing the role of religious leaders in peacebuilding efforts as they acted as intermediaries, who used their positions to reach out to local traditional, religious and community leaders, community, stakeholders and state authorities in facilitating peaceful co-existence among the religious communities. Religions are a rich source of peace services. Thus, religious leaders have proven to be key actors in many efforts to resolve conflicts and promote peace,

The success of the Kano Covenant hinged on the cooperation and support it garnered from the Kano traditional institutions, prominent politicians, Islamic clerics, community leaders, Kano State authorities and the Christian community. It also worked because the pact was initiated by liberal Muslim religious leaders (who were mainly Kano professionals and businessmen) rather than the mainstream Muslim body, *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (JNI). The Kano Covenant interfaith dialogue had wider acceptability and goodwill from the wider spectrum of Kano society and its emergence was celebrated in the local, national and international media (Interview with Bashir, 2017). Despite its wider acceptability and popularity, it was opposed by a few Muslim and Christian extremists. Its formation was also opposed by Boko Haram members who threatened co-founders of the Kano Covenant, Bashir Ishaq and Bishop Ransom Bello (Bello and Bashir Interviewed, 2017). The threats notwithstanding, both religious leaders were unscathed and in collaboration with security agencies, state

government, traditional institutions and other stakeholders resolved to reject Boko Haram religious extremism and violent attacks on Kano residents.

### *The Outcome of Kano Covenant Interfaith Dialogue*

The Kano Covenant inter-religious peace pact was unique because it marked a significant shift from conflictual to harmonious Muslims-Christians relations in Kano. Its relevance lies in its transformative approach in transforming the insurgents' instigation of inter-religious conflicts into a cooperative and peaceful co-existence unprecedented in Kano's history. It established a new form of collaboration between the two religious faiths, Kano State authorities and security agencies and Kano emirate council in matters relating to peace and security in Kano. Unlike the inter-religious dialogue in Kaduna, Jos and even previous interfaith dialogues in Kano that yielded little result in the promotion of peaceful co-existence between the faiths, the Kano Covenant was successful because of the application of genuine inter-faith peace pact by resolving the structurally inter-religious tensions that engulfed Kano and entrenchment of concrete collaboration beyond faith in the post-insurgency era. The pact led to the revival of the Centre for Inter-Religious Co-Existence which was established in 1994 (Isah Interviewed: 2017). The religious leader in collaboration with the Kano State government, civil society groups and non-government organizations used the centre for sensitizing and educating the public on the imperative of inter-faith cooperation and mutual co-existence in Kano and other conflicted zones in Nigeria.

The interfaith pact ushered in form interactions beyond faith in the economic, social and political spheres in the post-insurgency era. In this regard, leaders of both faiths attend seminars and conferences together organized by the state, non-government organizations, civil society groups, advocacy groups and they used the fora to create awareness on the need for interfaith cooperation. The leaders of both faiths working under the platform of Kano Covenant collaborated with the Kano State government, security agencies, Kano traditional institutions, politicians, and community and opinion leaders in resolving critical national security issues. Two major instances that illustrate this are the "Operation Python Dance" military exercise to quell the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) separatist agitation for a Biafran state in Igboland, Southeast Nigeria led to the killing of some agitators. The killing was perceived by Igbos as a "Hausa-Fulani" military occupation and in retaliation, Igbo youths attacked persons of Hausa-Fulani ethnic stock.

The planned reprisal attack by Northern youths on Igbos and other Christians coupled with the orchestrated "Quit Notice" issued to Igbos to leave Northern Nigeria by October 1, 2017, caused great tension across the country (Mosch, 2012; *Vanguard* 2017; Researchers eye witness account: 2017).<sup>3</sup> The Kano Covenant succeeded in addressing the underlying difference between the two faiths by establishing trust, honesty and commitment of the

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<sup>3</sup> Eyewitness account by the researcher during fieldwork in Kano in October 2017.



religious leaders to build peace in a fractured Kano society that has suffered cycles of ethno-religious conflicts for many years. The intervention of the religious leaders in collaboration with the emirate council, security agencies and other stakeholders forestalled the imminent violent conflict that would have erupted in Kano and other cities in Northern Nigeria. This paper has demonstrated that the peacebuilding strategies of the Kano Covenant were appropriate, effective in the management of violent religious conflicts and contribute to security in Kano.

### ***Conclusion***

This study has examined the role of religious leaders towards inter-religious peacebuilding in Kano in the wake of insurgency. Despite the fundamental differences of both faiths, the role of their leaders has a considerable impact on the behaviour of their adherents. The resilience of the religious leaders manifestly stands out in their responses to the challenges of the Boko Haram insurgency. The Kano Covenant interfaith pact was successful in the de-escalation of extremism. It cemented the fissures between the followers of the two faiths and transformed religious extremism into peacebuilding unprecedented in Kano's history. The Boko Haram siege on Kano five days after its formation, although disrupted its activities, failed to upset the nascent inter-faith dialogue. A new form of relationship was established beyond faith in the economic, social and political spheres in the post-insurgency era. The Kano Covenant is a rare phenomenon of inter-faith dialogue and the peacebuilding strategy. Its formation was an appropriate, effective and timely intervention in the management of violent conflicts in Kano. On this note, governments at all levels should integrate the local religious leaders in peacebuilding projects and adopt the peace pact as a template in conflict management especially in Kaduna Jos where previous interfaith dialogues were established, but later failed as well as other conflict-affected areas in Nigeria.

### ***Suggested Policy Recommendations***

- I. While religion has the power to be a force for both peace and war, many religious leaders and religious institutions seek to be part of the solutions to conflict.
- II. Peacebuilders must understand the benefits and risks of religious engagements and act promptly to resolve them before escalation into full-blown conflicts.
- III. This novel Kano interfaith peacebuilding should be encouraged by the government at all levels of governance-federal, state and local and the Kano interfaith dialogue should serve as a model for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Nigeria and other conflicted regions in Africa.

## Conflict of Interest

The author hereby declares that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

## Notes on Contributor

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## Changing Nigerian Migration Trends and its Hungarian Context

János Besenyő<sup>1</sup>, Marianna Kármán<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

In a country like Nigeria, there is a decades-long tradition of internal and international migration, which has begun to strengthen especially since the country gained its independence. While the postcolonial period - from the 1960s until the 2000s - was marked primarily by the internal migration of workers to administrative and economic centres, with the rise of unemployment in the 2000s, the international migration of the Nigerians also strengthened.

As a result of the diverse opportunities offered by international migration, at the 2015 migration summit, Nigerians turned up in relatively large numbers among migrants arriving in Europe via illegal routes. Although Nigerians are essentially leaving their country on legal routes, Nigerian illegal immigrants arriving in 2015-16 have aggravated the situation of Nigerian diaspora and painted a fundamentally negative image of Nigerians. Although most of them returned home, this still did not mean the elimination or alleviation of the problems that still spur migration in Nigeria.

### Keywords:

Migration trends; Nigeria; Hungary; reasons of migration; Boko Haram; COVID-19.

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## **1. Introduction**

Although migration as a concept has basically always been a part of human life, in recent years, it has increasingly become the center of attention. At the same time the phenomenon itself also received a rather negative charge.

As a consequence of globalization and technological advances, migration opportunities have intensified. Travelling to father parts of the world is much more accessible and it is increasingly common for someone to continue living in another city, country, or continent for a longer or shorter period.

The intercultural and economic relations that have developed during migration have as many dangers and sources of conflict as they have the potential for networking, development and security. Successful migration is based on realistic plans, legally and financially feasible and workable travel, and then integration into the host country. In the absence of these, both the migrant and the host community stand in the way of successful integration.

Nigeria, as the largest emitter of migrants in Africa, serves as an excellent example of the ambiguity of migration trends. Among Nigerians, migration is typical between states of the country, to neighboring countries, within the continent, and beyond. Nigeria, in addition to hundreds of thousands leaving its territory every year, also needs to pay serious attention to internal migration.

One of the most controversial forms of migration now is when people are forced to leave their homeland for their own security, that is, become a refugee. As a consequence of displacement, migrants arriving through unusual, illegal channels which may present skilled or unskilled labor, law-abiding citizens and criminals, a social stratum contributing to population growth, or a growing minority, an exotic, or a foreigner group (Verter and Darkwah 2014). The label attached to a particular minority group depends on the nowadays increasingly fragile relationship between the majority and the minority in that region.

Nigeria is not only struggling with their most skilled workers leaving the country, who make up one percent of the population. The country also has to face steadily rising unemployment due to which there is a high level of migration within the country, leading to depopulation of poor Nigerian states and overpopulation of cities (Ikuteyijo 2020).

## **2. Nigerians living worldwide**

In the case of African countries, it is always difficult to provide adequate population statistics. The situation is the same with the number of African refugees. The number of people living in Nigeria in 2015 was about 183 million, according to the Nigerian Bureau of Statistics, 182 million in 2015, according to the UN (2015), and 181 million according to World Bank (n.d.) – finally they reached 200 million in 2019. (Trading economies 2020a) All of these data are, of course, roughly the same, but in the preface to the Nigerian census data, they highlight that 3



of the 36 states – by the way, the most densely populated ones – did not provide data and 7 states did not act in accordance with the communication requirement. Moreover, conducting a census in an African country using birth and death registries is not the most accurate method of data processing, since many people do not have such documents. So, despite the three types of mutually reinforcing data, we actually only have methodologically approximate information on population data. The same is true of Nigerian refugees.

Nigeria is the most populous country in West Africa, and one of the most developed countries in the continent, despite nearly 1% of the more than 200 million people living as refugees (UNHCR 2016) in various countries around the world, most of them in different regions of their own country (estimated at 1.7 million). Neighboring countries with the highest proportions of Nigerian refugees are Chad, Cameroon and Niger. In 2016, about 460,000 Nigerians left their homeland and were sent to refugee camps in these neighboring countries alone, according to UNHCR. The provision of these refugees is a great problem in the surrounding countries, so due to the miserable conditions there, many of them are moving on to Europe in the hope of a better life.

Nigeria has been a humanitarian focal point since the 2010s. There are numerous international and Nigerian organizations operating in the region: the Red Cross and UNHCR provide support for refugees primarily at the borders of neighboring countries, while others take care of refugees specifically around Abuja. Among the largest international organizations are USAID, the NRC (Norwegian Refugee Council), the NCA (Norwegian Church Aid) or the MDM (Médecins du Monde). One of Nigeria's largest NGOs helping refugees is the African Refugee Foundation (AREF). There are also some initiatives organized by Nigerians as the Nigerian branches of Save the Children Nigeria or VSO Nigeria which are the parts of international organizations, and the Foundation for Refugee Economic Empowerment, which is very active on Facebook. Despite the largest international and Nigerian organizations being involved in the provision of more than 2 million refugees, their effectiveness is difficult to control due to the widespread money laundering.

From January 2016 according to UNHCR (n.d.), nearly 40 000 Nigerians have arrived in the Mediterranean Meaning that most African people arriving to Europe were Nigerian citizens. They are only overtaken by Syrians and Afghans in numbers, but it is noteworthy that the number of Nigerians exceeds the number of Iraqis by more than 10,000.

Immigrants from Africa to Europe on illegal routes can basically flow in three directions: Western Mediterranean Route (WMR), Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) and Eastern Mediterranean Route (EMR). These routes are provided primarily by junctions, but from one point to another there are several familiar or newly found routes that can pose dangers such as kidnapping, murder, slavery, or drug, arms, or human trafficking.

The Western Mediterranean Route (WMR) was one of the least preferred routes during the 2015, 2016 migration peak, but from 2018 onwards due to the weakening of CMR the traffic relocated from Italy to Spain. "In turn, the WMR became more predominant than the CMR in

2018, with approximately 65,300 migrants and refugees arriving in Spain. The number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Spain in 2018 constituted a more than twofold increase compared with 2017, when just over 28,700 arrivals were reported. In the first half of 2019, there was a slight decrease in the number of migrants and refugees who arrived in Spain relative to the same period in 2018.” (Borgnäs and Schöfberger 2020, p. 41)

While in 2017 15% of those arriving at CMR were Nigerians, in 2018 it was only 5% and in 2019 it was less than 1%. The same change could be seen in the EMR, where African migrants, including the most dominant community, Nigerians, appeared almost overnight. At the WMR, Nigerians typically arrived in Europe with little or no access.

Of course, migration by illegal routes accounts for only a small proportion of Nigerian migration, and while 0.7% of the population lives as legal immigrants in many parts of the world (1.255 thousand people), only 0.1% of the population (238 thousand people) live as refugees. 31% of Nigerian immigrants live in the EU (389 thousand people) and only 12% (28 thousand people) of refugees reach the European Union. (Urso et al. 2019)

Nigerians can be found in most countries of the world. Nigerians are numerous in the United States and the UK, followed by South Africa, UAE and other European countries such as Italy & Spain. As a US survey showed, Nigerians in the US are one of the highest educated migration groups. (Cuevas-Nohr 2019)

While in 2014 the most exaggerated estimates said that there were more than 17 million Nigerians living in different parts of the world (Subair 2014), now, according to 2019 data at least only 2 million Nigerians live worldwide, of which more than 400,000 are in the United States – so they are currently the largest diaspora in the world. In the United States, most Nigerians are located in Texas and New York. (Cuevas-Mohr 2019)

In Europe, the country with the largest population of Nigerians is, as an ex-colonist, the United Kingdom. In 2013, 3-4% of the London population was Nigerian. Of the 65 million people in the country, more than 216,000 were Nigerian-born, so 0.3% of the population has Nigerian origin, but not necessarily in asylum or refugee status - and most of these refugees arrived in England in the 1960s. (Migration Observatory, Oxford University)

### ***3. Main reasons of Nigerian migration***

Nigeria is officially a democratic, secularized state, the most populous country in Africa (and the seventh most populous country in the world). One of the most important features of the country is the ongoing population explosion. Despite the fertility rate having fallen since its peak in the mid-1980s (from 6.76 to 5.67), the population is still growing by more than 2.5% per year, which is not expected to fall below 2.5% by the middle of the century. This means that Nigeria’s population is currently growing by 4.8 million per year, so in 2050 the country’s population will reach 400 million.



This situation is worsened by the fact that while Nigeria's economy has been able to show GDP growth in excess of population growth since the mid-1990s, from 2014 the country's economy has plunged into recession. (GDP decreased by 2.58% in 2016.) Although there have been examples of GDP declining for up to a year in the past, the current decline in GDP has been ongoing since 2014. The reason for this decline should partly be the significant fall of prices in the oil industry – which accounts for 9% of GDP – and in the world market, although the Nigerian economy has nevertheless decreased.

As for their economic development, each Nigerian province differs significantly which results in an internal migration (Isiugo-Abanihe 2014; Odimegwu 2020). While in the Niger Delta or the state of Edo GDP per capita is around 3,500 to 4,000 \$, GDP per capita is below 1,000 \$ in some northern and eastern states. (In Borno State, which is the main area of Boko Haram operations, GDP per capita is 1,200 \$.) In line with the unequal distribution of GDP, the poverty rate is formed similarly in different states. While in the Niger Delta, approximately one-third of the population lives below the poverty line, in the northern states more than half, in some cases 70-80%, live below the poverty line — that means that they live on less than \$ 1.9 per day. (National Human Development Report 2015)

According to the WHO report (2015), the most common fatal diseases are malaria (especially among children under 5), HIV / AIDS, infectious meningitis, but also malnutrition. Fetal and infant deaths, maternal and postnatal deaths during pregnancies are also very frequent. All this is mainly due to extremely poor hygiene conditions, bad or poor medical care, primitive religious rites and water pollution.

In Nigeria, public security is very poor, and there are several major criminal organizations in the country that operate in various areas: armed robbery, armed roadblocks, rape, assault, and terrorism. A typical phenomenon in the Niger Delta is pipeline vandalism, illegal oil and fuel trafficking in the fight for oil. Financial fraud is also common across the country, and on the international level Nigerians are famous for internet frauds (marriage promises, business initiatives, humanitarian aid).

The increasingly unstable economic situation also manifests in the politics. On the one hand, the presence of Boko Haram in the north is strengthening which is blocking the pacification of the Niger Delta. On the other hand, from 2015, Muhammadu Buhari, who had previously staged a military coup and the situation led to the rise of a dictatorship for a year and a half (1983-1985), became the democratically elected president, and in 2019 he was reelected.

The majority of Nigerian refugees leave their homes due to the cruel activities of the Boko Haram terrorist organization in the north of the country, but the organization's operation also covers neighboring countries (e.g., Cameroon). Thus, most of the refugees cannot feel safe there either, and many Cameroonians leave their homeland also because of Boko Haram.

People fleeing from poor economic, political, public safety or health conditions usually have two options: they break out of their environment in some legal way - through employment, studies or starting a family; or applying for asylum in a country that promises better living conditions.

### **3.1. Economic problems in Nigeria versus European illusions**

In many cases, Nigeria is left by its citizens due to existing economic problems (Ikuteyijo 2020), poor public health care, infrastructural difficulties, and inadequate public security. Many of them choose illegal routes to leave the country and apply for asylum together with the refugees because their financial means do not allow them to choose legal migration options. A small percentage turn to asylum because of the failure of their European studies which were funded by their family or local community. Since they can no longer be supported by the mother community, they do not dare to return to their homeland, and rather leaved their studies unfinished, because they are afraid of the revenge of their supporters.

Those who choose illegal routes will be 'cultivated' during the journey in terms of the asylum procedure, and they adjust their life stories to the immigration system of the target country. This makes the work of the European agencies or the opportunities for 'real' asylum seekers from other circumstances very difficult.

Many people who arrive in Eastern Europe for the first time encounter European conditions and difficulties affecting European African communities. Once they become aware of the problems that also exist in local European conditions, they try to continue their way to the West where the African diaspora is larger.

In the Hungarian conditions, for example, one of the biggest challenges is living without knowing the Hungarian language or learning it. Nevertheless, Africans are popular in the Hungarian labor market mainly because of their language skills. There are many illegal immigrants who started or completed their university studies in Africa, or spent several years in the Middle East, Turkey and/or the Balkans before arriving in Hungary, or perhaps have already visited Western Europe with little luck, only expelled or returned to Hungary, so they possibly speak three or four European or world languages (and let us not forget that they also have an excellent knowledge of at least one or two African languages).

Without the right education, language skills, integration assistance, and negative discrimination of Africans, these immigrants often face serious difficulties to find their place in the European communities.



### 3.2. Political problems in Nigeria: Biafra

Although Nigeria's leadership is currently democratically elected, corruption in the country is strong - be it economic or political one ([Trading Economies 2020b](#)).

However, since the declaration of independence, the Igbos have wanted to establish their own state, called Biafra, separate from Nigeria, with which non-Igbo states disagree, and the current political system seeks to eradicate these efforts or initiatives in a variety of ways.

Due to its natural resources (mainly oil), favorable geographical location (see Niger Delta) and the resulting economic benefits (Olajide 2014), the Republic of Biafra would be a potentially fast-growing, rich state not only in West Africa but throughout the continent, while the remaining areas would live in significantly worse conditions.

By May 30, 1967, the Igbos had already proclaimed independence during the Civil War and the Republic of Biafra had been established, but in January 1970, the Igbo territories came under the control of Nigeria again. Ethnic groups in Biafra also included, of course, smaller ethnic groups living in Eastern Nigeria, such as Efik, Ibibio, Eket or the Ijaw peoples as well, but the leadership was basically in the hands of the Igbos. After the civil war, which led to the death of more than half a million people, the Nigerian government is making every effort to prevent the emergence of similar independence aspirations, political organizations or armed actions.

The state, established in 1967, has been acknowledged by several African countries and backed by a few great powers, and finally in 1970 the end of the Republic of Biafra was the Nigerian-led economic blockade, which led to the starvation of the new country and death of hunger of more than 3 million Biafrans.

A Swedish-Nigerian research study made in 2010 found that among citizens born in the Republic of Biafra the appearance of diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and metabolic disorders have increased due to starvation, and that developmental disorders caused by famine e. g. cardiovascular diseases were also common (Hult et al. 2010).

The ongoing Movement of the Actualization for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) is one of the largest Igbo initiatives to revitalize the State of Biafra, but in addition to MASSOB, many smaller organizations have similar aims which, besides peaceful means, are often attempted to be carried out by armed forces. The current political leadership is trying to make a devastating statement about these efforts and react by armed forces to Igbos using even peaceful or terrorist means. Recently, for example, in January 2017, there was a major raid, or in February 2021, Nigerian government moved its military forces to ex-Biafra states to fight against the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra group (IPOB) (Nebe and Bello 2021) and Facebook also removed the page of Nigerian separatist leader Nnamdi Kanu for violating its rules on harm and hate speech (BBC 2021).

While the Igbos, who are fighting for their independence, are constantly confronted with political leadership, even occasionally, due to the political leadership just coming to power,

many people are leaving Nigeria because of political corruption — be it the opposition or later frustrated supporters of the elected government.

Corruption cases in previous governments are mostly investigated and punished by subsequent political leadership. During recent governments, the rate of corruption has declined according to Nigerian results. While, during Obasanjo's time, a huge scandal erupted over the corruption of his vice president, and under Jonathan Goodluck's leadership, several dubious deals by the former president came to light. Under the presidency of Yar'Adua and Goodluck, this rate has stagnated and even improved (Chima 2014) – until, of course, under Buhari's leadership, a matter can be found that can be rolled up.

### **3.3. Religious or ethnic reasons**

The West African country is inhabited by more than 500 ethnicities (among whom, of course, several are close relatives). The three largest ethnics are Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo (all three represent about 30-30 million people). The Hausa are Muslims, the Igbos are Christians, and the Yoruba are roughly half Muslims or Christians. In the case of the Igbos and the Yoruba, the traditional animist faith still plays a significant role, although in addition to the great world religions, these faiths have been marginalized to some extent.

In Nigeria, members of different religious denominations live basically peacefully side by side, it gives an excellent example just to take a walk the streets of Lagos, where Christian and Islamic schools and communities can coexist and work side by side in peace.

Yet in a country so religiously and ethnically diverse, sudden ethnic or religious conflicts (in this case primarily between Muslims and Christians) are extremely common. Certain areas of the country resemble gunpowder barrels, and during conflicts within certain settlements on ethnic or tribal grounds, entire villages and small towns became extinct.

Their ethnicity is mainly referred to by the Igbos already mentioned, who also flee not because of their ethnicity but because of their political behavior, while refugees arrive from Northern Nigeria in a mixed way – regardless of ethnicity or religion.

In addition to minor ethnic and religious fights, there is a problem that is also active in intellectual circles, the issue of animism. Proponents of the Yoruba faith have a significant influence on the superstitious lifestyles of Nigerians, but 2008 research in Ibadan has also shown that elements of Yoruba culture and belief systems have spread not only throughout the country but across the continent through Yoruba home videos (Adejumo 2009).

Extreme manifestations of the Yoruba faith are life-threatening primarily for albinos and individuals who come into contact with extremist cult communities. Extreme views are a particular concern in university communities, where students are abducted, subjected to ritualistic rites that can sometimes end in death. Due to the fact that these communities are organized on a cultic basis, they are strongly and even violently closed communities, so there



is no opportunity to leave, and their members maintain regular and close contact with each other. Therefore, any relationship with cult groups (e.g., social, friendship, cohabitation, family), especially confrontation, is a continuous and targeted life-threatening situation.

However, religiously organized threats include the armed forces of the Boko Haram organization, which were organized in the northern regions of Nigeria on the model of terrorist organizations based on misinterpretations of Islamic teachings. They are passing unbearable laws for both Muslims and Christians and are a constant threat not only to Nigeria but also to the population in Niger and Cameroon.

### **3.4. Boko Haram as the largest representative of Islamic terrorism in Nigeria**

Basically, due to the steady increase of poverty, armed groups organized on different political or religious grounds are constantly present in the Northern and Northeastern states of Nigeria. These groups are extremely hectic in terms of their ideological motivation, often the available foreign funders or sponsors determine what ideology they follow. Thus, for example, the most infamous organization today, Boko Haram, started as a syncretistic movement in the 1970s, which was based on charismatic and mystic Shi'ism, but by 2014 it had already joined ISIS as a Salafist or Takfirist organization.

By the way one of the reasons for the spread of Boko Haram was the mismanagement of the conflict, as under the presidency of Obasanjo, the ill-equipped, corrupt army embarked on a campaign against the local civilian population instead of military action, leading to a marked increase in support for Boko Haram in Borno State.

Boko Haram was renewed in 2002 under the leadership of Mohamed Yusuf, which defined the Takfirist background of today's organization. One of Boko Haram's goals was to exclude Western values from everyday life, also known as the group's name: Boko Haram, in Hausa, "the West is forbidden". Organizations with radical views are built on similar principles. For example the terrorist groups operating in Mali, Somalia hold their extremist opinion, that everything coming from Western, European, or American society is incompatible with Islam. Typically, a similar mindset appears in the Middle East among people who are not open to the world outside of Islam, mostly have no knowledge of the values of the Western world, so in the light of the misinformation circulating in their heads, the West is considered the realm of Satan. It is also important to remark that these ideas do not stem from the Qur'an or the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, but from human ignorance.

Even in the semi-Christian, semi-Muslim Yorubaland people still blame the colonial powers for illiteracy, political corruption and bad regional conditions – which plunder the country by paying local leaders and returning through the back gates according to their narratives.

Thus, the pan-African thought of the former colony confronting the West has a very fertile breeding ground, which was the cradle of pan-African thoughts, and similar thoughts are given



a very fertile breeding ground. As the organization also indirectly criticized the Nigerian leadership and tried to enforce its ideas in various, initially peaceful ways and establish the ideal Islamic regime in northern Nigeria, Boko Haram became a target of the Nigerian secret service and army even before it became a terrorist organization.

After the death of Mohamed Yusuf in 2009 in a clash between Boko Haram and local security forces, the organization became heavily radicalized (Barkindo 2016). From July 2009 to the present, Boko Haram's increasingly violent activities have left 5.5 million people displaced and hundreds of thousands have lost their lives, as the organization strengthened, so not only in Nigeria but also in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.

Boko Haram has clearly adopted the Salafist mindset of extremist terrorist organizations formed after 11 September 2001 or radicalized at the time, according to which all Muslims, but also Christians, should identify with the scientific approach and cultural customs prevailing in the time of the Prophet Muhammad. However, there is no basis for this in the Islamic tradition. Mohamed was precisely the eminent thinker of his day: he was known for his modern political and religious views, according to the accounts of non-Muslim historians. But as religion always serves politics, politics also serves religion, both in Nigeria and Mali or even Somalia, negative views of ex-colonial powers of the West, which also became more popular in the Middle East, spread relatively fast in Africa.

From 2009, Boko Haram continued to operate as an international terrorist organization under the leadership of Abubakar Shekau; members of the group encountered al-Qaida and then formed an alliance with ISIS (Besenyő and Mayer 2015). Although in Africa these alliances are primarily political based, if a terrorist organization can prove to be affiliated with the largest, best-known terrorist organizations, it acquires believers relatively quickly over other similar organizations, making it easier to control crimes such as drug and human trafficking which no longer has anything to do with any religion, but still provides financial support for terrorist organizations.

In the most influential period of Boko Haram (in 2010), it controlled a significant part of the state of Borno, but its scope of activity extended to several neighboring states, including virtually the north-east of the country and some states in neighboring countries. It practically started during Jonathan Goodluck's presidency, and during a more effective military offensive during Bukhari's leadership, Boko Haram lost control of these territories and now operates primarily as a terrorist organization, so its activities have now weakened and narrowed. However, defeating Boko Haram will not solve the problems in these areas, as there are several reports that other armed groups will emerge in parallel with the decline of Boko Haram, e.g., also those who follow the original Shiite line of Boko Haram.

One of the reasons for the downfall of Boko Haram is that in 2016, the organization was torn in several directions and got disintegrated. Of course, Boko Haram is still an active organization that is currently carrying out attacks, but still sporadically. The most recent kidnappings took place in December (Kankara, Katsina state, 300) (BBC 2020) and February



(Kagara, Niger state, 42 student) (Hazzad and Muhammad 2021), during which hundreds of students were taken away - probably for recruitment purposes.

The list of crimes committed by Boko Haram is almost infinite in length, with numerous accounts of their history and horrors available both in scientific circles and based on media reports (Pérouse de Montclos 2014; START 2015; Walker 2012). However, it raised an interesting question in terms of migration. Most of the refugees remain within Nigeria, as no one is willing to leave their homeland easily, so most of the refugees settle in the more peaceful northern states or around the capital, with a small number fleeing to neighboring countries. A relatively small percentage of them leave the continent, mostly those, who are targeted and hunted by Boko Haram.

Nigerians forced to leave their homeland by the terrorist organization are therefore seeking refuge primarily in Nigeria or West Africa, and about 1-2% of the ever-moving mass of refugees leave for Europe, mostly those whose previous financial situation allows or their family members living elsewhere in Nigeria finance their trip to the West.

#### **4. Nigerians living in Hungary**

Refugees from Nigeria arrive in Europe on several routes. Of these, the two largest smuggling routes are the Libya-Italy route and the Middle East Greece route. Most Nigerians arrive in Western Europe via the former, and before 2015 they arrived in Germany on the Greece-Serbia-Hungary route (Eastern-Mediterranean Route - EMR).

The European presence of Nigerians will always show a constantly changing picture, as the motivation of refugees is quite different: linguistic environment, friendships or family ties, or rather the route set up by the smugglers determines the destination country. The Hungarian example paints one of the most layered pictures of the potential causes and the situation of Nigerian immigration. Due to Hungary's role as a transit country, the number of returning migrants was also particularly large in the last ten years.

In 2013, the first comprehensive survey of African immigrants living in Hungary was conducted, during which 238 of the 4-5,000 Africans living in the country were interviewed – with leadership of Marianna Kármán. (Kármán and Tesfay 2013) In the research the subjects were approached by using two types of interviews: a personal interview or a questionnaire-driven interview, during which we researched the migration habits, cultural integration and image of Hungary of Africans living there. After completing the basic research, from 2014 onwards another multi-year research was conducted specifically examining the life of African refugees inside and outside the camp, during which a similar survey was conducted on the lives of more than 100 refugees. Both researches were affected by national contexts of integration, but also concentrated on intercultural coherences. (Scholten et al. 2015)

According to 2013 data, almost 20% of Africans living in Hungary are Nigerian. Of the 156 questionnaires, 52 were Nigerian: based on these, 6% of Nigerians living in Hungary are immigrants (i.e., workers or entrepreneurs), 4% are asylum seekers, 6% has scholarship and 75% are students paying tuition fees, and 8% lives in Hungary with family reunification (mostly through a spouse). So, most Nigerians come to the country because of a good education or a family member living in Hungary.

Nigerians in Hungary are active members of Hungarian African communities. They regularly run community venues, which in many cases specifically host Nigerians, leaving the local 'pan-African' cohesive community. Within the Hungarian African community, their assessment is generally not good, because the number of offenders is higher among them, which sheds a bad light on the Africans living out of Africa. However, it would be a mistake to condemn the Hungarian African community, but also the Nigerian community, based on only one or two criminals.

African migration to Hungary as a destination country for immigration, should be divided into three periods in terms of motivation:

- before the change of regime (1989), the immigration of scholarship students is decisive – immigrants that arrived during this time have a particularly good knowledge of the Hungarian language and are highly qualified, and in most cases, they have a Hungarian wife, so they integrated more easily;
- after the change of regime, most of the scholarships ceased, the appearance of students paying tuition fees is much more typical, arrival of refugees and illegal immigrants is more pronounced, and Hungary as a destination country became less popular for Africans;
- the situation changed at the accession to the EU, when Hungary received the so-called outstanding role as a transit country, reinforced by the accession to the Schengen Convention.

In 2015 and 2016 not more than one Nigerian person per year was granted reception status. Nevertheless, several Nigerian asylum seekers visited Hungary in these years. Typically, due to a series of rejections, most people go further to Western Europe or interrupt their proceedings that have developed over years, due to marital relationships.

In recent years, the number of Nigerian students has increased significantly in Hungary. Among non-European regions, Nigeria is sending the third greatest number of students. Their largest host institution is the University of Debrecen. Of the 38 students surveyed in Budapest, 18 were Nigerians. This is a much lower rate than in rural cities. A significant number of Nigerian students study in Hungary because the tuition is lower than in other European countries, and the quality of education is also good. When they were asked why they chose Hungary, 72 percent of the students surveyed said it was because of the reputation of



education. In addition, according to one of the informants, students applying to Hungarian universities are trained in separate schools in Nigeria.

Overall, the composition of rural and urban African communities shows a different picture. The overall picture of Budapest (the capital) is extremely heterogeneous, so opinions are much more diverse. The opinion of African immigrants in rural towns about Hungarians is particularly sensitive to the circumstances, namely that the proximity of the earlier refugee camp and the behavior of Africans living there painted a negative image of African immigrants among the local population. Furthermore, in rural cities where the number of African immigrants is small (Pécs), the interviewed Africans have a better relationship with the locals than in the cities where the presence of the African diaspora is more perceptible (Debrecen, Szeged). African students living in rural areas are living in isolation, they do not know NGOs for African, nor do they have an active relationship with the older African generation living in Hungary.

Small Christian churches are very popular among West African immigrants. They advertise themselves as international communities and have contacts abroad, and they are happy to see any nationality among their members. Most small churches, however, are made up of only one or two nations, especially Nigerians. However, at one of our research sites, the community expressed its intention to reach as many Hungarians as possible. In addition to the churches visited mainly by Nigerians, there are also international branches of the Baptist or Methodist Churches, which also have significant African members, but these communities have much more heterogeneous composition compared to Nigerian ones.

Besides religious organizations, there are several civic initiatives that support the lives of Nigerians living in Hungary from an economic and cultural point of view, and there is also a presence of remedial activists.

### ***5. Effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigerian migration***

The Covid-19 pandemic clearly confined Nigerian migration in 2020. “Nigerian migrants, who were the single-largest nationality along the Central Mediterranean route in 2016–17, had all but disappeared as a major group.” (World Bank 2020, p. 19)

Although the number of Nigerians has decreased considerably, migration has remained a significant political and humanitarian issue during the COVID-19 pandemic, as migrants are stuck in transit and rescue operations are being frustrated or ignored by some countries.

The first appearance of COVID-19 infection on the continent brought a series of restrictions on African countries. The closure of national borders has made illegal migration more difficult but has prevented not only travel to Europe but also return to countries of origin. This is how migrants got stuck on the main human trafficking lines.

In June 2020, Libya and Malta negotiated a new migration deal aimed at keeping migrants in unstable regions in Libya. In Greece, controversial restrictive measures by the government have resulted in migrants being expelled and abandoned in the sea. (Bisong 2020, p. 1)

According to a survey in Libya, more than a third of migrants stranded there have not given up their plans despite the outbreak of the coronavirus, and immediately intended to travel further to Europe. Only 7% of them thought about returning home, and almost half of them had changed their plans due to the epidemic: they changed their route, their destination, or decided to wait for the situation to ease. The survey also showed that half of Nigerians stranded there wanted to continue their journey, and only 5% thought of returning home ([Mixed Migration Centre 2020](#)).

The pandemic has not only exacerbated the situation of illegal migrants, but in many cases made migration cooperation between Europe and Africa impossible, and, among other things, the possibility of remittances has become more difficult, as the mainland favors the use of cash, but some money transfer operators closed due to the crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping across Africa at the same time the continent is facing record numbers of forcibly displaced people. Due to conflicts or insecurity, Africa has registered more than 25 million forcibly displaced people who are either IDPs or refugees. Most of these displaced people originate from the following countries: the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. Many find themselves in informal settlements and managed camps hosting tens to hundreds of thousands of people. High densities of forcibly displaced populations and the mobility of migrants make both groups highly vulnerable to contagion, and therefore a priority in efforts to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus in Africa. (World Bank 2020, p. 29)

Returned or stranded migrants, in most cases, lived in impoverished, poor conditions, and the luckier ones tried to maintain themselves from daily work, waiting for restrictions to ease. But with the otherwise weakened economic situation and rising unemployment, many migrants have died in crowds, without proper hygiene, either from starvation or from coronavirus infection.

## 6. Conclusion

The migration habits of Nigerians have taken an extremely varied form over the last ten years. While they took an active part in migration to Europe in the pre-wave of 2013 and then at the 2015-16 summit, in 2017 – as a result of migration policy steps by Nigeria and Europe, migration of Nigerians on illegal routes has dramatically decreased. Around 2019-2020 and at



the time of the pandemic, even large numbers of Nigerian migrants appeared on illegal roads and despite the COVID-19 epidemic, they had strong intention to migrate to Europe, but the number of Nigerians fleeing international routes dropped dramatically by 2020.

Overall, a significant and clearly larger part of Nigerians are trying to reach Europe primarily through legal routes, where they had been steadily coming from the West African country since Nigeria gained independence. Although legal immigrants are usually intellectuals, businesspeople or university students and researchers, the overall perception of Nigerians remains negative due to the difficulties of integrating illegal migrants – especially in some parts of Europe. Knowledge of languages and localities (e.g., legal regulations), lack of education and features of non-European cultural and religious traditions that are not in line with European values, can be a particular and typical problem for applicants for refugee status.

Since 2016, the Nigerian government has continuously ensured the repatriation of Nigerian migrants, as in 2016 President Bukhari held several discussions with Germany and the EU. According to these agreements in the spring of 2017 about 10,000 Nigerians were deported e.g., from Germany (Tella and Jolaoso 2017). In March of 2017, an agreement was reached with Cameroon (Vanguard 2017), as a result of which from March of 2017 the government started the forcible expulsion of Nigerian refugees from the refugee camps in Cameroon (Guilbert 2017).

All these efforts were implicitly linked to the suppression of Boko Haram, and President Bukhari sought to prove his political and military power at international level, too. But the real cause of emigration based on economic and population growth indicators: poverty, corruption and public security has not been reduced by Nigerian government. As European governments do not currently classify Boko Haram's violence as a legitimate reason to apply for refugee status, there are more and more applications for other reasons, showing that the operation of the terrorist organization was only one option for Nigerians arriving in Europe to leave their country.

### ***Conflict of Interest***

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

### ***Notes on Contributors***

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## A Review of: “The Boko Haram Reader” by Abdulbasit Kassim, Michael Nwankpa and David Cook<sup>1</sup>

Alex Cann<sup>2</sup>

The name “Boko Haram” is synonymous with terror, horror, pain, and agony, at least to people who do not believe in the group’s ideology. The mention of Boko Haram often sends shivers down the spines of most people, especially those who have been affected directly or indirectly by the actions of the group. Boko Haram has been a social movement since the 1990s. However, it emerged in 2002 with its charismatic leader, Mohammed Yusif, who started preaching messages from the Quran and the Sunna in cities in northern Nigeria through the establishment of Islamic schools and centres. The radical approach to his teachings, with Salafist-jihadist undertones, successfully influenced his followers. Subsequently, he was arrested and died in police custody. The death of Mohammed Yusif gave birth to Africa’s deadliest terrorist group, known as Boko Haram, which translates as “Western education is forbidden”. The actual name of the group is Jamā'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l-Jihād (The Sunni Group for Preaching and Fighting, abbreviated as JASDJ).

Abubakar Shekau succeeded Mohammed Yusif, and he led the group religiously in its Salafist-jihadist campaign to unleash terror and cause huge casualties among both security forces and civilians. Within 12 years, Boko Haram metamorphosed from a small social movement to a Salafist-jihadist movement to an established Islamist state. In March 2017, the group declared itself an affiliate and branch of the Islamic State (IS, also known as ISIL and ISIS), becoming its West African Province. Currently, the group refers to itself as the Islamic State of West African Province (ISWAP). The propaganda videos and audio, interviews and texts, tactics, strategy, ruthlessness, and the influence of the group have attracted a huge literature on their activities because of the high interest of academics, practitioners, and politicians who want to understand the group and what they seek to achieve. The book “The Boko Haram Reader” has done exactly that. “The Boko Haram Reader” is a masterpiece about Boko Haram, and it aims to get its readers closer to understanding it. The book covers hours of teachings, preaching, sermons, lectures, debates, and texts of Boko Haram which have been transcribed and translated from either Arabic, Hausa, or Kanuri into English.

Part one of the book is subtitled “The Nigerian Preachers” (2006–2008). The authors describe how the history of the Muslim religion has evolved in Nigeria. It also discusses how some northern Muslim elites and imams have always wished for an Islamic state in Nigeria and the subsequent resistance by the Christian south. The adoption of the sharia in Zamfara

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<sup>1</sup> Kassim, Abdulbasit, Nwankpa, Michael, and Cook, David, *The Boko Haram Reader*, Hurst & Company, London, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-8490-4884-2.

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state in 1990 was welcome news as other northern states soon adopted it. However, the long-term implications and the opportunity for youth radicalisation were least expected. The position of Mohammed Yusif on the Supreme Council for Sharia in Nigeria put him in an influential position and it facilitated his radicalisation campaign. According to Yusif, Islam is based on three perspectives on knowledge: knowledge that conforms to the Quran and the Sunna; knowledge that contradicts the Quran and the Sunna; or knowledge that neither confirms nor contradicts the Quran or Sunna. Everything that conforms must be accepted, those that contradict must be rejected, and everyone has the freedom to either accept or reject those that neither contradict nor conform. Western education, technological innovation, working for the government, and democracy were described as an abomination and forbidden. Democratic systems and government are not subservient to Allah and, therefore, they are often referred to as "infidel illegitimate systems".

"Reaching the Verdict" (2008–2009) is part two of the book. The focus of Yusif during this period was jihad and violence, which is reflected in his teachings and even in the teachings of his lieutenants such as Abubakar Shekau and Mamman Nur. His messages were full of vengeance, rebellion, anger, frustration, threats, and incitements. The group became more violent during this period, partly due to the harsh treatment unleashed on them by the Nigerian security forces during Operations Flush, when the government wanted to exert its control in Maiduguri and most other cities in the north. Boko Haram often releases messages, some of which are directed at individuals, including the Presidents of Nigeria and Chad, warning of retaliation for the attack on Boko Haram members.

Part three, subtitled "Making Nigeria Ungovernable" (2009–2012), highlights the economic implications of the activities of Boko Haram and the strategy and tactics the group uses to unleash its terror. The declaration of war in part two of the book was brought to fruition in part three. The authors argue that the politicisation of sharia law and the passing of a law by the Nigerian Senate to proscribe Boko Haram as a terrorist group worked to the advantage of the group. Following the passage of the laws, the UK, US, EU, and Australia blacklisted the group as an international Salafist-jihadist group. The media frenzy rather brought the group to the limelight and it became attractive to other Salafist-jihadist groups such as AQIM, al Shabab, and al Qaeda, and they started building the necessary alliances and affiliations. The targets of the group included private properties, security forces and their bases, government institutions and religious institutions, with no discrimination against civilians. Their tactics included kidnapping, ambushing, assassinations, hostages, and the use of improvised explosive devices.

Part four is subtitled "Boko Haram State" (2013–2015). The authors focus on Boko Haram's ferocious expansion of its territory (Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states) and its influence across borders (Niger, Chad, and Cameroon). The group achieved this remarkable success despite the effort by the joint multinational military offensive comprising Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Benin, and Cameroun. The group continued to insist that they would never negotiate or have any dialogue with the government of Nigeria. They continued to rely on their most lethal weapon

(suicide bombing), which was planned in detail and well-executed. During this period, it conducted one of the most daring and deadly day attacks on the Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri to free its members who had been incarcerated. Boko Haram relies on winning the hearts and minds of its followers by using poetry in four broad categories, which include martyrdom, the joy of paradise, recovering lost dignity and freedom, and mobilising and encouraging its fighters. This feature is prominent in most of their messages.

The "West African Islamic State" (2015-2016) is the subtitle of part five of the book. The authors try to analyse the capability of Boko Haram to establish a caliphate as they claim. This was done by comparing the activities, structure, ideologies, tactics, and strategies to those of other similar groups such as ISIS and al Shabab. Emphasis was placed on the political, social, economic, and ideological underpinnings of Boko Haram. The group swore allegiance to the Islamic State and this was a great achievement because it demonstrated the expansion and the push to propagate the Salafist-jihadist ideologies and agenda. Shekau resurfaces after it was rumoured that he was dead. Factions emerged among Boko Haram along the line, with one group in the camp of Shekau and the other with al Barwani. The reasons alluded to by the factions are the leadership of Shekau Abubakar. This was enough evidence that Boko Haram did not practice what they preached.



## Ways out of the maze in Nigeria?

### A Review of: “Naija Marxisms: Revolutionary Thought in Nigeria” by Adam Mayer<sup>1</sup>

Cyörgy Suha<sup>2</sup>

From a Hungarian vantage point, Nigeria is “on the map” again since the reopening of Hungary’s Embassy in Abuja in 2013, after a brief interlude. These connections are not new. The then extant Hungarian People’s Republic had established its own representation in Lagos as early as 1964 in the country (barely a year after Nigeria established its own republican form of government), and Nigeria reciprocated by opening its Embassy right after Hungary’s transition to democracy in 1989/1990. Nigeria, West Africa’s giant, as well as its biggest economy since 2018, is an obvious choice for Africa watchers to study in detail.

This is exactly what Adam Mayer, a Hungarian Africanist did, with his *Naija Marxisms: Revolutionary Thought in Nigeria* that came out with Pluto Press in London in 2016. The book is a history of African social science, political thought, trade union agitation, feminist thought, and socialist movements in the country. The tome has received excellent reviews in the British and American Africanist and Leftist press, as well as the Hungarian one.

Nigeria in the late 1940s, the 1950s (still under the British) and then after decolonization in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, according to Mayer, produced a magnificent and robust school, or rather, a multiplicity of schools of African Marxist thought, philosophy, agitation and propaganda, and art (including novels that put 1950s Soviet ‘socialist realism’ to shame with their faithful towing of the party line). Nigeria, easily the most capitalist country North of South Africa on the continent, produced its pro-Soviet Marxist-Leninist union personalities, writers, historians, Trotskyite mavericks of every possible conviction, economists that drew from Mao Zedong thought, and feminist radicals of the Marxist leaning variety.

The fact that Nigeria has never elected a single politician on a socialist platform does not appear to bother Mayer. Nigerian socialists also paid (and some still pay) lip service to concepts of a Bolshevik style Communist ‘vanguard party’ (in the same vein as Hungary’s ruling Communist party between 1948 and 1990), but they never managed to put together anything resembling a unified Leftist political force, let alone a Communist Party of any consequence. (The Socialist Workers and Farmers Party of the early 1960s was a case in the point even

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<sup>1</sup> Mayer, Adam, *Naija Marxisms: Revolutionary Thought in Nigeria*. London: Pluto Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-745336-62-6. pp. 256. GBP 85.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. habil György Suha, former ambassador, full professor of PolSci and IR at Milton Friedman University, Budapest, with a special focus on African diplomacy and politics. Visiting lecturer at Africa Research Centre, University of Pecs, founding member of the Africa Committee of Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Member of Editorial Board of the Hungarian Journal of African Studies (HJAS) - Afrika Tanulmányok. ORCID: 0000-0001-5119-3584; suha.gyorgy@milton-uni.hu.

according to Mayer who chronicles their multiple splits) (Mayer, 2016).

Instead, Mayer is similar to Gáspár Miklós Tamás (the doyen of Hungarian Marxists since the early 2000s) in his ethereal understanding of social and political movements as they shape history, with a preference for the role of university professors, intellectuals, artists, and other creatives.

This is a problem despite the attempts by Mayer to provide the grassroots background to the intellectuals' work (including their rural and other working-class involvements). Paradoxically, we are confronted here with an elite social history of university professors and other top strata, some of whom, understandably, drop in and out of what Mayer calls 'bourgeois parties', throughout these decades.

If Mayer is as post-Leninist as he claims (and Lenin, as we are very aware in Hungary, was quite the rabble rouser who managed to mobilize the peasant millions of Russia through a civil war), then where are the socialist masses, people's parties and grand historical significance demonstrated through his socialist minded historical account in Nigeria? Mayer bashes post-1989 Nigerian (as well as Hungarian, and other Eastern European) socialist parties as neoliberal in their economic and social policy, especially in the 1990s and beyond. But does the Nigerian scenario (which practically, according to his own narrative, meant the near-total collapse of socialist parties and formations in the 1990s) fare any better than the democratic Leftism that we have observed in socialist, liberal, and other human rights conscious, democratic sectors of the Central Eastern European public life?

The other problem with Mayer's thesis is the concept of economic delinking that Mayer, following up on Nigerian thinkers Eskor Toyo, Edwin Madunagu, and others, seems to advocate. Did any African Marxist regime manage to actually delink their respective countries from the international capitalist economy at any time? This was not even true of Angola and Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Benin, Congo Brazzaville, Mali, Sudan, or Madagascar, during their one-party rule phases... These countries were forced to keep vital economic connections with Western multinational companies as well as, in most cases, their former colonial powers, in order to keep functioning economically. This is true even if a thinker as important as Samir Amin propagated delinking and autarchy in his books. Autarchy produces famines.

Mayer, in his book as well as subsequent articles of his (Besenyő and Mayer, 2015) links the capitalist nature of the country to the emergence of security threats, including, but not limited to Boko Haram. Quite apart from the theoretical merits of Marxism in tackling inter-ethnic differences in Africa and elsewhere, the real political workings of Communist and Marxist parties in past decades in Africa more often than not included ethnicist, and even ethnocentric political behaviour. Nigeria, where the SWAFP had a Yoruba and Tiv ethnic character even according to Mayer's account, is no exception to this rule.

That said, *Naija Marxisms* is a good historical work, pathbreaking in its effort to expose the



history of political theory and social science in Nigeria, more turbulent than we would assume. In that sense, the author's attention to detail, and encyclopaedic knowledge of the subject at hand, are noteworthy. As well as, of course, exposing an extremely understudied subjects of African social science and scientists in opposition to Nigeria's civil and dictatorial military governments. Despite the author's reluctance to condemn the anti-democratic content of certain socialist tendencies, Mayer does provide space to the history of pro-democratic labour and student militancy especially in the 1990s in Nigeria, by Baba Aye, Omoyele Sowore, and others. From 2019 onwards, when the same Omoyele Sowore was a (failed) presidential candidate in Nigeria's elections, the politician has been active in EndSARS and other demonstrations in Nigeria, heading a grassroots opposition movement in the country, despite the emblematic leader's questionable calls also for „revolution now“.

With West Africa's recent sharp turns in a number of countries in 2021 and 2022, Nigeria finds itself in a regional foreign policy context that is ever more complex in terms of its security, as well as economic implications. More than robbing socialist and leftist movements of their democratic credentials (which some Marxists are wont to do), democratic openness shall ensure a more equitable future for Nigeria, as well as West Africa in general. I conclude by expressing a hope that this volume will continue to strengthen the democratic tendencies that characterize at least the segment of the Nigerian Left, and to support the country's general openness.



## A Review of: “African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges” by Ryan Schaffer<sup>1</sup>

Gábor Sinkó<sup>2</sup>

Africa has long been characterized by political struggles. Due to its geostrategic importance, a large number of studies have scrutinized the continent’s intelligence activities; however, they mostly did that from a colonial or Western perspective. While world powers definitely had the agency at some of the most significant historical moments<sup>i</sup>, Africa should not be regarded a passive agent, subordinated only to external pressures. The anthology argues that in contrary to Europe and North America – which have been dominant in intelligence studies – African intelligence have largely been overlooked and understudied.<sup>ii</sup> Researching the colonial legacies and contemporary challenges of African intelligence services may contribute to a better understanding of the nexus of history and security.

*African Intelligence Services* is an important addition to the academic literature, since the international community has limited knowledge of the role of African intelligence agencies. Studying secret services, especially in Africa, is a huge challenge in itself, so the use of different records and various research methodologies is to be applauded. Through its eleven chapters the book follows a chronological order to depict the evolution of African intelligence services. The first part of the anthology (Chapter 1 – Chapter 4) examines the early postcolonial period, while the second half (Chapter 5 – Chapter 9) is a detailed account of how contemporary events have shaped the studied countries’ colonial history. The last two chapters (Chapter 10 – Chapter 11) also deal with contemporary challenges, albeit not from a historical or institutional, but rather a legal perspective.

Chapter 1 illustrates the difference between Kenya’s intelligence structure and the country’s intelligence apparatus after independence. While the former – preserving its colonial nature – largely remained unchanged, the latter was increasingly filled up by African personnel, slowly becoming the “tool of authoritarian political surveillance” (p. 23). It is peculiar how the Special Branch took up the fight against nationalist movements pre-independence, but then collaborated with these politicians within the same institutional framework. Shaffer argues that Kenya “had a chance to break away from the past of colonial structures” (p. 38), however, it can be rather challenging to shake off a 43-year-long legacy.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 elaborate on how Cold War competition was exploited by Zanzibar

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<sup>1</sup> Ryan Schaffer (ed), *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-5381-5082-5 (hc).

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and Tanganyika, and Mozambique and Angola. In order to receive financial, material and educational support and develop their intelligence capacities, Zanzibar started building relations with East Germany, while Tanganyika approached West Germany. Graham is correct in pointing out how little these countries' commitment to non-alignment and anti-colonialism was understood by the Germans (p. 56). As a reaction to Portuguese repression and to protect themselves from liberation movements, Mozambique and Angola turned to East Germany, the Soviet Union and Cuba to help them train their intelligence agencies after independence. Nothing illustrates the influence of these countries better than the example of the official state security service of the GDR. Being the operational model for Mozambican and Angolan intelligence services, the Stasi was able to outlive East Germany (p. 80).

The following three chapters highlight some of the most crucial factors related to destabilization: insurgencies, regional rivalries and neo-patrimonialism.<sup>iii</sup> Chapter 4 argues that only through a unified political-military approach could intelligence be an effective tool of shortening wars and reaping victories. Taking the example of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Cross reasons that although the country had strong intelligence capabilities, intelligence could not bring the expected results in its counterinsurgency. It was relatively late when the "lack of emphasis on military intelligence" (p. 105) was recognized, and even after the establishment of the competent body was the service plagued with problems. Listing the key factors that contributed to the ineffectiveness of Rhodesian intelligence services provides a great summary of understanding the complexity of the issue.

Rwanda in Chapter 5 is an excellent case study for intelligence used for self-interest. It is demonstrated that although the Rwandan intelligence services were controlled by Hutus, there was regional fractionalism in the elite that eventually led to the 1994 genocide. Kegel rightly points out that "regionalism can be an important driver of conflict within mono-ethnic power structures" (p. 137), however, it should be noted that it can definitely be a source of tension in polyethnic societies as well. Chapter 6 offers an intriguing account about the bureaucratization of Liberia's intelligence services over time. In the context of neo-patrimonialism, intelligence structures can be viewed as a "political tool to enhance the leader's grasp on power and/or to undermine real or perceived competitors" (p. 149). Despite their occasional politicization, Spatz and Bollfrass argue that the intelligence service in Liberia was given relative independence and intelligence as such is not more, only *differently* politicized in neo-patrimonial systems.

Studying the Sudanese intelligence services, Chapter 7 illustrates "how bureaucratic institutions often seek to survive in highly unstable political environments" (pp. 182-183). Due to ethnic and religious complexities, intelligence collection in Sudan had to be diversified. With the separation of institutional and state interests, the intelligence services could remain relatively autonomous. However, as Fitsanakis and Brophy emphasize, this development paved the way for the fragmentation of security agencies through the creation of informal intelligence mechanisms. Chapter 8 draws attention to another trend often discerned in African politics, which is the establishment of overlapping agencies. According to Gwatiwa and

Tsholofelo, there was “lack of clarity of roles” (p. 198) between the police and Botswana’s intelligence agency. Besides the overlaps in their mandate, the latter lacked credible oversight as a result of political and legal shortcomings, which underpins the authors’ claim that intelligence in the country must be understood in historical-legal-social contexts.

Chapter 9 is about the “politicization of the intelligence functions allegedly serving the state” (p. 212). While intelligence dispensation in South Africa can be considered a success strategically, the government and secret services were rife with corruption. It led to lack of trust and the politicization of the intelligence process, which spurred the creation of independent intelligence agencies. Chapter 10 best illustrates how intertwined colonial legacies and contemporary challenges can be by stating that regardless of what rule Nigeria has been under, intelligence has served the ones in power. Although Adeakin is right to explore the connection between intelligence, ‘institutional prerogatives’ and the degree of civilian and legislative oversight, I would like to point out some shortcomings. The first is of conceptual nature and it concerns Boko Haram, which is translated as “Western values are sin” (p. 249)<sup>iv</sup>. A better translation of ‘haram’ would be ‘forbidden’, since Islam refutes the concept of original sin.<sup>v</sup> Besides, the author remarks that outside Nigeria’s intelligence services “several multiagencies are engaged in intelligence gathering” (p. 247); however, with the exception of the army and police, nothing is mentioned. It could have been interesting to elaborate on their involvement, activities and whether they complement or overlap the others.

Chapter 11 comparatively analyzes the roles of the regional intelligence, police and security services in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania from a legal perspective. Bailey argues that – despite a common colonial background – a gap exists between theory and practice. Although these East African countries possess sound administrative structures, there are “challenges in legal accountability and shortcomings in institutional capacity” (p. 257). Expanding legal education as a way of increasing judicial oversight is a good solution in theory; the question is how viable it could be in practice.

While each chapter is intriguing and revealing, I feel that apart from the importance of studying modern Africa through the lens of intelligence services, there is no unifying argument holding the book together. Intelligence agencies are not attempted to be put into a broad analytical framework, since as Shaffer correctly points out “a single intelligence theory [would be] too broad for any meaningful contribution or too narrow to be valid across the continent” (p. 7). Being of descriptive nature, I did not miss the empirical approach<sup>vi</sup>, however, I have found the anthology format too eclectic. I understand its objective is to draw attention to the diversity and complexity of African intelligence agencies, but by using the term ‘postcolonial’ more narrowly and focusing on a single approach instead of trying to cope with challenges from historical, institutional and legal perspectives would have made the book even stronger.

*African intelligence services* is nonetheless a significant contribution to the field of Intelligence Studies. It also provides an excellent overview of the various challenges African



intelligence agencies have in the developing world in national, rather than international contexts. Despite the differences in their government systems, histories, politics and populations, the studied countries undoubtedly face very similar challenges. The anthology is the first edited volume that looks at intelligence and security services in Africa from academic and professional standpoints, and as such it could be useful for scholars, students and international agencies cultivating relations with African countries diplomatically and strategically. It could also be of interests to readers who wish to extend their knowledge in topics of security and intelligence in Africa. More importantly, the book offers a new understanding on African intelligence services and encourages researches to further explore the subject.

<sup>i</sup> See, for instance, Aldrich, R, Rawnsley G. and Rawnsley M (Eds.), 'The Clandestine Cold War in Asia, 1945–65: Western Intelligence, Propaganda, Security and Special Operations', Frank Cass, London, 2000

<sup>ii</sup> However, there are a number of studies that can be considered exceptions, such as Agbiboa, D.E, 'Eyes on the Street: Civilian Joint Task Force and the Surveillance of Boko Haram in Northeastern Nigeria', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 22, No. 7, 2018, pp. 1022-1039; Ingiriis, M.H, 'Predatory Politics and Personalization of Power: The Abuses and Misuses of the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) in Somalia', *African Affairs*, Volume 119, No. 475, 2020, pp. 251-274; Ingiriis, M.H, 'Insurgency and international extraversion in Somalia: the National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) and Al-Shabaab's Amniyat', *African Security Review*, Volume 29, Issue 2, 2020, pp. 125-151; Sinkó, G and Besenyő J, 'Comparison of the Secret Service of al-Shabaab, the Amniyat, and the National Intelligence and Security Agency (Somalia)', *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, DOI: 10.1080/08850607.2021.1987143, 2021

<sup>iii</sup> Neo-patrimonialism refers to a system, where formal and informal institutions have merged and personal power dominates the bureaucracy, Shaffer, R (Eds.), *African Intelligence Services: Early Postcolonial and Contemporary Challenges*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2021, p. 144

<sup>iv</sup> Various translations – literate, figurative, linguistic – exist in the current academic literature. While the most common remains 'Western education is forbidden', there are some other noteworthy forms. For instance, it was translated as 'Western education is sinful' (Peters, M.A, 'Western education is sinful': Boko Haram and the abduction of Chibok schoolgirls', *Policy Futures in Education*, Volume 12, No. 2, 2014), or '(traversing) the Western education system is haram' (Murtada, A, 'Jama'at 'Boko Harām': Nasha'tuhā, Mabadī'uhā wa A'māluhā fi Naygeeriyah' [The Boko Haram Group in Nigeria: its beginnings, principles and actions in Nigeria], 2012, p. 4). On top of that, former acting leader of the terrorist group, Mallam Sanni Umaru argued that "*Boko Haram actually means 'Western Civilisation' is forbidden. The difference is that while the first gives the impression that we are opposed to formal education coming from the West... which is not true, the second affirms our belief in the supremacy of Islamic culture (not education), for culture is broader, it includes education but not determined by Western education.*" (Onuoha, F.C, 'The Islamist challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram crisis explained', *African Security Review*, Volume 19, No. 2, 2010, p. 57)

<sup>v</sup> See Lomier, R, 'Boko Haram: The Development of a Militant Religious Movement in Nigeria', *Africa Spectrum*, Volume 47, No. 2/3, 2012, pp. 137-155

<sup>vi</sup> In another review of the anthology, Francois Sennesael remarks that according to his opinion "*the book does not infer from the detailed empirical realities...*", The London School of Economics and Political Science, November 5, 2021, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lsereviewofbooks/2021/11/05/book-review-african-intelligence-services-early-postcolonial-and-contemporary-challenges-edited-by-ryan-shaffer/>

## A Review of: “Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield” by Jason Warner, Ryan O’Farrell, Héni Nsaibia, and Ryan Cummings<sup>1</sup>

Michael Nwankpa<sup>2</sup>

The Islamic State in Africa is a significant piece of work. Jason Warner and his co-authors provide a profound analysis of ISIS (also known as ISIL, IS or IS Central as used in the book) in Africa. The book is guided by two critical and interwoven questions: how did the Islamic State’s African official provinces and non-province affiliate groups emerge and evolve, and why have these affiliates continued to show loyalty and strength – by re-pledging allegiance, continuing to conduct and publicize attacks in the Islamic State name, and developing new branches – even as the IS Central itself was in seeming decline following its annus horribilis of 2019 (p.4)?

Using a simple but effective tripartite periodic structural framework that focuses on the pre-Bayah, Bayah and post-Bayah periods, Warner et al show the emergence, evolution, and transformation of nine ISIS affiliate groups in Africa. The pre-Bayah period defines the years before 2014 when several jihadist groups in Africa began to pledge allegiance to IS Central. Here, Warner et al provide the conditions that made the would-be ISIS franchises ripe for such move. The Bayah period focuses on the time when the groups pledged allegiance (between 2014 and 2019) to IS Central and the processes of acceptance of the pledges. The authors show that the pattern of the pledges, process of acceptance and/or elevation to wilayat or province status, and material support received from IS Central varied across the ISIS franchises in Africa. Particularly, they use the phrase ‘affiliate utility validation’ to describe the process that prospective ISIS franchise must undergo to gain acceptance. Lastly, the post-Bayah period captures the phase after the death of al-Baghdadi in late 2019 and the repledging of allegiance to ISIS. Between the introductory and concluding chapters are nine chapters that focuses on the different Islamic States in Libya, Algeria, Sinai, Tunisia, West Africa Province (that is Boko Haram), West Africa Province-Greater Sahara, Somalia, Central Africa Province-DRC, and Central Africa Province-Mozambique respectively.

In 2014, at the height of its successful campaign in Iraq and Syria where it commanded control of large swathes of territories under the leadership of the self-declared Caliph al-Baghdadi, ISIS became a symbol of Islamic victory or Islamic renaissance and hope for the global entrenchment of Islamic worldview. The symbolism of ISIS’ success and its impact on the global umma-that is, the worldwide community of Muslims are reflected in the horde of

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<sup>1</sup> Warner, Jason, O’Farrell, Ryan, Nsaibia, Héni, Cummings, Ryan, Islamic State in Africa: The Emergence, Evolution, and Future of the Next Jihadist Battlefield. Hurst & Company, London, 2021. ISBN: 978-1-7873-8390-6 (hc).

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African jihadists that jumped on the popular ISIS bandwagon. The authors of *The Islamic State in Africa* describe the chain effect of the victories recorded by IS Central as the 'democratisation of jihad' on the African continent. In essence, ISIS presented itself as a supra-national and powerful force with great ideological and material benefits to its African affiliates. Before ISIS, al-Qaeda served as the transnational jihadist hub and provided global patronage to local jihadist groups. Warner and his co-authors show the subtle and sometimes not-too-subtle tension between ISIS and al-Qaeda as some of the new ISIS' franchises oscillated in their loyalty to both supra-structures. The groups as well as ISIS and al-Qaeda exploited the powerplay in some instances.

The Islamic State in Africa is particularly relevant as Africa becomes the new theatre of jihadism. Although IS Central has been badly weakened following the successful counterterrorism campaign by the Western-led coalition force against ISIS that led to the killing of al-Baghdadi and loss of ISIS-controlled territories, ISIS affiliates in Africa have surprisingly remained loyal to IS Central. The unflinching loyalty to a greatly diminished supra-power is, according to Warner et al, due to the symbolic benefit that ISIS African affiliates continue to enjoy from the ISIS brand. According to the authors, IS Central and the plethora of ISIS provinces and non-provinces that emerge in Africa enjoy mutual benefits. Although, some of the African ISIS' affiliates gained material support from the parent Jihadist body, which was once the richest terrorist groups in the world, the core benefit to the ISIS affiliates was symbolic. The ISIS affiliates retained their operational independence and remained largely driven by local politics and conditions. The symbolic currency of ISIS brand has not ceased despite the death of al-Baghdadi and the weakening of IS Central. This, in Warner et al's opinion, explains why ISIS African affiliates re-pledged allegiance to IS Central after the death of al-Baghdadi.

The Islamic State in Africa has great policy and intellectual usefulness. Intellectually, Warner et al offers a simplified yet effective analytical model for explaining the trajectory of extremist organisations. Policy-wise, the book provides a deep insight into the material and existential conditions that inspire the rise of Jihadist groups in Africa and how nefarious organisations such as ISIS can capitalise on these conditions to perpetuate and 'democratise' (using the author's terms), -that is, expand their evil agenda. Removing those conditions or elements that allow the conditions to fester can go a long way in denying ambitious extremist organisations such as ISIS the opportunity to entrench themselves. As Africa becomes the new frontier for jihadism and other forms of extremism, *The Islamic State in Africa* provides readers with the correct tool for understanding and addressing the threats that this creates.

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