MINORITY RIGHTS AND THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN NIGERIA

Edited by
Uyilawa Usuanlele and Bonny Ibhawoh

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For
Nosakhare Ikponmwosa Usuanlele (in memoriam)
and
Francis Ehidiamen Ibhawoh (in memoriam)

CONTENTS

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List of Abbreviations

ADL	African Democratic League
AG	Action Group
APC	Arewa People's Congress
BDPP	Benin Delta Peoples Party
BYM	Borno Youth Movement
CAN	Christian Association of Nigeria
CRP	Constitutional Rights Project
ITP	Ilorin Talaka Parapo
MASSOB	Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra
MSM	Mid-West State Movement
NCNC	National Council for Nigeria and the Cameroons (later, National Council for Nigerian Citizens)
NDSC	National Defense and Security Council
NPC	Northern People's Congress
NSCIA	National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs
OPC	Oodua People's Congress
UDD	Universal Defenders of Democracy
UMBC	United Middle Belt Congress

LIST OF TABLES

Introduction: Minorities and the National Question in Nigeria

Uyilawa Usuanlele and Bonny Ibhawoh

Minority groups in Africa are frequently the victims of local and global power structures. The marginalization and domination of minority ethnic, religious and cultural groups are often a continuation of the ethnic, class and caste hierarchies established under colonial rule. Colonial rule brought together diverse ethnic and sub-ethnic nationalities under a process that was often arbitrary and chaotic. The constituent African peoples had no say in determining the boundaries of African states when they were delineated at the Berlin Conference of 1884. Once colonial rule was established, they also had little or no control over how these states were struc-

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tured and administered. Colonial politics and economic policies tended to benefit the elites of dominant groups at the expense of less influential ethnic minority groups.

In British Africa, the policy of indirect rule required the homogenization of ethnic identities and the creation of distinct hierarchies of "tribes" and clans. This created tensions and fissures that would endure long beyond the colonial era. With the end of colonial rule, the central challenge that African political leaders faced was forging cohesive nations out of the fragmented colonial entities bequeathed at independence. Like the colonial order, the post-colonial state in Africa has largely been defined by ethnic politics, religious factionalism and the struggles of minority groups for inclusion, representation or self-determination. Independence has not significantly changed the unequal power relations instituted under colonial rule. If anything, the politics of decolonization and the struggles over political power intensified the domination and marginalization of minority groups.[1] The process of decolonization was pushed amidst a discursive struggle not just between nationalist and colonizer, but also between minority groups and the more colonially privileged and dominant ethnicities. Just as nationalists posed decolonization as the right to self-determination, leaders of sub-national minority groups also adopted the language of human rights to push their case for self-determination. Agitations for self-determination by minority groups in Africa invite a rethinking of the basis upon which the post-colonial state was constituted.

Nigeria epitomizes the minority question in Africa and offers a valuable case to explore the enduring patterns of debates and encounters relating to the minority question. The minority question is the core issue in the national question in Nigeria. It lies at the roots of the crisis of governance that threatens the legitimacy and viability of the state.[2] It is also at the centre of perennial debates about how to order the relations between the different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural groupings to ensure equality of rights and privileges, equal access to power, and guarantee that constituent groups have an equitable share of national resources.[3] A key challenge to the idea of the Nigerian nation remains the sheer diversity of its constituent ethnic and religious groups as well as the arbitrary colonial circumstances of its creation. The task of building a cohesive nation and forging a sense of national identity among its people is one that the country has grappled with since colonial times and will likely continue to grapple with in the years ahead. The persistence of ethnic politics exemplified in ethnic and religious factionalism and conflicts, youth militancy in the Niger Delta and Islamist militancy in North Eastern Nigeria underscores

the need to address these issues from both historical and contemporary perspectives.

This book offers a thematic study of key debates on ethnic politics, democratic governance and minority rights in Nigeria. Nigeria provides a framework for examining the central paradox in post-colonial nation-building projects in Africa—the tension between majority rule and minority rights. The liberal democratic model on which most African states were founded at independence, and to which they continue to aspire, is founded on majority rule. It is also founded on the protection of the rights of minority groups to political participation, social inclusion and economic resources. Maintaining this tenuous balance between majority rule and minority rights has, in the decades since independence, become the key national question in many African countries, perhaps none more so than Nigeria. Since the colonial era, political and economic control by numerical majority groups (religious and ethnic) and ethnically dominated politics has created disparities, discontents and alienations in Nigeria. This has resulted in frequent inter-ethnic and religious clashes, several insurgent movements and a civil war. This volume explores these issues, focusing on four key themes as they relate to minority rights in Nigeria: ethnic and religious identities, nationalism and federalism, political crises and armed conflicts.

Part of the difficulty of addressing the minority question from both academic and practical standpoints is determining what constitutes a minority group in the context of a federal system of government. "Minority" might be a concept of numerical relations, but is also intricately related to influence, the exercise of power and access to resources. Ultimately, minority status is best understood not simply in numerical terms but also in terms of power relations and the collective aspiration for equity and autonomy. The use of "minorities" here emphasizes those historically regarded as "Other" and the victims of the nation state created as a result of Africa's colonial experience. As such, it does not include other accepted forms of minorities such as those defined by sexual orientations. Although the concept of minority as deployed here is synonymous with the "subaltern," we also recognize the fluidity of this concept and the significant ways that politically and economically privileged minority groups have used state institutions to dominate numerically advantaged groups in some parts of Africa. It is a reality of the African experience that numerical minorities have in some cases dominated majority, as in Rhodesia and apartheid South Africa.[4] This volume is alert to this conceptual ambiguity.

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The minority rights question in Nigeria epitomizes a key human rights issue in Africa. When the British government formed the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1900, it inaugurated a process of state-building that brought together formerly autonomous and divergent ethnic groups in the region. This process was consolidated with the amalgamation of both protectorates to formally establish the colonial state of Nigeria in 1914. Colonial efforts at creating a Nigerian nation were fraught with many challenges. The most significant of these challenges were the cultural and religious differences between the predominantly Muslim North and the South where Christianity and indigenous religions were dominant. For most of the colonial period, the British administration maintained a policy of divide and rule that sought to keep the prevalent Western Christian influences of the South from the Muslim North where appeals to Islamic legitimacy upheld the rule of the emirs. The policy of indirect rule was aimed at preserving the indigenous cultures of each area. Although the bringing together of various ethnic and religious groups under a common colonial administration fostered some sense of nationhood that ultimately shaped the nationalist movement, ethnic and religious cleavages and tensions persisted throughout the colonial period.

British approach to managing Nigeria's multiple ethnicities was guided by the image of Africa as one constituted by many fragmented tribes and dominant empires. For example, British colonial officials assumed the dominance of empires in Sokoto and Oyo, and constructed these as the capitals of the large ethnicities of Hausa–Fulani and Yoruba, respectively. Based on these assumptions, the colonial government privileged the historical and cultural claims of those entities that appeared to be dominant. In reality however, many of these groups did not historically occupy the privileged position that they assumed under colonial rule. Oyo had virtually ceased to exist since the early nineteenth century, and the Fulani Caliphate was a narrow minority rule with minimal control over the areas it claimed to have conquered. By effect therefore, the British indirect rule policy recreated a disappearing empire, empowered weak political institutions and entrenched local domination beyond its scope.[5] The cumulative outcome of colonial strategy, and the violence which resistance against it elicited, further forced and locked people into primary ethnicized identities as the only expression of colonial relations.[6] Whether these identities pre-existed or not, they became ossified as a consequence of colonization. Perceptions of domination by the colonial state translated to a distrust of more dominant local groups which were able to access colonial power.

Indeed, many conflicts that were thought to be anti-colonial also invariably targeted other local structures of domination.

Ethnic minority tensions were also evident in early anti-colonial nationalist politics. The formation of political organizations along ethnic lines in the 1950s set the tone for the ethnicization of national and regional politics. The National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, the Action Group (AG) led by Obafemi Awolowo and the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello came to be seen primarily as representing the interest of the three dominant ethnic groups in the country. The AG, which evolved from Egbe Omo Oduduwa (Society of the Descendants of Oduduwa), was a pan-Yoruba cultural movement which had as one of its main objectives, "the inculcation of the idea of a single nationalism throughout Yoruba land." The founders of the party openly declared it to be a regional party aimed at organizing within its fold all nationalities in the Western Yoruba–dominated region of Nigeria. Similarly, the NPC was a purely Northern political party, dominated by the Muslim Hausa–Fulani ethnic group. The membership of the party was limited to people from the Northern region, and the party's declared objective was to seek regional autonomy within Nigeria. The third major party was the Igbo-dominated NCNC (later the National Council of Nigerian Citizens). Although these regionalist parties jointly negotiated with the British government over constitutional changes leading up to independence, cooperation among them was the result of expediency rather than an emerging sense of national unity. For the most part, political groups articulated their political aspirations on the basis of regional, rather than national, interests. Once it became evident that political independence was within reach, the tenuous sense of national unity and consensus that had sustained the anti-colonial movement gave way to rigidly parochial ethnic and regional interests. In championing their various regional causes, some political leaders even questioned the viability and desirability of the Nigerian state.

In the process of decolonization, British colonial officials and Nigerian politicians destined to succeed them reached a tenuous consensus that federalism was the best form of power sharing for the nation in the making. A federal system of government was considered most suitable for the country, given the plural and multiethnic character of Nigerian societies. But even in the early debates about political representation and resource allocation within the federal system, the key concern was how to protect the interests of minority groups within a decentralized system founded

on regional autonomy. This was a main thrust of the national question. The federal political and administrative structure eventually adopted at independence represented a marked departure from the centralized unitary system of colonial governance. Aaron Gana, the Nigerian political scientist, has argued that federalism was attractive to the British because it was a formula that assured their favoured constituency—the northern oligarchy—of progress at their own pace. Federalism was also desirable to the anti-colonial "nationalists" from the educationally advantaged southern part of the country because it facilitated the realization of their dream of terminating British rule and establishing a sovereign nation.[7]

In the negotiations for a federal system at the constitutional conferences leading to independence, little attention was paid to the dynamics of inter-ethnic competition for limited state resources that would be unleashed to undermine the process of national integration. The choice of a federal system of government was therefore born out of a compromise of convenience. Nigerian federalism was informed, not so much by the intrinsic qualities of federalism as a mode of exercising sovereign authority or accommodating claims to cultural autonomy, but more out of the need by ascendant political elites to achieve independence and consolidate their political influence. This has led some scholars to the conclusion that Nigerian politicians who delivered Nigeria from British colonial rule were less concerned with forging a Nigerian identity than with carving out regional bases for their political and material advancement.[8]

Decolonization accentuated ethnic politics and heightened the concerns of ethnic minorities. Constitutions enacted in 1946, 1951 and 1954 in the lead up to independence in 1960 established three regional governments around the dominant ethnic groups. The arrangement favoured political parties claiming to represent these ethnic groups, each dominating its base region and needing to silence opposition voices and maintain control of their domain as they contested federal elections. It is significant that during this period, minority claims were mostly expressed through political opposition, thus blurring the margins between cultural difference and political exclusion. Minority advocates tended to also be political elites excluded from political power and state patronage. With growing regional sentiments among the dominant ethnic groups, leaders of minority ethnic groups began to demand either for separate states of their own or for constitutional safeguards to prevent their domination by majority ethnic groups in an independent Nigeria. Their concerns were based on the fact that the major regional parties were effectively controlled by leaders of

the numerically dominant ethnic/cultural groups—the Hausa–Fulani, the Yoruba and the Igbo. Minority groups were concerned that independence from British colonial rule would only be replaced by permanent Hausa–Fulani, Yoruba or Igbo domination.

To address these concerns, the British colonial government established a commission in 1957, headed by a British administrator, to ascertain the facts about the fears of minority ethnic groups in Nigeria and propose means of allaying those fears. In its report, the Willink Minorities Commission identified two main grounds for the fears of suppression and political marginalization among minority ethnic groups in the country. First was the use of physical force by the major political parties to intimidate smaller political groups. In the view of the Commission, this trend was a grave threat to national integration and inter-ethnic harmony. A second reason for the fears of the minority groups, the Commission found, was the tendency of regional governments, secure in their majority, to disregard the wishes of the minorities. But in spite of these observations, the Commission rejected the idea of creating more states because it thought that, that would "create more problems as great as it sought to cure." It suggested instead that a "Bill of Rights" modelled after the European Convention on Human Rights be included in the independence constitution as a way of promoting national integration and guaranteeing minority rights. Following this recommendation, the constitution introduced at independence contained elaborate provisions guaranteeing to every Nigerian certain basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Neither the Constitutional Bill of Rights nor the attainment of independence in 1960 fully resolved the minority rights questions. Constitutional and other legal guarantees of minority rights proved inadequate in protecting racial, ethnic, religious and other minority groups from majoritarian domination and marginalization. Individual rights centred on citizenship came to be differentiated from collective rights centred on the nation. As has been noted in other contexts, ideals of national unity manifested by centralized political power, common language and culture, and by economic and geographical limits, all so fundamental to the self-identification of the new states, tended also to express themselves in intolerant and repressive attitudes towards those who were perceived or perceived themselves as "others."[9]

Rather than resolve the minority question, the democratic and constitutional framework adopted at independence may have complicated it. A Western-style model of liberal democracy uncritically adopted by African

states at independence has posed a challenge to pluralistic states like Nigeria that are acutely divided on ethnic, cultural or religious grounds. Because democracy has become closely associated with partisan politics and elections in which Africans tend to vote on the basis of their politicized ethnic or religious identities, its literal application risks creating "a dictatorship of numbers," with the majority imposing its will on the minority on political, cultural or religious grounds.[10] This was certainly the case in Nigeria. With independence, ethnic and regional differences were reinforced in the struggle for economic power and competition for limited state resources. Political parties operated largely along ethnic and regional lines. In the absence of a truly national political platform, politicians drew on ethnic and regional loyalties in staking their claims to national office. Even supposedly national institutions such as the military and the police were not spared the divisive ethnic politics of this period. A military coup in 1966 overthrew the elected government and the new military rulers suspended the constitution. Violence between Igbo Christians and Hausa–Fulani Muslims in Eastern and Northern Nigeria triggered the Nigeria–Biafra War and two decades of military dictatorship.

The end of the war in 1970 also did not resolve the ethnic minority question. One of the main challenges that faced the country after the civil war was restoring confidence in the nation, which had been shaken by the conflict. One solution was to split the country into more states to reduce the concentration of ethnic groups in particular states. It was thought that this would help to erase memories of past political ties and emotional attachments. Another change aimed at addressing the minority question was the adoption of an American-style presidential system of government and a new constitution in 1979. This was aimed at avoiding the divisive ethnic and regional political alliances of the past. A key provision of the 1979 constitution was the "federal character principle." This was an affirmative action principle requiring that appointments to top government positions be made to reflect the regional and ethnic diversity of the country. This principle also applied to the composition of the armed forces and the distribution of national resources. Yet another proffered "solution" to the minority question and the broader national question was a proposal to create largely autonomous ethnic states, and restructure the revenue allocation system to reverse the situation where those who provide the bulk of the national revenue are politically marginalized and remain least developed.[11] While these "solutions" have been creative, they have not resolved the minority question in Nigerian politics. This is partly

because the minority problem has been approached with a focus on the three dominant regions—Eastern, Western and Northern—that formed the basis of the colonial administrative apparatus and the federal system of government adopted at independence.[12] This is premised on the assumption that the roots of ethnic minority grievance and protests lie in the homogenization policy of the majority or the dominant groups within the regions created under the federal structure. The solutions proffered for the minority question have therefore taken fragmented ethnic and regionalized approaches rather than a comprehensive national approach.

The minority question continues to threaten the legitimacy and viability of the Nigerian state. The recent minority rights agitation in the Niger Delta, for example, has centred on the resource demands of what has been described as the "oil minorities." These include the protests by the people of the oil-producing communities of the Niger Delta such as the Ogoni communities, which in recent years have escalated into armed militancy. Like other minority groups, the oil minorities of the Niger Delta have historically felt shortchanged by the revenue allocation model of the federal structure, which has left their communities exploited and undeveloped, even as they bear the burdens of environmental degradation due to oil production. Although their protests and agitations question the basis of Nigeria's federalism, they also offer new opportunities for addressing lingering minority discontent. The calls for a sovereign national conference have grown louder amidst protests and agitations by the oil minorities. The issues being raised by these minority groups are fundamental to addressing the national question and the modifications in political structures and processes which can advance resolution.[13]

The continuing quest to understand the minority question in Nigeria from both historical and contemporary standpoints constitutes the main rationale for this volume. This book brings a uniquely multidisciplinary and thematic approach to the topic of minority rights in Nigeria and postcolonial nation-building. It includes contributions from a diverse group of scholars who approach the minority question from varied disciplinary perspectives. The chapters draw on established scholarship but also offer new insights and perspectives on the themes discussed.

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This book is divided into three parts, with the first part of the book focusing on *Minorities, Colonialism and Decolonization*. In this part, Tunde Oduntan revisits the articulation of minority consciousness and

claims by examining the setting up of the Willink Minority Commission by the colonial government to enquire into Nigeria's minority question and find ways of resolving it. Building on the thesis that tribal identities were colonially constructed, Oduntan argues that rather than being the platform for resolving pre-existing "tribal" relations, the Willink Minority Commission consummated a colonial strategy of creating and reinforcing tribal identities. The Commission legitimized and concretized previously fluid and tentative minority identities and claims arising from colonial policies. Nigerian elites took advantage and invoked colonial narratives to map ethnic differences and highlight minority groups' fears of domination. Thus, the Willink Minority Commission turned out to be a colonial dialogue between Western-educated Nigerians appropriating colonial preconceptions and resources to repartition post-colonial governance, one as overarching as British colonization.

Continuing with the theme of ethnic politics within decolonization, Arua Omaka examines ethnic group movements and the demands for state creation. His chapter explores the colonial political conditions that shaped the emergence of ethnic organizations and why state creation became the ultimate expression of sub-national struggles for self-determination. Omaka concludes that the roots of minority agitation for state creation lies in the "unwieldy structure of the Nigerian federation," which made it difficult for minority ethnic groups to express their full political rights and assume significant political roles in the federation.

In his discussion of the place of ethnic minorities in Nigerian politics, Emmanuel Ojo argues that minorities have served as political bridgeheads in that they have provided a semblance of "national" outlook for dominant groups. Political parties dominated by ethnic majority groups have historically forged alliances with smaller minority parties in order to gain power and legitimacy at regional and national levels. Without these alliances and the role of minority parties, Ojo suggests, Nigerian politics would have been even more ethnic and regional in outlook than it turned out to be in the immediate post-colonial period.

The second part of the book, which focuses on *Minorities and Postcolonial Politics,* opens with Joseph Nevadomsky's examination of the dynamics of political and ethnic rivalries in early post-colonial Benin City. Centring on the Owegbe Cult, a secret society that came to prominence in the 1960s, his chapter calls into question some widely held assumptions that have informed analyses of political conflict and ethnicity in Africa. Nevadomsky challenges the view that political rivalries are solely the result

of tribal animosities or primordial sentiments. He argues instead that the causes of conflict in post-colonial Benin City are to be found in divergent and competing economic, political, cultural and ethnic interests.

Uyilawa Usuanlele's discussion of the response of non-Igbo ethnic minorities to Biafra's occupation of the Mid-West region during the Nigerian civil war offers interesting insights into the role of ethnic politics in armed conflict. Usuanlele draws attention to the complexity of the war, the fluidity of the ethnic interests and alliances, and the changes in loyalties and resistance over time, of the personalities and groups involved in the conflict. This fluidity of interest and alliances meant that victimhood cut across all sides of the conflict. Challenging contemporary accounts of the war, Usuanlele argues that in the Mid-West war theatre, the line between victim and perpetrator was blurred and complicated. It was a complex conflict, and atrocities were perpetuated on all sides that victimized both Igbo and non-Igbo ethnic groups. Sanya Osha's chapter continues with the themes of conflict and ethnic politics by examining the variety of sociopolitical configurations in which the Nigerian experience of federalism was forged. He suggests that Nigeria's experiment with federalism can only be fully understood by confronting the confluences of militarism, ethnicity and religion.

The final part of the book focuses on *Minorities and Contemporary Nation-Building*. In his chapter, Emmanuel Akubor takes a retrospective look at Willink's Minority Report and its implications for contemporary minority rights struggles in the Niger Delta. He argues that militancy in the Niger Delta centres primarily on alienation and the continued dissatisfaction of the ethnic minorities with the distribution of power and resources in the nation. Efforts to address the restiveness in the region must begin with infrastructural development, which has long been neglected, and the provision of basic social services in oil-producing communities that have suffered environmental degradation.

Enaruna Edosa examines the problems and contexts of national integration against the backdrop of constitutional provisions for citizenship in Nigeria. He contends that most of the policies that have been put in place by successive governments to foster national integration have not been effective for various reasons centring on the lack of political will to push through real changes. He argues that at a minimum, the promotion of national integration requires component states within the Nigerian federation to clarify their minimum residency and citizenship requirements which should then be centrally harmonized at the federal level. The promotion

of national unity, he contends, must begin with wide-ranging political and representational dialogue in the form of a Sovereign National Conference, a Sovereign Constitutional Conference or a Constituent Assembly. This would provide a forum to discuss and agree on the terms of national unity as well as the collective goals to pursue and enshrine in the constitution.

Festus Imuetinyan brings a more optimistic view to his assessment of the national integration project in Nigeria. He argues that both the federal structure and the process of state creation have been largely effective instruments of national integration in Nigeria in spite of the continued challenges and limitations of nation-building in the country. Although federalism and the issue of state creation have come to encapsulate many of the contradictions and conflicts associated with the political management of cultural plurality in Nigeria, Imuetinyan opines that both have been helpful to Nigeria's ethnic minorities in their quest for self-determination and equality in the power equations in the country. Also, by maintaining a strong central government so that regionally weak ethnic groupings can find coalition partners at the level of central government, Nigeria's federal structure has largely achieved stable inter-ethnic relations.

In the final chapter of the volume, Besnon Igboin examines religious referent power and the rise of ethnic militias in Nigeria. He argues that the activities of these groups demonstrate the role of religious, cultural and ethnic affinities in contemporary Nigerian politics. Religious referent power, he points out, is not simply a smokescreen to achieve group solidarity but has served as an effective tool for political expression and a means of attainting political power.

<p style="text-align:center">∗∗∗</p>

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Notes

1. George Shepard, "African People's Rights: The Third Generation in a Global Perspective," in *Emerging Human Rights: The African Political Economy in Contex*t, George Shephard and Mark Anikpo eds. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 46.

2. For a discussion of the diverse implications of the minority question on the political, social and economic life of Nigeria, see Rotimi T. Suberu, *Ethnic Minority Conflicts and Governance in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Institut français de recherche en Afrique, 2013).

3. J. Shola Omotola, "The Nigerian State and Multiple Minorities," in *Minorities and the State in Africa*, Michael Mbanaso and Chima J. Korieh eds. (Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2010), 272.

4. For a discussion of the minority question in the broader African context, see Mbanaso and Korieh, eds., *Minorities and the State in Africa* (Amherst, NY: Cambria, 2010).

5. Tunde Oduntan and Bonny Ibhawoh, "Are Minority Self-Determination Claims Human Rights? Nigerian Minorities and Decolonization," paper presented at the conference "Minority Rights and the National Question in Nigeria," University of Benin, 2012.

6. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Forth Dimension, 1978), 161.

7. Aaron T. Gana, "Federalism and the National Question in Nigeria: A Theoretical Exploration," in *Federalism in Africa: Framing the national question, Vol. 1*, eds. Aaron Tsado Gana, Samuel G. Egwu (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003), 17.

8. Gana, "Federalism and the National Question in Nigeria," 26.

9. Patrick Thornberry, "Is There a Phoenix in the Ashes? International Law and Minority Rights," *Texas International Law Journal*. 15, Summer 1980, 421.

10. Francis Deng, "Human Rights in the African Context," in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Kwasi Wiredu ed. (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), 502.

11. This "solution" was put forward by a military junta that led a failed coup. See Eghosa Osaghae, *Crippled Giant: Nigeria since Independence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 247.

12. R. T Akinyele, "The State and Minority Agitation in Nigeria," in *Minorities and the State in Africa*, Michael Mbanaso and Chima J. Korieh eds. (New York: Cambia Press), 294.

13. C. I. Obi, *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria Under Economic Adjustment: The Case of the Oil Minorities Movement of the Niger Delta* (Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute, 2001), 99.

Minorities, Colonialism and Decolonization

Decolonization and the Minority Question in Nigeria: The Willink Commission Revisited

Oluwatoyin B. Oduntan

Following petitions by minority advocates expressing fears of domination, the British government set up the Willink Commission on the question of minorities in Nigeria to address the fears of minorities by suggesting safeguards in the Constitution of Nigeria, which was being negotiated. In its report published in 1958, the Commission recommended the adoption of articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the Nigerian Constitution as the best-possible safeguard for minorities.[1] Not only was the prescription of civil liberties unprecedented and untried, it was contrary to established colonial practice of ruling the country through native authorities. British rule had been predicated on the idea that its colony was a conglomeration of many distinct tribes under British supervision,

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and for whom British law and conceptions of civil liberties could not be applied. Collectivizing colonial subjects in tribes (cast in traditions, customs and, chiefly power) made it easy to rule them. It also had the effect of creating and ossifying those tribes, and rendered ethnicity as the most important form of social identity.[2]

Colonial reforms from 1946, which aimed to replace native chiefs with educated elites as the bedrock of colonial administration at the local level, failed to undermine subsisting ethnic consciousness or the idea that Nigeria was a conglomeration of many distinct ethnic groups. Rather, it privileged a few ethnic groups, hardened the ethnic consciousness of those excluded from colonial privileges and increased their fears of domination. The Willink Commission acknowledged that some of the claims of minority advocates were legitimate, but concluded that they were best addressed by the inclusion of a bill of rights in the Constitution. This prescription makes sense only in terms of the British design for a modern state, but, for Nigerians, it amounted to a sharp shift from contemporary political reality; and thus imposed on independent Nigeria fundamental contradictions (between individual rights and communal identity) that it continues to struggle to overcome. The Willink's Report has thereby become etched as the main referent in the explanation of Nigeria's minority question, with many authors seeing the Commission as a missed opportunity to anticipate and resolve Nigeria's political crises, and achieve a gradual integration of its diverse ethnic/tribal identities. I refer to this as the "conciliation" model; its main premise is that Nigeria is a British amalgamation of many distinct tribes, relations among which the colonial power consciously (or naively) complicated by failing to address long-standing fears of domination by the smaller tribes or minorities.[3]

Writing on colonialism, Fred Cooper cautions against reading history backwards and finding the past only as it offer explanations for current realities.[4] Doing so, he argues, narrows history such that it loses its wider context, especially those other possible futures that were contemporaneously at play but which did not develop further. Such possible directions and the narratives behind them are likely to have been silenced by power. This appears to well capture the dominant views on the minority question in Nigeria, most of which try to offer explanations for the failure of the state to achieve internal cohesion. This chapter modifies the broad assessment of the Willink Commission by proposing constructivism as a more contextual explanation of the Commission's report and its impact on Nigeria. Constructivist theorists argue the primacy of human consciousness in

how society is constructed, and focus on the ideas, belief and interests of historical actors towards uncovering historical phenomena. Society (nation, tribe or country), according to Vivien Burr, does not evolve in an organic way but is constructed through the negotiation of its being.[5] Constructivists will not deny that Nigeria (or any society at that) exists; rather, they seek to explain how it came to be as a socially constructed reality. In line with this, I advance two related arguments. First, I build upon the thesis that tribal identities were colonially constructed to argue that rather than being the platform for resolving long pre-existing tribal relations or ancestral imperatives, the Willink Commission actually consummated a colonial strategy of creating and concretizing tribal identities.[6] The Commission legitimized and concretized previously fluid, tentative and comparatively insignificant minority identities and claims which colonial reforms from after World War II brought to life.

Therefore, where the popular "conciliation" notion suggests that the Commission offered a forum to natural tribes, this chapter argues that a project of construction was apace, based on colonial ideology and Britain's vision for what its post-colonial appendage should become, and which Nigerian elites, who share in the colonial and decolonization ideology and vision, acquiesced to. Accordingly, the claims which the Willink Commission was called upon to address, and which it legislated upon, did not target the securing of tribal authenticity, but rather it secured contemporaneous political opportunity. Considering that the minority question has become a recurrent theme in Nigeria's politics, this chapter demonstrates the contemporaneity of minority consciousness and reveals many minority claims as elite privileges, rather than fear of cultural persecution.

By revisiting the process through which minority consciousness and claims came to be, the chapter contributes to the debate on minority rights and self-determination in Nigeria during the era of decolonization. Many authors have wondered how anti-colonial nationalists adopted self-determination as a human right to challenge foreign rule, but were unwilling to grant the same to ethnic minorities in the post-colonial state.[7] The failure to respect the rights of its minorities has been linked to crises in Nigeria, Mauritania–Morocco (over Western Sahara) and Cameroon, among many other countries struggling over the political arrangement to respond to incessant minority agitations. For Nigeria, the publication of Michael Vickers' book on ethnic minority struggles for self-determination reinforces the popular notion that decolonization was a convergence between the dominant ethnic groups and the colonizer to

perpetuate control and domination of minority groups. Vickers argues that the evidence of ethnic domination was so strong and genuine that the British denial of it amounted to connivance with dominant nationalists and majority groups, and, in his words, "a betrayal of Nigeria." In his view, the failure to make proper conciliation for minority claims foreshadowed the Nigerian Civil War, and subsequent secessionist agitations.

The conciliation perspective expressed in Vickers' book is held widely among Nigerian authors.[8] In his narration of the growing frustrations among the Rivers peoples with the failure of the Minorities Commission to recognize their subordination, Takena Tamuno claims that the Commission disregarded an old struggle by the Rivers people to "secure the recognition of their political identity in Nigeria."[9] However, a Rivers people political or ethnic identity only came into being from the colonial reforms of 1947, when a Rivers territory was created out of Owerri, Warri and Calabar provinces. As Tamuno explains, the Niger Delta region was constituted by various groups, each organized around merchant chieftaincies and not defined by fixed cultural markers. Some of them, such as the Western Ijo and Opobo, shared cultural relations with the Rivers but were never considered part of the region until the creation of Rivers State in 1967.[10] The question to pose to those evaluating the Commission by arguing the pre-existence of a Rivers identity is: which ethnic group was dominating the "Rivers people" prior to 1945? Posed differently, what manner of cultural impediments were Rivers people facing, which they feared would be heightened at independence?

It becomes apparent therefore that authors of the conciliation model arrive at their conclusion only because they take the existence and coherence of minority identities for granted. Such background produces a self-sustaining explanation, which virtually reduces many agitations to the minority question. Examples include Bello-Imam's contention that the failure of the Willink Commission resonates with every resurgence of minority agitations in Nigeria, or Ugbana Okpu's connection of the Commission's disregard of ethnic minorities to the political instabilities from the eve of independence to 1965, and the Nigerian Civil War, which followed.[11] Similarly, Rufus Akinyele faults the Commission for having "compiled a report which was contradictory in content and left the ethnic minority problems practically unsolved."[12]

Ironically, these authors recognize that what drives minority agitations has not been the protection of tribal rituals, language or any other cultural particulars which might confirm the genuineness of ethnic minority fear. They all agree with the popular Okwudiba Nnoli's observation:

> The most ardent advocates of new states or regions have always been aspirants to high positions in the political, administrative, professional and business fields, who have failed to attain positions of preeminence at the national, regional or state levels, and who hope to attain such heights in smaller constitutional units.[13]

Those who led minority associations to advance claims to the Willink Commission were aspiring to political and other opportunities created by decolonization politics and did not seek the protection of ancestral imperatives by the claims they made. Therefore, the current scholarly consensus on Nigeria's minority question is predicated on assumptions of existential tribalism, which many analysts uncritically take for granted and have further popularized as being at the core of Nigeria's problems, that is, its incapacity to forge national unity out of what is presumed to be its disparate *primordial* parts.

By demonstrating that the invention and ossification of tribes in Nigeria was a colonial strategy to justify conquest and rule, a different interpretation of the Willinks Commission is revealed. In this vein, the Commission demonstrates clearly how deeply ingrained British thoughts that Africans are tribal peoples, organized in primordial identities and around unbridgeable traditions, were. The British believed that these tribes were held together only by their presence and colonial power, and that should they leave, the state would disintegrate into its erstwhile tribal forms. With such a preconception, British officials expected, anticipated and, indeed, stimulated minority consciousness. The British also encouraged the formation of minority associations and gave voice to their leaders to express fears that more populous groups will infringe on their rights in the event that the British left. Indeed, it was at the 1957 Constitutional conference in London that the British government suspended further advancement towards independence until the minority question was resolved.[14] The issue is not that those fears were real or not, but that they *did not* previously exist before the era of decolonization, when they not only evolved but were also rather very quickly recognized by the colonizers.

Seen differently from the conventional explanation therefore, this was an astute strategy in how it shifted attention away from seeing the colonizer as the collective enemy of all colonized people in Nigeria—the common theme around which Nigerian nationalists were collectively and successfully forcing the British to decolonize. By fragmenting a growing national consciousness into majority and minority tribes, the British reinvented themselves as adjudicator, conciliator, unifier and modernizer,

rather than as invader, colonizer and exploiter. Cumulatively, decolonization policies from 1947, including drafted Constitutions and political restructurings, broke down the growing sense of Nigerian nationhood being promoted by the nationalist movement.

The Willink Commission can be seen as a consummation of this colonial strategy. The first of its four terms of reference—"to *ascertain* the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and to propose means of allaying those fears *whether they be well or ill founded*"[15]— reflects an awareness that the claims of many minority groups may be unfounded. Yet, so deeply ingrained were British views on tribalism that in its conceptualization of "minority" and in its procedures and method, the Commission privileged "ethnic or religious minorities of a *permanent* nature.[16] It held 61 public sittings to hear the fears of ethnic minorities. By so doing and by committing to territorial adjustments (redistricting) and the creation of new states, the Commission gave voice to minority claims, including of hastily formed minority associations. In other words, the Willink Commission did not simply fail to resolve or reconcile ethnicities; it actually promoted them. By failing to interrogate this notion of enduring tribalism, theorists of Nigeria's minority question carry on the reinforcement of tribalism as a grundnorm.

In the light of this, this study demonstrates that the ethnic minority consciousness, which manifested in the late colonial period in Nigeria, was contemporaneous to decolonization. It was organized in response to the opportunities and challenges of impending national independence. Far from being targeted at resolving a long-standing problem of relations between immutable tribes, the Willink Commission can also be read as a colonial dialogue among Nigerian elites invested in the colonial political and bureaucratic project of districting the impending state.

The Willink Commission has attracted attention among scholars for other reasons. Despite its brevity (sitting from 1957 to 1958), the Commission was the most comprehensive attempt at resolving multi-ethnicity in Britain's African empire. The Commission generated a rich and extensive collection of documents, including its report, legal drafts and opinions from its sittings held in different parts of the country, and submitted memorandums, which have become valuable data for understanding minority agitations in Nigeria. These documents, especially transcripts of sittings, are valuable because of the adept ways in which transcribers record the subtleties of conversations, highlight the dramatic personae, and reveal their *locus standi*. The Willink papers are

the most comprehensive public documents yet available on the subject of minorities in Nigeria.[17] However, the selective use of these materials has shaped how authors interpret the minority question. By narrowly drawing their conclusions from the report of the Commission, many reproduce colonial preconceptions and evaluate the Commission and British policy on terms which are implicated in colonial ideology and design for post-colonial Nigeria, at the expense of a more wholesome contextual reading of the Commission and its purpose. For instance, Vickers interpreted the Commission's report to determine that the dominant Yoruba discriminated against the Edo, Urhobo and other non-Yoruba peoples. Other authors such as Akinyele and Lawal examined the Commission's report and arrived at conclusions based on the categories set in the report. In contrast to the report, which was presented to address specific policy actors, the transcripts of the Commission's many sittings offer a deeper insight into intricacies glossed over in the report. They reveal many minority petitions as uncertain and stumbling claims. In particular, they reveal why minority consciousness and fears of domination did not evolve prior to the era of decolonization.

Decolonization and the Making of Minorities

Even though there were ethnic identities even before colonial rule, the expression of minority consciousness and claims that emerged within decolonization was unique to that period, and were shaped by the geopolitics of the era, British strategy to forge an acceptable post-colony and competition among Nigerian elites to succeed the British to political positions. James Coleman ascribes the rise of minorities to the political reforms from 1946 onwards, which created regions over existing chiefly native authorities.[18] The Macpherson Constitution of 1951 provided for regional elections and generated fears that dominant ethnic groups in the regional capitals at Ibadan, Enugu, Kaduna and Lagos will likely subjugate minority ones. However, the political reforms also initiated the most intrusive era of British colonization in Nigeria. The cumulativeness of the Colonial Overseas Development and Welfare Act, domestic unemployment in post-war Britain and political reforms in the colonies resulted in the outpouring of more British personnel and unprecedented intervention in Nigeria's politics and economy. Alongside new political structures, colonial and nationalist penetrations into previously mildly impacted social spaces made the idea of Nigeria more real than ever before and, accord-

ingly, heightened apprehensions over meanings and implications. The era also witnessed the exclusion of many chiefly elites and native authorities, and created new opportunities for educated ones, who had previously been excluded from political power. Minority consciousness developed in the intersections of these developments during which political opportunity widened for educated elites without effectively undoing existing native governments sustained by colonial policies since British conquest.

British conquest and administrative policies were predicated upon the idea that many distinct tribes constituted Nigeria. As Okwudiba Nnoli demonstrates, colonial tactics of divide and rule locked people into primary identities, and accordingly into limited reactions and resistances, which sharpened ethnic differences, thus elevating tribes as the primary form of social identity.[19] The system of indirect rule, which further concretized ethnic identities by organizing local government around native chiefs claiming ethnic authenticity, resulted in the exclusion of non-natives from customary governments. Where individuals could have been strangers under well-established pre-colonial customary practices with options for social inclusion, "native foreigners" now formed ethnic enclaves, *Sabon Gari*, *Igbo Quarters*, *Sabo* and so on at the margins of host communities.[20] However, while settlers generated ethnic differences and conflicts, they did not account for minority consciousness because the colonial system virtually silenced the rights of settler/"foreigners." Indeed, large settler communities in Ibadan, Kano and Jos did not conceive of themselves as minorities and, thus, did not, on that basis, petition for protection at the Willink Commission.

Most of the ethnic conflicts during colonial rule were not minority conflicts. The earliest series of riots were anti-tax revolts against the British in Abeokuta (1918), Iseyin (1921) and Aba (1930). While violence in Jos (1945), and Kano (1953) may have been xenophobic, it is more meaningful in terms of anti-colonialism, indigene/settler conflicts and inter-ethnic competition among the dominant ethnic groups. In Jos, fighting was between migrant Ibo workers and Hausa settlers, and similar ones in Kano and Zaria were viewed as Northerner versus Southerner conflicts and Hausa versus Ibo imbroglios.[21] Conflicts which happened specifically among minorities were mainly internal, often very localized, and were rarely seen as expressions of minority rights. For instance, the "Leopard Killing" case among the Southern Annang and Ibibio, which claimed many lives, had nothing to do with minority consciousness.[22] In 1948, women in Abeokuta protested against the powers and excesses of

their king, and in Ibadan there were protests against local chiefs. There were of course conflicts among and within particular ethnic groups prior to the 1950s, and most of these were targeted at defining the limits of local chiefly power, rather than at fears of the domination of one over the other. Perhaps the best example that can be advanced for minority resistance was in the Middle Belt, where Tiv and Jukun locals demonstrated against the imposition of emirates over them. For instance, between 1946 and 1966, there were regular reports of riots staged by the Kataf of Southern Zaria against Fulani rulers, and against the oppressive features of the emirate/native administration system. Such riots against oppressive rulers happened across the country and may not exactly fit as minority resistance. The known instances of minority-induced conflicts happened after the Commission, rather than before it. Evidently, as decolonization politics promoted minority consciousness, it led to the definitions, mapping and politicization of minority identities

Why were there fewer minority agitations prior to the 1950s? The answer also lies partly in the pace at which ethnic identities were being formulated and concretized, and partly in the form of colonial power and opportunity that ethnic champions began to gear their campaigns towards. Yet, much needs to be done to understand the forms of social belonging in pre-colonial societies. However, the preponderance of evidence from studies tends towards a very fluid conception of who belongs to a society and who does not.[23] In what became Nigeria, many societies were highly permeable to "foreign ideas" through trade, slavery, war, rituals and other impetuses of long-distance travels and settlement, which precluded ironclad forms of primordial identity. Thus, by 1880, more than half of the Lagos population were former slaves, migrants or persons of such descent.[24] In Abeokuta, because there was no other way to unambiguously determine citizenship, the native authority had to come up with this simple criterion that anyone who had lived in the city continuously for ten years was a native.[25] Therefore, neither in pre-colonial society nor through most of colonial rule were nativity or minority identity critical social signifiers. Rather, minority consciousness evolved slowly as the political conditions of decolonization facilitated its political value.

This is well demonstrated by the evolution of a pan-Rivers minority consciousness, which did not become pronounced until the 1950s. According to Tamuno, "consciousness of a Rivers identity was more the result of cultural (and commercial) affinity than the product of a prior common pre-colonial political experience."[26] A diversity of identities, including the

Ijo, Ogoni, Ikwerre, Egbema and so on, fluidly traded and travelled across the region and were open to "foreign" traders and settlers. The earliest consciousness of a political identity in colonial Nigeria resulted from the administrative amalgamation of parts of the Calabar and the Owerri provinces to constitute the Rivers Province in 1947. This Rivers consciousness grew apace a sense of difference from the rest of the country. "Strangers," especially the Ibo, who had previously travelled and settled indiscriminately, began to be seen as "dangerous" foreigners. The narrative turned from seeing them as individual traders and settlers to "members of an Ibo nation seeking access to the Atlantic."[27] Elite associations such as the Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers (COR) State Movement (1953) and Rivers Chiefs and Peoples' Congress (1956) developed, to articulate and defend the collective heritage of the Rivers peoples within Nigeria, and against interlopers. Their activities included petitioning the colonial government for minority rights and self-determination.

Similar dynamic played out in the Middle Belt where a numerous but previously acephalous Tiv population coalesced around anti-colonialism and the British imposition of a Hausa as the paramount chief of Tiv Division. Yet it was not until the succession disputes following the death of Audu Afoda in 1945 that organized resentment against Hausa control burst out in the Tiv Riots of 1947. The simple explanation for this was that such super-structural political (and indeed colonial) authority had no direct application to, predominantly farmers until they began experiencing intrusive taxation and land expropriation. The Tiv Progressive Union, which had been formed in 1938 as a sociocultural movement to promote the "general improvement of the Tiv People," was altered into Tiv nationalism by evolving elites made up of Western-educated and World War II ex-servicemen. Tiv awareness of colonial injustices, of the imposition and domination of Hausa, of their lack of access to colonial privileges became pronounced from 1948 onwards. By 1951 the Tiv Union began to articulate Tiv concerns as the struggle of a political and ethnic minority against a dominant Hausa identity.[28]

Colonial administrative policies contributed to the making of minority consciousness, but they actually had limited impacts prior to the 1950s. Apart from the Lagos Colony (1865–1906), British rule in Nigeria was designed to be as non-intrusive as possible. A sequence of policies, including the Select Committee Report (1865), various protectorate agreements, and Lugard's proposal for indirect rule (1900) and amalgamation (1914), emphasized official determination to operate colonial administration at

the most minimal costs possible, within the limits of available personnel, and to dissuade public antagonism and expensive revolts. Therefore, far from being transformative, colonial rule only mildly affected the lived realities of most Nigerians. For instance, when on January 1, 1900, at Lokoja, Frederick Lugard declared himself as head of the Northern Protectorate, British presence was actually limited to a "restricted territory of Kabba and Ilorin." He divided the wider North into "civil provinces"—to underscore how weak British military influence was. Residents posted to the "civil provinces" were expected to act in "a kind of diplomatic administration." Even in Ilorin, Kabba and Bassa provinces, where British presence was comparatively significant, their secretariats were little more than administrative clearinghouses; colonial control meant little more than Lugard drafting papers and visiting with chiefs. Indeed, well past the amalgamation of 1914, the Northern provinces were nothing but "paper" provinces, lacking any secretariat or council, short of manpower and lacking any real administrative control. The amalgamation itself was deemed an administrative failure in Northern Nigeria, incapable of providing British control or supervision over the region.[29] Such incapacity was evident in how dependent colonial officials were on emirs and district heads for the imposition or collection of taxes, and were often unable to do anything when such chiefs obviously understated their returns.[30] By and large, indigenous processes of identity and politics continued from wider sources only mildly influenced by the British.

Communities in the South enjoyed comparable independence and limited interference from colonial officials until 1948. The Native Authority Ordinance of 1914 organized local governance around pre-existing traditional chiefs. Subsequent amendments in 1930, 1933 and 1943 aimed at strengthening native rulers to govern their territory under the supervision of a Resident. Some rulers such as the Alake of Abeokuta, Oba of Benin and the Alafin of Oyo were specifically designated Sole Native Authority, ostensibly because of the trust and confidence reposed in them by the colonial government, but really because colonial presence was weak and limited.[31] To many native rulers, their relationship with the British was a friendly tutelage in civilization rather than an imposition of a superior power. It was not until the 1945 amendment that provisions were made for native authority-in-council, requiring the rulers to constitute advisory councils. In reality, these councils were no more than rubber stamps. Despite the imposition of warrant chiefs in the Southeast, British rule did not produce a fundamental transformation in identity. Peoples of the Niger Delta did

not see themselves as minorities prior to 1950 and did not articulate their political identity and interests as minority groups. This does not imply that these people were unaware that they were numerically less than the more populous groups, but this sense of numerical disadvantage did not define their political and social identities in the way it began to during the era of decolonization. In fact, the Ahoada, Brass, Degema and Ogoni divisions continued to affirm their colonial identity on the basis of their protectorate treaties signed with the British during the nineteenth century. From the perspectives of most rulers, British rule was "friendly tutelage." Chiefs addressed Residents, District Officers and the Governor as "My friend" in their letters and correspondences, and colonial officials responded in like manner.[32] There was limited minority or majority consciousness because political relations were mainly vertical with the colonial government, and horizontal connections among Nigerian groups were minimized by the colonial provincial system.

Colonial provinces were not only organized for minimal British intrusion in local politics but also structured around pre-existing political geographies. The point has been made that British conquest was mainly by treaties, which retained the authorities of traditional systems intact but under British jurisdiction.[33] The Northern provinces, including Sarduana, Sokoto Kano, Borno, Adamawa, Katsina and Ilorin, corresponded to the pre-existing emirates, and the non-emirate provinces, including Kabba, Benue and Cameroon, were organized around pre-existing kingdoms. In the West, provinces conformed to the old Yoruba kingdoms at Oyo, Ife-Ilesa, Ibadan and Abeokuta, and Edo, Kingdom of Benin. In the East, Calabar, Onitsha, Owerri and Rivers similarly corresponded to old realities. While there were struggles among groups within provinces, a consciousness of a national minority or majority did not evolve.

How, and at what point, did Nigeria's minority question become so politicized and critical as to warrant a special commission and result in post-independence tensions? Most authors find a direct link between the Richard Constitution of 1946 and the accentuation of minority fears.[34] The Constitution created three new regional Houses of Assembly at Kaduna, Ibadan and Enugu, with legislative control over regional budgets. The new assemblies were also to choose the regions' representatives to the Nigeria-wide Legislative Council. This was a major shift from a system of Native Administration—a conglomeration of districts and provinces loosely overseen by a hierarchy of District Officers, leading to the Governor. It was designed largely to assuage the exclusion of a loud and vociferous edu-

cated elite, based mainly in Lagos and operating in an Atlantic context, the discourses of which influenced policy in the colonial metropolis. It also signalled a marked shift in British vision of Nigeria, replacing indirect rule through native rulers with constructive engagement with an educated elite. This vision privileged Western-educated persons, most of whom identified themselves as Yoruba or Ibo, not necessarily because they belonged to these ethnic groups but because of the nineteenth-century missionary enterprise which blossomed in the Yoruba region and around the Niger Ibo. Thus, the 1946 Constitution provided conditions by which dominant groups could control and claim ownership of regions, and consequently render other groups as outsiders.

However, the Richard Constitution was mired in controversy and was never fully implemented until its revision in the Macpherson Constitution of 1951. Region-based political parties began to appear from 1949 to contest regional elections set for 1951. The Northern People's Congress (NPC) (1949) and Action Group (AG) (1950) evolved from pre-existing Hausa and Yoruba ethnic cultural associations, while the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which had previously proclaimed a pan-Nigerian platform, slanted towards an Ibo identity. The formation of these regional parties implied the exclusion of those defined as nonnatives; exclusion not only from these political parties (except at subordinate levels) but also, concomitantly, from the structures of self-government being set up and from impending post-colonial power. Those so excluded mobilized minority consciousness around evolving sentiments against the perceived dominance of foreigners. The regional parties further intensified minority agitations by promoting minorities in other regions while trying to mute agitations in their own. The AG offered itself as champion to ethnic minorities, forming political alliances with opposition movements such as the United Middle Belt Congress (Northern Region), and among the Ibibio and Efik in the Eastern Region. Similarly, the NCNC infiltrated minority groups in Modakeke and Ibadan, and championed the cause of the Bini–Urhobo–Itsekiri for the excision of the Mid-West State from the Western Region. Riots in Kano (1957) and Ibadan (1956) were related to how political opposition mobilized minority resistance against policies perceived to be detrimental to them.[35]

Rather than simply being a platform for resolving a long pre-existing tribal problem or "ancestral imperatives,"[36] the Willink Commission actually served to concretize identities and minority identities, and claims which, up to then, were previously tentative and were just being formal-

ized. Minority consciousness evolved after the Richards Constitution of 1946 began to be implemented with the inauguration of regional governments in 1948. "Regional governments became the fount of privilege and the fulcrum of social control." Regional associations began to be formed only afterwards, Middle Belt National Congress (MBNC) (1951), COR State Group (1950), Ijaw National Union (1952), and so on. The enactment of Constitutional conferences from 1953 and the adoption of a federal system in 1954 based on the contested ideas of regionalism further pitched its advocates and those opposed to it in a desperate struggle over power in the impeding independent state.

Evaluating Minority Claims at the Willink Commission

The ambiguities and uncertainties of minority identities and claims were very apparent from the beginning and all through the sittings of the Commission. Petitions and memorandums were not simply the uncontested agendas of ethnic identities as authors such as Vickers assume; rather, many submissions were stumbling claims by unsure identities, and by undeterminable representations. Indeed, there was no consensus over what being a minority meant, what forms of political or primordial definitions could be applied and, ultimately, how best to secure minorities.

The first sitting of the Minorities Commission held in Lagos revealed the conceptual ambiguities of "minority" as litigants debated whether political minority corresponded to ethnic/tribal/cultural minority. The chairman's clarification that political parties such as the NCNC, which had lost elections and constituted a parliamentary minority, were outside the terms of the reference did not really clarify the confusion. Rejecting the representations of political parties and social associations, the Commission defined a minority as "something, which was permanent in form." In its view, a political party was a shifting entity, which might "be a minority only if it was linked with some permanent distinguishing characteristics, such as ethnic difference, or a religious belief."[37] This might appear conceptually apparent; however, the difference is blurred where political parties corresponded to ethnic and religious affiliations, and in which political opposition aggregated minority fears of the monolithic (ethnic) state. For instance, the petition of the Yoruba Central State Movement was both ethnic and political because the proposed state identified with the political minority NCNC against the perceived Ijebu-dominated AG govern-

ment. The ethnic and political lines were similarly blurred in the Northern Region, where the NPC not only represented but also epitomized the Hausa–Fulani Islamic Caliphate ideology, seen by the MBNC as unbridgeable to Tiv, Idoma or Jukun nativism and traditions.

Apparently, the Commission preconceived that African identities were fixed and static, "something which is permanent in form," and had unbridgeable differences between tribes whose ways of life precluded one from the other.[38] Nigerian elites preyed upon the colonial narrative as self-reinforcing logic to map ethnic differences and highlight minority fears of domination. Minority petitions advanced and justified historical claims, by pointing to the colonial accounts, existing administrative structures and voting patterns, and other colonial infrastructures constructed by and meaningful to the British. In other words, the chief evidence provided by these minority groups were those collected and organized by the British. Litigants quoted extensively from the colonial intelligence reports, which were collected during the 1930s by British district officers to facilitate the reorganization of native administration following protests against the introduction of indirect rule and direct taxation in the Southern Provinces. Many authors have queried the manner and purpose of their collection, with Gann and Duignan cautioning that "they are not irreproachable."[39] Indeed, they were so widely criticized during the 1930s for their inaccuracies that their use for the reorganization of native administration was discontinued in the Western Provinces.[40] However, by 1950, intelligence reports had become the standard and official histories used to justify primordial identities, and to claim minority status; as were the administrative structures constructed to serve colonial administrative purposes. Books such as Talbot's *History of the Peoples of Southern Nigeria* became authoritative texts from which evidence were gathered. Meaningful to the British, they formed the stock of documentary evidence by which the Willink Commission made its decisions, and indeed upon which many subsequent scholarly accounts have been narrated.

Such historical claims did not always go unchallenged (including among the ethnic minorities advancing them). For instance, strong claims of a coherent Bini/Edo identity built around the well-documented ancient kingdom were challenged by a variety of identities such as Ishan, Afemai, Ijaws, Urhobos, Akoko-Edo and Ika peoples included in the proposal for a Mid-West state, so much so that the Commission had to divide them into "pro" and "con" groups. Responding to claims that all "Edoid peoples wished to be grouped in the proposed state," the Otaru of Auchi insisted,

"he had no complaints about Yoruba domination and had been happily connected with them for a long time."[41] In a similar vein, Ijaw respondents were not agreed on the size of Ijaw population or the extent of Ijaw territory. The Ila–Igbomina Union wished for a regrouping of regions to combine a substantial part of their population from the Northern Region. The main justification advanced was that all Igbomina people came from Ile-Ife with other Yoruba groups but were dispersed to other places, including Ilorin, during the wars. The Union had no clear sense of the particular wars that dispersed them, at what dates these wars were fought and which particular areas the people dispersed to as a group. Asked if they were willing to repatriate all Ila–Igbomina people back home from wherever they were, the Union preferred that their land, wherever they settled, be added to Igbomina territory.[42] In the North, two factions of the United Middle Belt Congress presented two contrasting proposals arguing over where should be the capital of the new region and how its anticipated resources were to be distributed.[43]

Equally intriguing is the issue of representation. Many of those who submitted petitions as representatives of minority groups could not substantiate their identification with the groups they claimed to represent. For instance, one A.G. Idahi's claim as the Secretary of "Ishan Progressive Union," which he claimed had 12,000 persons, was proved to be false upon cross-examination. Apparently, Idahi lived in Jos for most of his life as an employee of the United Africa Company (UAC), where he formed the *Otu Ofura* society of people who spoke the Edo language. He returned to Ishan four years previous to the Commission, joined a local "*Ogboni* cult" and unsuccessfully applied for a position in the AG government before submitting a petition for the independence of the Ishan people. Upon cross-examination in the Igbomina case at Ibadan sitting, J.B. Layeni, Secretary of the Ila–Igbomina Union, admitted that he was not Igbomina himself. When asked if he considered the significance of him not being an Igbomina, "[t]he witness [Layeni] said he had been secretary for the past 20 years and at the time of his appointment there were not enough educated people 'to go round.'"[44]

Generally, minority advocates advanced that they were culturally different from the dominant groups, that the current regional arrangement threatened their identity and cultural practices and, more commonly, that the dominant groups denied (or will deny) them the benefits of government, including education, infrastructure, postal services, and so on. In the Western Region, the Mid-West Movement demanded self-determination on behalf of the Benin–Delta provinces to mitigate domina-

tion and "recolonization" by the Yoruba. The movement frowned at how the Yoruba-dominated Western regional government interfered in the cultural practices of the region by dissolving Divisional councils without consultation, by failing to pay the traditional rulers in the province and by imposing appointments. Furthermore, it claimed that the Yoruba imposed the Ogboni, which was a Yoruba cult and which required the adoption of Yoruba culture for qualification. The government also allegedly privileged cocoa production and paid scant attention to rubber, which was the main cash crop of the Benin–Delta provinces. For the Eastern Region, the Ijaw State Union canvassed that Ijaw communities scattered across provinces in the Western and the Eastern regions should be constituted into a Rivers State. The Union claimed that the Ijaw were the fourth largest ethnic group and therefore merits a state of their own. The existing regional system was adverse to them because the government was not paying adequate attention towards developing their area but rather spent on Yoruba and Ibo areas. Furthermore, the Union saw the imposition of the Olu of Itsekiri over Warri, a town it claimed belonged to Ijaws, as a portent of what the AG would do against the Ijaw upon independence.

In the North, advocates of groups in the Middle Belt (Ilorin, Kabba, Benue and Plateau) argued that the government under the dominant Moslem Hausa–Fulani–Kanuri–Nupe ethnicities amounted to a denial of their fundamental human rights. Yoruba-speaking peoples across the Niger wished to be reunited with their ethnic kin, ditto for the Ibo, while other minorities wished to have a separate state away from the Hausa–Fulani-dominated region. Collectively, they posed their desire as the restoration of their humanity, suggesting that being in the same region with the Moslem Hausa was dehumanizing. Minorities here made similar political and material accusations of discrimination in the appointments to political and public services. Chiefly elites in these provinces claimed that they were not accorded statuses commensurate to their cultural positions and were made subordinate to Emirs and Hausa rulers. Minority provinces also claimed that they were discriminated against in development projects, educational and medical grants, and student scholarships. They wished to ebb the flow of Islamist penetration and conversion in their provinces, including the imposition of Emirs in non-emirate areas, and the hostilities of the government against their chiefs, which further confirmed their fears that at independence, their lives were in danger.

Not many of these accusations were well substantiated. In the North, the regional government countered that the territory being canvassed to comprise the Middle Belt Region held 20% of all first-class chiefs and 55%

of all second-class chiefs in the Northern Region. It argued that the contention that the chiefs were not given due regard was not supported by evidence, including the regular payment of wages from government coffers. Middle Belt chiefs constituted the majority in the Council of Chiefs in the region's House of Chiefs, where voting on decisions was by simple majority. Furthermore, the regional government upgraded the statuses of non-Hausa chiefs well above the grades the British had determined them to be since 1912.[45] The government further demonstrated that rather than being disadvantaged in the allocation of public resources, the Middle Belt was well catered for comparative to other parts of the region. On the medical grants issued up to 1957, the Middle Belt, constituting 21% of the regions' population, received 44.5% of total grants. It similarly led in the ratio of public dispensaries and of beds to population, as well as in the provision of public education—hosting two of four technical colleges and 1056 primary schools compared with 345 for the core North. Capital grants for the Middle Belt amounted to £37,537, compared to £4770 for the core North.

While most fears of domination were described in terms of the capacity of dominant ethnic groups to deny minorities social amenities, there were not many claims of a cultural nature, such as could imply fear of persecution or attacks against cultural authenticity. Middle Belt groups in the Northern Region complained of forced Islamization but failed to provide evidence of any instance when anyone was so persecuted. In contrast, Christian groups loudly proclaimed proselytization of Moslems as their main purpose. In the Western Region, Benin elites highlighted that they were so culturally different from the Yoruba that a Yoruba government threatened the authority of their *Oba*. They frowned at the limited employment opportunities available to them because government positions precluded those who will not join the Yoruba cult group, *Ogboni*. They could however not substantiate that a Yoruba-led government obstructed their native rituals, traditions or language.[46] In many cases, governments provided explanations for actions deemed by minority advocates to be exclusionary. For instance, the Western regional government conceded that it could not build infrastructure in Ijaw riverine areas comparable to Ibadan because of the topography and the huge expense of displacing water to reclaim land. The case of the Olu of Warri pitched Ijaws against Itsekiri and Urhobos, which further establishes that minority agitations were about political rivalries, districting and the collection of ground rents.

Conclusion: Minority Rights or Elite Privileges

Many reasons can be advanced for why the Willink Commission was silent on the many inconsistencies and ambiguities in its final report. First, its mandate and terms of reference were preconditioned on the colonial axiom that Africans were organized in tribes. Therefore, it failed to value obvious evidence which challenged the coherence of ethnic identities and the authenticity of those who represent them. Secondly, its prescription of a regime of civil liberties demonstrates its recognition that unclear geographical and cultural delimitations could not be the basis for organizing a modern state. The transcripts of the Commission's sittings reveal the ambiguities of ethnic identity and why the Commission could not have prescribed self-determination, which many authors suggest it could have.

By highlighting the inconsistencies in minority claims, this chapter has demonstrated that the discourses of minority rights in Nigeria has been less about the protection of cultural identity or rights and more about the jostling for political advantages among Nigerian elites. Minority consciousness evolved not because sharp ethnic distinctions had pre-existed, but because decolonization and the prospects of independence opened up new spaces of political power for educated Nigerians—spaces which had precluded them under the native authority system. Constitutional reforms opened up electable offices outside of Lagos, which educated persons read they could contest for by claiming to belong to particular groups. Many of them had been excluded from political offices in the regional capitals and interpreted their exclusion as being ethnic outsiders. Thus, the Willink Commission, set up to enquire into Nigeria's minority question and find ways of resolving minority fears, turned out to be a colonial dialogue between Western-educated Nigerians appropriating colonial preconceptions and resources to repartition post-colonial governance, similar to British colonization.

Notes

1. National Archives Ibadan (NAI), Colonial Office (CO). Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them," July 1958.
2. On the use of "tribes" in this chapter: I am not unaware of its pejorative uses, but I use the term to contextually reflect colonial inventions of Nigerian identities. Where appropriate, I use "ethnic."

3. On Willink Commission and Nigeria's minority question, see R.T. Akinyele, "States Creation in Nigeria: The Willink Report in Retrospect," *African Studies Review*, 39, 2 (1996): 71–94; Babatunde Agiri, "The Concept and Practice of Individual Rights in Nigeria, 1950–1966: How Relevant Is the American Constitutional Experience?" *American Studies International*, 29, 2 (1991): 55–68; Ugbana Okpu, "Nigeria's Dilemma: Development or New States," *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto Italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, 38, 2 (1983): 183–203. For a contrary view, see J.D. Hargreaves, "From Strangers to Minorities in West Africa," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5, 31(1981): 95–113.

4. Fred Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 107.

5. Vivian Burr, *Social Constructionism* (London: Routledge, 2003). On Constructionism, see also P. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (London: Penguin Books, 1991).

6. On the invention of tribes and traditions thesis, see Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger (eds.) *Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1992); Leroy Vail, *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press,1989); J.D.Y. Peel, "The Cultural Work of Yoruba Ethnogenesis," in *History and Ethnicity*, ed. Elizabeth Tonkin et. al. (London: Routledge, 1989); Frank Salomane, "Becoming Hausa: Contributions to the Study of Cultural Pluralism," *Africa* 45, 4 (1977).

7. Ingrid Barnsley and Roland Bleiker "Self-Determination: From Decolonization to Territorialization," *Global Change: Peace and Security*, 20, 2 (2008): 121–136; Joshua Castellino, "Territory and Identity in International Law: The Struggle for self-Determination in the Western Sahara," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 28, 3 (1999): 525.

8. Wale Adebanwi describes it as "the incredibly illuminating book (which) unveils a critical part of the fatal constitutional and structural flaws inscribed by the British" in "Review of a Nation Betrayed" *African Affairs,* 111, 443 (2012): 35–337; Olufemi Vaughan, "Decolonization Politics and Mid-West Autonomy," Review of Ethnicity and Sub-nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Mid-West state by Michael Vickers, *Journal of African*

History, 44, 1 (2003): 171–172; Boateng Osei, "How Britain Messed Up Nigeria's Minority Question," *New African Magazine*, 497 (2010): 17.

9. Takena Tamuno, "Patriotism and Statism in the Rivers State, Nigeria," *African Affairs*, 71, 284 (1972): 67.

10. Ibid., 68.

11. Ugbana Okpu, 188.

12. Tamuno, 79; J. B. Bello-Imam, "Problems of National Integration in Nigeria," *Indian journal of Political Science*, 48, 2 (1987): 266–228; Agiri, "Concepts," 57; Akinyele, 90.

13. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics in Nigeria* (Enugu: Forth Dimension, 1978), 161.

14. NAI, C. (58) 171, "Memorandum by the Secretary of State," July 31, 1958.

15. Cover letter, Henry Willink to Lennox-Boyd, *The Willink Commission Report. Italics* mine.

16. Ibid., 113. Italics mine.

17. Other reports include "Report of the Panel Appointed by the Federal Military Government to Investigate the Issue of the Creation of More States and Boundary Adjustments in Nigeria," Federal Government Press, Lagos, 1976. Most studies of state creation in Nigeria have relied on newspaper reports on the subject.

18. James Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (University of California Press, 1971).

19. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnic Conflicts in Africa* (Senegal: CODESRIA Book Series, 2000).

20. Hargreaves, 98.

21. Nnoli, *Ethnic Politics*, 78.

22. David Pratten, *Man Leopard Murders: History and Society in Colonial Nigeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007). On women's protest in Abeokuta, see Cheryl Odim-Johnson and Nina Mba, *For Women and the Nation: Funmilayo Kuti of Nigeria* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). For Ibadan, see Ruth Watson, *Civil Disorder is the Disease of Ibadan* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2003).

23. Hargreaves, 98; Peel, 198, *passim*.

24. Kristin Mann, *Slavery and the Birth of an African City, 1760–1900* (Indiana University Press, 2007), 217–218.

25. NAI, APP 8/1, Egba Government Gazette, 27 Jan. 1913; reaffirmed in Adebesin Folarin, *The Laws and Customs of Egbaland* (Abeokuta, 1928) 15, 16.

26. Tamuno, 268.

27. D. Larry, "Class, Ethnicity and Democratic State: Nigeria, 1950–1966," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 25 (1983): 475.

28. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties: Power in a Emergent African Nation* (Africa World Press, 2004), 374–376.

29. Z.O. Apata, "Lugard and the Creation of Provincial Administration in Northern Nigeria 1900–1918," *African Study Monographs*, 11, no. 3 (1990): 143–152.

30. Tanimu Abubakar (ed.) "The Role of Emirs and District Heads in the Imposition, Assessment and Collection of the Kurdin Kasa and the Jangali in the Emirates, 1903–1914," in *The Essential Mahmud: Selected Writings of Mahmud Tukur* (Zaria: ABU Press, 1990).

31. Editorial, *Lagos Standard*, January 3, 1917.

32. For example, National Archives, Abeokuta (NAA) 52/2/2, Oba Ademola II: Letters and Correspondences.

33. Coleman, 17–18.

34. Akinyele, 79; Coleman: 81.

35. Sklar, 91.

36. Vickers, 10.

37. Proceeding of Sittings of the Commission on Minorities (Ibadan, December 7, 1957), 3.

38. Ibid.

39. Lewsi Gann and Peter Duignan, *Colonialism in Africa, 1870–1960: A Bibliographical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973); also NAI, 1/3: A Gwan, "A Preliminary Index to the Intelligence Reports in the Nigerian Secretariat Group," Nigerian National Archive (Ibadan, 1961).

40. E.A. Miller, Annual Report of the Southern Provinces, 1938, 48–49; Letter no. 14590/432, Secretary, Western Provinces, Ibadan, to The (Hon.) Chief Secretary to the Government (Lagos, November 29, 1940).

41. Transcript, Willink Sitting, Benin, December 16, 1958, 4, 15.

42. Ibid., 47.

43. Memoranda by Northern Regional Government (section 41, 15). Willink Report (Appendices).

44. Willink Proceeding, Ibadan, Dec. 1957, 3.
45. Memorandum of the Northern Regional Government to the Minority Commission, 12–13.
46. Transcript, Willink Sitting, Benin, 21.

Historicizing Ethnic Minorities' Movements and State Creation in Nigeria, 1946–1967

Arua Oko Omaka

The concept of "minority" within international politics has posed some definitional problems among scholars. Owing to the fluidity of the concept, there is no consensus on a definition. One of the earliest attempts to provide a definition for the term was made in 1977 by Francesco Capotorti, the former Special Rapporteur of the United Nations, who defined minority as:

> A group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a State, in a non-dominant position, whose members—being nationals of the State—possess ethnic, religious or linguistic characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and show, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language.[1]

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The problem with this definition is that it only covers persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities. There is no provision for other minority groups in terms of different social categories grounded in sexuality, gender, age, class, race, and so on.

Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities adopted in 1992 recognizes minorities as a group of people with similar national or ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity, and provides that states should protect their existence.[2] The article makes reference to the same groups already identified by Capotorti. However, other groups such as sexual minorities, gender minorities, age minorities, and other minorities who are also entitled to rights are omitted and, consequently, appear voiceless and unprotected. With the rapidity of sociocultural, political, and economic changes taking place all over the world, the concept of minority continues to pose more questions than can easily be answered.

A more workable definition of what constitutes a minority group should thus be seen in terms of context. Based on this, I define a minority group quite broadly as any group of people, typically with less population than other groups within a given community, which is disadvantaged when compared to the rest of the population. The "minoritization" of a group should be seen more in terms of the situation and not just numerical weakness. For instance, a group can be a majority in terms of numerical strength but a minority in terms of political representation. In this sense, the numerically superior black population in South Africa under the Apartheid regime could be described as a minority in the Apartheid government. It was on the basis of being a political minority in government that black South Africans agitated for equality and full representation in the national government. However, the minorities referred to in this chapter are the ethnic minorities in Nigeria, and they are construed as minorities because of both their numerical weakness and poor representation in the national politics.

Ethnic Minorities and Agitation for State Creation

Ethnic consciousness and the demand for state creation have a long history in Nigeria. By the time one of the key colonial constitutions, the Arthur Richards Constitution was promulgated in August 1946, the Ibibio Union, the first ethno-cultural organization in Nigeria, was already in existence. However, this pioneer ethnic organization did not have an explicit political agenda,[3] and the issues of federalism and marginalization were not

evident in its agenda or activities. Subsequent ethnic minority unions that emerged such as the Edo National Union, Calabar Improvement League, and the Ijaw Progressive Union assumed a political character. Like the Ibo Union and Egbe Omo Oduduwa, the minority unions wanted representation in the political process of the federation. The Nigerian political elite understood the extreme ethno-cultural diversity of the Nigerian nation and argued for the creation of many states. However, the colonial authorities were unconvinced about the political expedience of more states and consciously ignored it in their administrative plans.

Writing in his book *Political Blueprint of Nigeria* in 1945, Nnamdi Azikiwe, who later became the first president of independent Nigeria, advocated a federal form of government for Nigeria and the division of Nigeria into eight states based on ethnic affiliations.[4] Another prominent Nigerian leader, Obafemi Awolowo, in his book *Path to Freedom*, suggested dividing the country into 40 states based on ethnic and linguistic affinity. It was obvious that Nigeria, being very large and multi-ethnic, required a unique administrative apparatus. Instead of creating more states to accommodate ethnic and cultural diversities, the colonial governor Arthur Richards created three large regions, disregarding the conspicuous cultural, linguistic, territorial and historical dissimilarities within them. This colonial decision partly laid the foundation for the crises that engulfed Nigeria soon after independence.

The key problem with the Richards Constitution, which came into effect in January 1947, was that it created a faulty regional structure that encouraged regionalism in Nigeria's pre-independence and post-independence politics. The colonial authorities drew the boundaries of the Northern Region to include about 52 per cent of the national population and about the same share of power in the national government while contributing less commensurate revenue to the national economy.[5] Apart from the fact that one of the regions was large enough to politically dominate the other two regions, the political parties in the federation were regionally oriented with politicians such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello depending mainly on ethnic and regional support to pursue and achieve power at the national level. For instance, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (later renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC) led by Nnamdi Azikiwe, an Igbo, was seen as an Igbo party; while the Northern People's Congress (NPC) led by Ahmadu Bello, a Fulani, was considered a Hausa–Fulani party. The Action Group (AG) was called a Yoruba party because its leader, Obafemi Awolowo, was Yoruba.

Until the collapse of the First Republic in 1966, regional governments were very powerful and controlled most development projects in the country. Since political parties also had enormous powers over public institutions such as civil service, public corporations, banks, and local councils, they wielded extensive influence over the masses. Some regional leaders practically compelled members of their ethnic group and region to join their political parties regardless of their personal values and convictions. Those who resisted party pressures were seen as either anti-regional or anti-ethnic elements, and were punished for exercising their free political rights.[6] The regional governments were so powerful that party leaders spurned any national vision and interest. Ahmadu Bello, the leader of NPC, for instance, felt more comfortable as a regional premier and sent his subordinate, Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, to represent his party at the national level. It was fashionable for political leaders to identify themselves first as members of a region or ethnic group before declaring national loyalty.

Commenting on the rise in ethnic and regional consciousness, Anthony Enahoro, the Minister of Home Affairs under Obafemi Awolowo's cabinet observed, that an average politician owed loyalty to his village and ethnic group, and little or nothing to the country.[7] To make matters worse, regional governments assumed powers and statuses comparable to the federal government by appointing Agent-Generals in London and setting up public relations agencies in the USA. The continuation of this rivalry among the regions and the apparent lack of national vision contributed to the collapse of the First Republic. The political elite spent their time and resources in building their ethnic and regional groups instead of building the nation. This unfortunate situation hampered efforts towards achieving full national integration and unity in Nigeria. As one commentator observed, because Nigerian nationalists saw Nigeria as an artificial creation, it was impossible for the ethnic leaders to coalesce the people into one national bloc.[8] Some Europeans who visited Ibadan in 1957 saw the looming danger in ethnic and regional struggle, and predicted that the federation might disintegrate after the exit of the colonial authorities.[9] Another observer described the four regions that later made up the federation as breeding grounds for most of the corruption and ethnicity that plunged the country into political crisis.[10]

Within the existing federal structure and the hyphenating regional rivalry that followed independence, the minority groups' aspirations were sometimes ignored but could easily be used to promote party propaganda.[11] For example, during the election into the Eastern House of

Assembly in 1957, Nnamdi Azikiwe emphasized the right of the minorities in Calabar–Ogoja and Rivers provinces to self-determination, but after the election, the NCNC abandoned its verbal support for new states in the East.[12] Obafemi Awolowo also used the creation of more states as a mantra to win the support of the minorities in the Western Region during Nigeria's general election in 1959. Awolowo's AG supported the creation of many on the ground that such states must be viable within a decentralized federation.[13] Feeling exploited by the AG in the 1959 election, the Mid-West State Movement accused the AG of working against the Mid-West while claiming to support it.[14] Awolowo's idea of "viability," however, suggests that the demand for autonomous states by the minority groups within the federation was always obstructed by leaders of the majority ethnic groups. Neither the colonial authorities nor the majority leaders in the post-colonial Nigeria saw the minority quest as a legitimate claim that deserved priority attention.

Being numerically weak, the leaders of the minority ethnic groups found themselves in a disadvantaged position in the federal political equation. The minority leaders also feared that the majority ethnic groups would always unite as a voting bloc to maintain permanent control of political power at the regional level. Leaders of the minority groups, however, lost a number of opportunities to redress the inherent imbalance in the federal system during colonial rule. One of such occasions was during the promulgation of the Macpherson's Constitution in 1951. The minority groups articulated their dissatisfaction with the existing federal structure and requested the creation of more states to protect their interests.[15] The minority groups organized themselves into regional organizations as platforms to express their grievances. Some of the major movements that represented minority interests included: the Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers (COR) State Movement in the Eastern Region, the Mid-West State Movement in the Western Region, and the Middle Belt State Movement in the Northern Region. In 1954, another state movement, Bornu Youth Movement, which was not comfortable with the delay in democratizing the feudal system of the Northern Region and ousting the British, joined in the state creation movement, demanding for the creation of a Bornu State out of the Northern Region.[16]

The groups' demand for state creation did not yield the expected result, but the minority leaders persisted in their demand. They presented their case again at the London Constitutional Conference in 1953 when Southern Cameroons, formerly a part of the Eastern Region, also

demanded a separate region. Whereas Southern Cameroon under the leadership of Dr Emmanuel Mbela Lifafa Endeley was given a condition for its separation from Eastern Nigeria, the minority groups did not receive any meaningful attention.[17] Since the minority movements were non-violent and did not pose any threat to the state, the colonial authorities showed virtual indifference to their agitation.

In spite of the failed attempts to negotiate the creation of more states under the colonial authorities, the minority groups intensified their struggle. Interestingly, the ethnic organizations that championed the minorities' cause were neither cultural nor national in their outlooks but were "situationally" or circumstantially formed to agitate for minority autonomy in the federation. Though not homogenous, the ethnic minorities were able to form formal structures that represented their groups, a development that challenges constructivist arguments that the "lack of pure identities means that groups are not homogenous and cannot be represented through formal structures."[18]

Leaders of these state creation movements strongly believed that the creation of more states would eliminate their fears of domination by the majority ethnic groups. Some Nigerians, however, observed that some colonial officials also encouraged the minority leaders to engage in separatist moves so as to delay Nigeria's independence.[19] Whether this is true or not, the role of colonial authorities in the pre-independence state creation movement did not in any way minimize the original initiative of the minority leaders to have their own separate region or state within the federation. It only suggests that the question of state creation movement was not as simple as it may seem. The British authorities saw Nigeria with huge resources and opportunities as the "India of West Africa" and were concerned about the rapid progress and radical character of the Southern Nigerian political elite. They had a huge investment in oil coupled with over 16,000 of their nationals who were gainfully employed in private and public services in Nigeria even after independence.[20] It could therefore be argued that the colonial authorities used state creation movements to delay the proposed independence of Nigeria.

The continued agitation for right to autonomous states led to the setting up of the Willink-led Minorities Commission in 1957.[21] While the Commission was ostensibly intended to assuage the feelings of the minority groups, it was also designed to delay the independence process. For instance, an important clause in the Commission's report stated that if new states were to be created for the minorities, such states would require

two years to settle down before Nigeria could be granted independence.[22] This was a difficult conundrum for the political leaders who desperately wanted an independent Nigeria. Although the spokesmen for the minority groups at the Constitutional Conference held in London in 1958 declared their preference to delay independence in order to get their own states, all the major delegations reaffirmed their choice for early independence.[23] The majority leaders' choice of immediate independence only strengthened the colonial government's decision not to create new states on the ground that it would lead to the breakup of the federation.[24] If the colonial authorities really wanted to create more states and considered the two years' condition necessary, they would have initiated steps towards the state creation before 1957. The apathy of the colonial office to the minorities' right, therefore, explains why it instructed the Minorities Commission not to recommend the creation of more states save as the last resort.[25] And while the colonial office believed state creation would lead to the breakup of the federation, it never thought about the implication of allowing a region in the federation to dominate the rest of the country after independence.

While the colonial office takes the historic responsibility for the imbalance in the federal structure and the denial of the minorities' right to have their own state, minority groups' agitation for state creation was also strongly opposed by some leaders of the majority ethnic groups. Ahmadu Bello, the premier of the Northern Region, for instance, criticized the idea of carving out the Middle Belt State from the Northern Region. He described the Minorities Commission as a "wandering and most embarrassing commission" set up by the colonial office. Bello argued that his great-great grandfather's family had ruled virtually the entire Northern Region without any difficulty and wondered why any group should agitate for the creation of a physically incongruous Middle Belt. Bello also stated that state creation in Nigeria would lead to further disintegration along ethnic lines. Based partly on these arguments, the Minorities Commission concluded that the boundaries of the three regions should remain intact.[26] The decision not to create the Middle Belt State did not bode well with some minority leaders such as Joseph Tarka. Shortly before Nigerian independence, the Tiv riot in the Middle Belt Region broke out. The Northern Region government accused the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) led by Joseph Tarka, a Tiv, and its ally, the AG, of inciting the people to wage war in order to delay the independence until a Middle Belt State had been created.[27] The riot continued until January 15, 1966, when

the military seized power from the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa–led regime.[28] Bello and Balewa, the Prime Minister, trivialized the persistent and violent character of the minorities' demand for the Middle Belt State in Northern Nigeria. Instead, Balewa's government carved out the Mid-West Region from the smaller Western Region in 1963 just to weaken the influence of the opposition party, the AG.[29] In fact, the Northern and Eastern Regions had minority groups that also needed new states. Intriguingly, the Eastern and Northern Region parliaments only approved the creation of the Mid-West Region; hence, the AG challenged the creation through the court.[30]

Bello's reference to the Minorities Commission as the "most embarrassing commission" lends credence to the view that the British nurtured despotism in the North by vesting a lot of powers on the ruling class and their relatives.[31] Some scholars have interpreted these developments as showing that colonial authorities were more inclined to protecting the interest of the Northern leaders than other groups. While making a case for the retention of a large region in the North, Bello raised a vital issue that is easily neglected in the minority discourses. The leaders of the state creation movement believed that they were neglected, but the Middle Belt area was comparatively ahead of the "core North" in terms of development. For example, the Middle Belt area had more schools, hospitals, and high-level manpower because they had unrestrained access to Western education compared to their Muslim Hausa–Fulani neighbours in the same region. The "core North" lagged behind in social developments because the colonial authorities restricted missionaries to the non-Muslim areas in the North. Like many African societies, colonial rule had an uneven impact on the Nigerian population, leading to a geographically differentiated development.[32]

These basic facts of development raise the question as to why ethnic minorities actually agitated for more states. Was the quest for more states borne out of the desire for development or mere desire for political power? One may be tempted to argue that access to political power brings development, but common understanding in the history of state creation in Nigeria proves otherwise. The Northern Premier, Bello, foresaw this and pointed out that people agitate for state creation when they feel they are not getting a "fair deal" from the government in power.[33] Fair deal in this context suggests equal representation and participation in the political process—holding prominent political positions at the national level. It was not about development because the Middle Belt area was quite ahead of other parts of the Northern Region in terms of infrastructural and manpower

development. The NPC leaders had, in fact, argued that the creation of the Middle Belt State would adversely affect the Northern Region, especially in the civil service, where the core North still lacked experienced officials.[34] This, among other things, explains why the Minorities Commission did not see the need to create the Middle Belt State. While not trivializing the principle behind state creation, a reading of the Nigerian political experience shows that state creation has only served the interest of a few ethnic entrepreneurs, who only pursue personal aggrandizement as against the general development of the people they claim to represent.

POST-COLONIAL NIGERIA AND STATE CREATION

The growing agitations of groups dedicated to improving the fortunes of minorities in Nigeria received a remarkable boost after the first and second military coups in 1966. While the first coup extirpated the influence of the Hausa–Fulani potentates, the second coup dislodged the Igbo from their positions of military control. These developments altered the balance of power and ethnic minorities in the army and civil servants became central players in Nigerian politics. General Yakubu Gowon, who is Ngas, a minority ethnic group in the Northern Region, had Colonel Akahan, a Tiv, as his Chief of Staff. Some commentators interpreted the new leadership structure as a government of Middle Belt minorities that has emerged to dominate the politics of Northern Nigeria.[35] When Lt. Colonel Joseph Akahan died in a plane crash, some leaders of the Middle Belt region accused the Hausa–Fulani leaders of masterminding his death.[36] Although there was no evidence linking Akahan's death to Northern leaders, the ensuing controversy led to the withdrawal of Tivs from different parts of the North to Tiv land.[37] At the centre of the civil service were minority group members such as Allison Ayida (Itsekiri) and Adamu A. Atta (Igbira), who were regarded as the "super-permanent Secretaries" because of their influence. People also regarded these "super-permanent Secretaries" as members of the "Oxford tribe" because they had received their degrees from Oxford University.[38] Edwin Ogbu (Idoma), who was a Permanent Secretary in charge of External Affairs, was equally a minority from the Middle Belt. Apart from Obafemi Awolowo, a Yoruba, some of the Commissioners who largely championed the war politics were of minority ethnic origin. Anthony Enahoro (Esan-Edo, Mid-West), Commissioner, Ministry of Information, and Okoi Arikpo (Ekoi/Ejagham), Commissioner, Ministry of External Affairs, were from minority ethnic groups. There were obvi-

ously other members of Gowon's cabinet from the majority ethnic groups, but those of the minority ethnic groups appeared to have wielded more influence.[39] The Nigeria–Biafra War era was perhaps the first time members of the minority groups could occupy many important positions in the military, politics, and civil service. The assistance provided to Gowon by the increased number of minorities in the civil service and army was critical in the administration's successful prosecution of the Nigerian Civil War.

The minorities' ascendancy after the July 1966 coup created an opportunity for them to address the grievances which they had long expressed through their movements. The project of state creation came at a time when the country was in a political stalemate. It was a desperate and an 11th-hour move to save the federation from disintegration. The coup and countercoup, the massacres of Easterners and Mid-Westerners in different parts of Nigeria, the failure to implement the Aburi Accord[40] by the Nigerian government, and the declaration of the Republic of Biafra worsened the tension between Nigeria and the Eastern Region, and distorted the long-agitated movement for the creation of more states for the minorities. As far back as December 1966, when the *ad hoc* Constitutional Conference collapsed due to the massacre of Eastern Nigerians in different parts of Nigeria, the federal government was struggling with the question of saving the country from disintegration. Gowon's new-states decree split Nigeria into 12 states—6 in the former Northern Region, 3 in the Eastern Region, and 2 in the Western Region, leaving the Mid-Western Region's boundaries intact. The structure of Gowon's new states reflected the early agitations of minorities' movements. The government of Eastern Region rejected the new-states decree because it believed that the creation of new states had to be based on mutual agreement among the regional governments, and that consent of the people of the areas which were to be included in the new states needed to ascertained and respected.[41] The Eastern Region's rejection of the new states heightened the existing tension in the polity.

The conflict between the Eastern Region and the federal government, however, was much more than state creation. The mass killing of Easterners—Igbos and other minorities—in different parts of Nigeria was the basis on which Easterners rejected the state creation and claimed the right to survival and secession. The Nigerian government, on the other hand, claimed the right to the corporate existence of the country, contesting that neither confederation nor loose association could guarantee stability in a situation where a section of the country was overwhelmingly

large enough to hold others to ransom.[42] In a national broadcast on May 27, 1967, Gowon stated, "The main obstacle to future stability in this country is the present structural imbalance in the Nigerian federation."[43] State creation, Gowon noted, was the only way to remove fear of domination by any section of the country and guarantee stability. Although Gowon did not consult relevant sections of the country in the state creation, he believed that it was the overwhelming desire of a vast majority of Nigerians.[44]

There is no doubt that Nigeria had a long history of minorities' agitation for state creation. However, it can be argued that General Gowon used state creation as a trump card to court the minorities and forestall Eastern Region's secession. This was obviously the immediate objective, but the long-term goal of the minority leaders in the state creation was to liberate the minorities from majority dominance. Gowon noted that the problem facing Nigeria was not just the misguided actions of the Eastern Region but equality and justice.[45] State creation was meant to guarantee equity and justice for all, especially the minorities, but there was no delimitation commission to look into complaints from groups that were not satisfied with their grouping in the state creation. Given that the country was in a state of emergency and virtual war, there was no noticeable protest except in the Eastern Region where the political leaders strongly opposed the creation and pulled out of the federation by declaring independence of Biafra. While the argument in favour of state creation was presumably to ensure stability and national unity, it was no less a struggle of the minorities against the old dominant majorities in the various regions. The Hausa–Fulani leadership, however, considered state creation as a breakup of their old empire and resented it, but some leaders of the new states such as Kwara and Benue-Plateau, which had many ethnic minority groups, considered state creation as an opportunity to get liberated from the Hausa–Fulani hegemony.[46]

State creation did not make much impression in other regions as it did in the Middle Belt area. Some members of the ethnic minorities in the former Eastern Region saw it as liberation from the alleged Igbo domination but some interpreted it as part of the struggle between the Eastern Region and the federal military government. The minorities in Eastern Region were divided on the state creation because many of their members were victims of the massacres in which a large number of Igbos were killed in different parts of Nigeria. There was no distinction between the Igbo and the Ibibio or the Ijaw in these waves of attacks in Northern Nigeria

and some parts of Western Nigeria in 1966. Members of the minority groups were easily mistaken for Igbos because it was difficult to differentiate between the two by mere physical appearance. There were no facial marks as could be found among the Hausa and the Yoruba, and the pattern of dressing, mostly western, was similar. N.U. Akpan, Secretary of Government, Republic of Biafra, noted:

> The killings in North in 1966, particularly those which occurred from the end of September, were indiscriminately directed against people from Eastern Nigeria, known in the North by the generic name of *Yameri* … The subsequent attempts in the North to distinguish between the Ibos and other peoples of Eastern Nigeria came too late to make any impression on the non-Ibo members of Eastern Nigeria, who now shared the same fears and dread of the North as the Ibos.[47]

The indiscriminate killing of members of Eastern Nigeria accounted for the divided loyalty of the minority leaders. While some supported the Biafran secession, others felt it was better to remain as Nigerians. Minority leaders such as General Philip Effiong (Chief of Staff, Republic of Biafra and Ojukwu's successor when he abdicated) and N.U. Akpan (Secretary of Government, Republic of Biafra) were on the side of Biafra, whereas Okoi Arikpo (Nigeria's External Affairs Commissioner) and Dr B.J. Ikpeme (medical officer in former Eastern Nigeria) supported Nigeria and the creation of new states.

The recurring question as to the attitude of the minorities towards state creation and secession, therefore, cannot be answered with certainty. While Biafra claimed that the minorities fully supported the secession, the federal government maintained that the minorities had been longing for liberation through state creation.[48] The political confrontation between the Eastern Region and the federal government generated a mixture of hopes and fears—hopes that they would have more opportunities in Biafra and fears that their area would be a battleground in the event of war. These fears were real because the minority areas in Biafra flanked the Eastern and Southern edges of the Biafran territory, girding the heartland of the dominant Igbo group. In the event of the Nigerian government's attack to crush the Biafran secession, it was believed that the minorities would be the target for strikes from sea and from the eastern fringes of northern Biafra. When the Nigerian government finally attacked Biafra, the minorities' areas became not only the first target but also the most contested area that the warring parties wanted to possess.[49]

Suzanne Cronje, one of the prominent journalists who reported on the Nigeria–Biafra War, observed that "the feelings of the minorities were difficult to define."[50] The anti-Igbo uprising which Nigerian government officials had predicted would come from the minorities as people who needed liberation did not emerge when the new states were created, neither was there any noticeable form of unrest among the minorities under the Biafran administration.[51] A number of reasons account for this. First, the Northerners who championed state creation were the same group that led the hysterical massacres of May 29, July 29, September 29, and October 1966 in which many minorities were murdered and expelled from Northern and Western Nigeria. The massacres and the subsequent creation of states created a sense of mistrust among the minorities as to what the actual Nigerian government's intention was on the state creation. Another explanation is that Biafran leaders made efforts to include some minority leaders at the top level of the Biafran administration. For example, N.U. Akpan, an Ibibio, and the Secretary of the Biafran government was the highest-ranking civilian in the Biafran government. Ambassador Matthew Mbu, an Ejagham, was the Commissioner for Foreign Affairs. Many of the minorities, therefore, felt fairly represented and, for the first time, had a political stake in a nation of their own.[52] Finally, the looting of minorities' property by Nigerian soldiers and the indiscriminate bombing of the civilian targets by the Nigerian Air Force accounted for the minorities' apathy towards the new states. Commenting on the bombing of Mary Slessor Hospital, an Ibibio male nurse noted, "We are no different from the Ibo. The Nigerians are all out to kill us all."[53]

There is no doubt that some members of the minority groups resented Igbo's economic dominance in their areas, but they still depended on the Igbo for their industry and energy. For instance, the Yala in Cross River preferred to rent their palm trees to Igbo palm-wine tappers and buy palm wine from them at a high price to producing it themselves. Some young people from Cross River believed that they had more prospects in Biafra and spoke of possible domination by the North.[54] In some parts of the present-day Rivers State, the people needed the Igbo for the expansion of their rice farm project. Chief William Dappa Pepple, a prominent monarch from Rivers, stated, "No matter what happens, we are going to continue to live with the Ibos, and it is with them that we must settle our problems. For Northerners in Lagos to try to impose a settlement upon us is an insult that no one can accept."[55] In an interview, Chief Pepple stated, "Bonny people are for Biafra in spite of all they have suffered in the war."[56]

The Bonny monarch believed that the federal government was playing politics with the minorities through state creation and asserted that "the federal government should leave them alone."[57] Chief Pepple, like some other leaders of the minority groups, supported the secession of Biafra based on the long-standing relationship with their Igbo neighbours and feared domination under the Northern leaders.[58] It is important to note that the Igbo and their minority neighbours had coexisted harmoniously for centuries before the creation of the political unit called Nigeria. The geographical proximity and intermarriage between Ibibio, Efik, Ijaw, and Igbo produced cultural homogeneity and economic interdependence that still exist today. Suzzane Cronje, who lived in Nigeria several years before the outbreak of the war, noted the pre-colonial relations between the Igbo and their minority neighbours.[59] Cronje buttressed her argument by citing the Minorities Commission's report: "Port Harcourt is an Igbo town; it is growing rapidly and the indigenous branch of the Igbos who were the original inhabitants are already outnumbered by Igbos from the hinterland."[60] It was on the basis of this age-old relations that the Minorities Commission noted that the minorities in Eastern Nigeria were inextricable interconnected with the Igbo.[61]

In spite of this age-old relationship, some minority leaders such as Nabo B. Graham-Doulas supported state creation and opposed secession. Given the bitter conflict between the Eastern Region and the federal government, it is difficult to determine whether the ethnic minorities that had clamoured for a separate state of their own actually wanted separate states during the war or not. A proposal for a plebiscite that could have created an opportunity for them to express their views on state creation and secession was strongly rejected by the federal government, which felt it would imply a withdrawal of the federal troops to the pre-war boundaries.[62]

Conclusion

Colonial administrative policies introduced ethnic and regional rivalry with the attendant marginalization of the minorities in the Nigerian political system. The colonial authorities defined and clearly reinforced the domination of the minorities by lumping together extremely diverse minorities with the majority ethnic groups in a federation. The unwieldy structure of the federation made it difficult for the minorities to express their full political rights and assume significant political roles in the federation. Given that the minorities were numerically weak and could not win national elections, the majority ethnic groups tactically excluded them from national

politics. The domination of the minority groups did not go unchallenged. The minority leaders formed regional associations as platforms to express their right to a separate autonomous state within the federation.

The agitations for state creation were peaceful during colonial rule but, at independence, some of them became violent. The Middle Belt group under Joseph Tarka led violent protests in the Tiv area, a protest that is commonly referred to as the Tiv Riot. The change from peaceful negotiation to violent protest did not change the fate of the minorities except in the Mid-West where a region was created to weaken the AG dominance in that region. The domination of the minority ethnic groups in Nigeria continued till 1966 when the military took over power from the majority ethnic groups. With the July 1966 countercoup, the majorities lost their powers while the minorities assumed important and critical historical roles in the national politics. The ascendancy of the minorities in national leadership broke the dominance of the majorities and facilitated state creation. However, state creation for the minorities did not come through the efforts of the regional pressure groups that initiated state creation movement during the colonial period. General Gowon saw state creation as the last option to salvage the country from imminent disintegration. It, therefore, took the political crisis and the ascendancy of a group people from the minority ethnic groups to fulfil the minorities' right to separate states of their own. Although the feeling of ethnic identity is still part of the Nigerian political culture, one can argue that it no longer defines national politics in the same way it did in colonial and pre-war Nigeria. Ethnicity in Nigeria today, therefore, can be described as a shapeshifter, adapting smoothly at colourful historical moments. Groups such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for the Southeast, Boko Haram for the predominantly Muslim North, Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC) for the Southwest, and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) for the Niger Delta are examples of the mutative character of ethnicity.

Notes

1. Francesco Capotorti quoted in Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Minority Rights: International Standards and Guidance for Implementation" HR/PUB/10/3, accessed August 5, 2012, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights_en.pdf, 2.

2. OHCHR, "Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities Adopted by the General Assembly Resolution 47/135 of December 18, 1992," accessed February 28, 2013, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/MinorityRights en.pdf

3. *Creation of States* (Washington D.C.: Embassy of Nigeria, 1968), 1.

4. *Creation of States*, 1.

5. Understanding the Nigerian Crisis: A Midwestern Nigeria Publication, 1968, File National Archives, Enugu (hereafter NAE) (Unclassified document), 4–5.

6. Understanding the Nigerian Crisis, 9.

7. Richard P. Hunt, "Tribe, Not Party Counts in Nigeria: Old Clan Loyalties Hamper Unity amid Desires to Gain Independence," *New York Times*, November 15, 1957.

8. Hunt, "Tribe."

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12. Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria: The Tribes, the Nation or the Race—the Politics of Independence* (Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1965), 90.

13. Richard P. Hunt, "Tribe, Not Party Counts in Nigeria: Old Clan Loyalties Hamper Unity amid Desires to Gain Independence," *New York Times*, November 15, 1957.

14. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 94.

15. *Creation of States* (Washington D.C.: Embassy of Nigeria, 1968), 2.

16. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 92.

17. Dr Emmanuel Mbela Lifafa Endeley was elected to the Eastern Nigerian Assembly in 1951, but he later led Southern Cameroonian representatives out of the Eastern Nigerian House of Assembly in Enugu. He first broke away from the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons in 1953 and negotiated the formation of autonomous region of Southern Cameroons in 1954.

18. Stephen May et al., *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Minority Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 8–9.

19. Ndukwe Egbonu, "For a Unified Nigeria: Colonial Rule Blamed for Existing Communal Differences," *New York Times,* May 31, 1953, E6.
20. Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, December 9, 1968, File National Archives of United Kingdom (hereafter NAUK), CAB/129/139.
21. Michael Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 242.
22. *The Struggle for One Nigeria* (Lagos: Ministry of Information, 1967), 3.
23. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 99.
24. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 92.
25. *Creation of States* (Washington D.C.: Embassy of Nigeria, 1968), 3.
26. Ahmadu Bello, *My Life* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1962), 216.
27. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 124.
28. *The Nigeria-Biafra Conflict: The Minorities Problem* (Enugu: Government Printer, 1967).
29. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 262.
30. Crowder, *The Story of Nigeria*, 262.
31. Ndukwe Egbonu, "For a Unified Nigeria: Colonial Rule Blamed for Existing Communal Differences," *New York Times*, May 31, 1953, E6.
32. See Philip Mawhood and Malcom Wallis "Ethnic Minorities in East Africa: Kenya and Tanzania," *Routledge* 3 (1993), 170–189.
33. Bello, *My Life*, 215–216.
34. Schwarz Jr, *Nigeria*, 95.
35. The Death of Akahan, August 1967, File Department of State, POL 27, Biafra-Nigeria, Telegram.
36. The Death of Akahan.
37. The Death of Akahan.
38. John J. Stremlau, *The International Politics of the Nigerian Civil War 1967–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 26.
39. See Stremlau, *The International Politics.*
40. The Aburi Accord was part of the efforts made by Eastern Region and federal government leaders to find a Constitutional formula that would hold Nigeria together. The agreement was reached at Aburi, Ghana, in January 1967.

41. C. Odumegwu Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches with Journal of Events* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 187.

42. Major-General Yakubu Gowon, Broadcast to the Nation, May 27, 1967, DPDL 778/667/30,000, 5.

43. Gowon, Broadcast to the Nation, 5.

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48. Conor Cruise O'Brien, "A Condemned People," *The New York Review* ix, no. 11, December 21, 1967.

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51. Lloyd Garrison, "Nigerian Rebels Win Support of Other Minorities," *New York Times*, February 3, 1968, 2.

52. Garrison, "Nigerian Rebels."

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54. Donald Louchheim, "Minorities in Middle in Nigeria-Biafra Feud: New Hopes, Fears How…" *The Washington Post*, June 10, 1967, A14.

55. Eric Pace, "Biafra's Ibo leaders Strive, with Some Success to Insure the Continued Support of Minority Tribes," *New York Times*, September 14, 1969, 12. Chief William was the Amanyanabo of Bonny and head of the 500-year-old Pepple House. He said that the invading Nigerian soldiers, whom he described as vandals, burnt down his newly built house, and that he had to escape with his people in order not to be wiped out by the soldiers.

56. Pace, "Biafra's Ibo leaders Strive."

57. Pace, "Biafra's Ibo leaders Strive."

58. Pace, "Biafra's Ibo leaders Strive."

59. Suzzane Cronje, "Nigeria," *Globe and Mail*, October 13, 1969, 6.

60. Cronje, "Nigeria." Cronje cited on page 51 of the Willink Commission's report.

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Minority Groups: Bridgeheads in Nigerian Politics, 1950s–1966

Emmanuel Oladipo Ojo

Introduction

Today, there is virtually no aspect of the national question in Nigeria that has not received in-depth research attention. Numerous studies have been done on the emergence of ethnic consciousness and the circumstances surrounding the creation of an uneven federation in Nigeria; the contrasting trajectories of the activities of the majorities and the incapability of the minorities; the selfishness of the majorities and the sufferings of the minorities; the fury of the majorities and the fears and frustrations of the minorities; the attacks by the majorities and the attrition of the minorities; the agenda of the majorities and the agitations of the minorities; the development of the majorities and the deprivations and denial of the rights of the minorities as well as the expansion of the majorities and the exploitation of the minorities.

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Although literature is diverse on the majority/minority debate, the greater percentage of existing literature on the debate focuses on the travails and tragedy of being in the minority in the Nigerian Federation. However, a careful analysis of issues reveals that the minorities served at least one important purpose—as political bridgeheads, they provided a semblance of "national" outlook for Nigerian politics between 1951 and 1966.[1] This was because the minorities formed alliances with the majorities in other regions to whom the majorities in their own regions stood opposed. The thesis of this chapter is that were it not for these "minorities" bridgeheads, Nigerian politics, before and during the First Republic, would have been more ethnic and regional than it was.[2] The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to examine how the political parties of some minorities served as springboards for the promotion of national politics in Nigeria between the 1950s and 1966.

Conceptual Clarification and Background to the National Question

In Nigeria, the term "national question" typically refers to issues relating to the composition and configuration of Nigerian society, particularly the geographical, demographical and political imbalance among the diverse ethnic groups and nations that make up the country. In a bid to initiate and safeguard its economic and political interests, the British colonial administration fashioned a geographically and demographically imbalanced Nigerian nation and foisted a fractured federation on Nigerian (particularly the minority) peoples. Obviously, the decision of the colonial authorities to tailor a federal structure for Nigeria in 1954 was not dictated by the interest of the country as a *whole* but by the desire to balance the varying needs and interests of the major ethnic nationalities, which occupied and controlled the then three regions that made up the country structurally.[3] Thus, on the eve of independence, the Federation of Nigeria consisted of three regions—North, East and West. Geographically, the Northern Region was three times larger than the Eastern and Western Regions put together as it accounted for 79% of the total geographical area, compared with Western Nigeria's 8.5% and Eastern Nigeria's 8.3%. Demographically, well over 50% of the country's population was said to be in Northern Nigeria.[4]

The implication is that categories of minorities did and continue to exist in Nigeria. Compared with the defunct Northern Region (and present-day Northern Nigeria), the defunct Eastern and Western Regions (and present-day Eastern and Western Nigeria) constitute minorities. This clarification is essential because contemporary references to minorities in Nigeria tend to emphasize those groups with only a few hundred or thousand people. While this may be correct, it does not provide a comprehensive definition of "minorities" because a minority could be a group that has fewer votes in an organization than another group or groups. This is significant since democracy is a game of numbers. Indeed, this consideration may have influenced the outburst of Southern Nigerian leaders over what they described as the "population tyranny" of the defunct Northern Region.[5] This was in response to the number of electoral constituencies and parliamentary seats allocated to each region being determined primarily by demographical data.[6] Apart from this, politics in the Nigerian context is not merely about the acquisition of political power but also an insurance against domination by other ethnic groups. Moreover, politics is a means of asserting personal or group pre-eminence as well as the primary means of distributing government patronage.

It is therefore not surprising that the leaders of the Western Nigeria–based and Yoruba-dominated political party, the Action Group (AG), did not mince words in its denunciation of the lopsidedness in the Nigerian Federation.[7] The party contended that no one state should be so big as to hold the other states in the federation to ransom and predicted that Northern Nigeria was going to be a "skeleton at the feast of Nigerian independence."[8] This argument implies that there are different categories of minorities in Nigeria. Thus, in addition to the celebrated minorities, there were the *majority–minority* groups such as the Yoruba and Igbo *vis-à-vis* the Hausa–Fulani in the pre-military Nigerian configuration. In the defunct Mid-West Region, the Edo-speaking people were clearly in the majority when compared with the Ijaw or Itsekiri but, compared with their Yoruba or Igbo-speaking counterparts, the Edo were an insignificant minority. The point here is that different levels and categories of minorities exist in Nigeria. These include the *majority–minority* such as the Yoruba and Igbo *vis-à-vis* the Hausa–Fulani, the *majority–minority* such as the Edo-speaking people mentioned above, the *minority–minority* and so on. Nigeria has had two different types of minorities resident within her borders—political minorities and minorities of a permanent nature. The

focus of this chapter is the latter. The AG was unpopular among many Ibadan indigenes. The Ibadan and the Ijebu were traditional rivals and their rivalry and hostility was heightened by the demand by the Ijebu for land rights and political representation on local councils in lbadan. Since the prominent members of the AG were of Ijebu extraction, many Ibadan indigenes refused to support the AG.

Nigeria, to use Emeka Ojukwu's telling phrase, "was randomly put together." The country is made up of diverse ethnic nationalities with different historical, geographical, political, religious and socio-economic specificities and peculiarities. Thus, the British created in Nigeria what has been referred to as "an impossible federation,"[9] "unnatural creation,"[10] "national question,"[11] "amorphous monster"[12] and "arbitrary block of Africa."[13] Finally, the Willink's Minority Report described the Federation of Nigeria as "unusual in the relative size of the units which make it up."[14] The most outstanding defect of the British-fashioned federation is thus its arbitrary composition. This, more than any other singular factor, has led to eruption of violence, acrimony and rancour.[15] Although, conflict is a natural phenomenon in human society,[16] it is particularly endemic in multi-ethnic states[17] and particularly in Nigeria where the British colonial administration consciously promoted centrifugal pulls.

It must be conceded however that the peoples of Nigeria had certain peculiar social, political, cultural and religious institutions, which John Macpherson, one of Nigeria's colonial governors, referred to as "pressure-points."[18] It will therefore be wrong to argue that the sole factor for the national question in Nigeria was British colonialism. The British may have fashioned the Federation of Nigeria but they did not create the peoples of Nigeria and, as Arifalo has argued, all human societies are artificial since they are man-made.[19] Since nations are made and not born, one can hardly think of any nation that did not begin as an artificial creation or as a mere geographical expression. For example, in one of his works, Michael Vile describes the USA as an artificial creation which was "fashioned out of the wilderness within the past 350 years."[20]

Obviously, there is nothing unusual about a state consisting of different ethnic groups as one finds in the USA, Brazil, Argentina, the Union of South Africa and so on. In fact, very few nations are composed of one ethnic group.[21] This may have informed the assertion that no country can really lay claim to complete homogeneity, and that lack of homogeneity in a nation does not necessarily constitute the bedrock of instability.[22] As several scholars have pointed out, the problem of heterogeneity is not pecu-

liar to Nigeria. Neither ethnic heterogeneity nor the national question is peculiar to Nigeria as an African state, as countries such as Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of South Africa have their own variants of Nigeria's national question. What may be peculiar to Nigeria is the rather large number of ethnic nationalities and minorities in the country.[23]

Minority groups complain that they suffer socio-economic and political deprivations in the hands of the political elites from majority groups. Almost without exception, Nigerian politics since independence has been conceived largely as a trade-off between the Hausa–Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba, the three majority ethnic groups. The other ethnic nationalities whose contribution to the national economy, national socio-cultural identity and provision of skilled manpower cannot be dismissed as marginal have tended to be treated as mere pawns in the game of national politics. Such marginalization is evident in the way in which state symbols are chosen and presented. One of the most important national symbols of a state is her currency, and even in an instrument as important as currency, the marginalization of minority elements is conspicuous. For example, the value of the Nigerian 50 naira note is written in four languages on the note: in English, Nigeria's *lingua franca*; in Hausa, the predominant language in Northern Nigeria; in Igbo, the predominant language in Eastern Nigeria; and in Yoruba, the predominant language in Western Nigeria. This suggests that not much importance is attached to the minorities by the majorities in Nigeria. While it is true that the names of all the ethnic groups in the country cannot appear on the nation's currency, it is not mandatory for the names or languages of the majorities to be printed on it. It would appear that *WAZOBIA*, a term that has been used to describe Nigeria's multi-ethnic identity (*wa* is Yoruba, *zo* is Hausa, while *bia* is Igbo, all of them meaning "come"), does not accord the minorities much importance. At some level, it can be argued that the Nigerian Federation was created to *accommodate* the majorities and to merely *contain* the minorities. This line of argument may have influenced Kimse Okoko's description of Nigeria's federalism as one that appropriates and expropriates the wealth of the minorities without hindrance and one wherein *all* the socio-economic and political calculations are based on the need to sustain the tripod hegemony of the three dominant ethnic groups.[24]

Abdulrahim Sallau expresses a similar view when he argues that the history of Nigeria's First Republic was "dominated by the three big tribes operating in the defunct three regions. Such was the acrimonious battle

for political supremacy between these three tribes that the minorities in their midst got caught helplessly in the struggle for survival."[25] Other contemporary commentators have pointed out that the foundation of Nigeria was laid on a faulty ground. As one writer put it, "we have a tripod in Nigeria … the Igbos, the Hausa-Fulani and the Yorubas. These are the three major ethnic groups that control the affairs of this country … They have refused to recognize that there are other ethnic groups … who have equal stake holding in the project called Nigeria. "[26] The only transient importance that political leaders of the majority ethnic groups have historically attached to the minorities is their electoral influence.

THE MINORITIES: BRIDGEHEADS IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

In military parlance, a bridgehead is an army position seized in an enemy territory that serves as a stepping stone or basis for further advances. When this is applied to politics, it means a "takeover" of a territory or area by political opponents or rivals with the prospect of such politically captured area serving as a stepping stone for further political offensives/ advances. In the context of this discussion, bridgehead is used as a term for the political strategies of the political elites of the majority ethnic groups of penetrating other regions by riding on the back of the political parties of the minorities, or minor parties such as the *Mabolaje* Grand Alliance of Ibadan. The history of political alliances and strategizing in Nigeria shows that this was the primary use to which the political parties of the majorities put the minorities from the 1950s up till about 1966.

One of the most significant trends in Nigerian politics and labour movements from the early 1940s up until 1947 was that ethnicity did not significantly interfere with policies and decisions. Leading politician and labour leaders during this period tended to have a nationalist outlook that transcended ethnic identities and loyalties. The anti-colonial struggle and the collective goal of independence from British colonial rule united Nigerian political elites for a common cause. One example of this is the February 1941 crisis in the Nigerian Youth Movement, one of the first nationalist political organizations in the country.[27] The immediate cause of the crisis was the scramble by the Movement's leading chieftains for nomination to contest a legislative seat vacated by one of its members, Dr Kofo Abayomi, who left for further studies in Britain. Two candidates struggled for the party's nomination: the President of the Movement, Ernest Sissei Ikoli (an Ijaw), and the Vice President, Samuel Akinsanya (an Ijebu Yoruba). The

Movement was thereupon split into two factions—while Chief Awolowo (an Ijebu Yoruba) supported Ikoli, Dr Azikiwe (an Igbo from same Eastern Region as Ikoli) backed Akinsanya. Although, Akinsanya eventually won the party's primary, the Movement decided to give the ticket to Ernest Ikoli. This angered Akinsanya who went ahead to contest as an independent candidate and lost to lkoli. This incident created much bad blood between two of the country's leading politicians, Dr Azikiwe and Chief Awolowo, with the former accusing the latter of tribalism. This, however, was a baseless accusation. As it turned out, Awolowo had turned his back on his kinsman, an Ijebu–Yoruba like himself, and backed a non-Yoruba, while Azikiwe, an Igbo, backed Akinsanya, a Yoruba. Although, different factors may have influenced their positions, neither Awolowo nor Azikiwe could rightly accuse each other of tribalism under these circumstances.

However, the most casual observation of the history of Nigeria from 1951 would reveal that ethnic politics and rivalry became the hallmark of Nigerian politics. The "divide and rule" tactics and the regionalization policy of the British colonial administration (which predated 1951) had stretched ethnic politics far beyond the limits ever known in Nigeria. From 1951, Nigerian political leaders became increasingly attached to their various regions, thereby promoting regional interests above national interests.[28] This was antithetical to the goals of nation-building and national integration. As Samuel Huntington has argued, nation-building and national integration essentially entail the eradication of primordial, sub-national, traditional, religious, familial and ethnic political attachments and their replacement with single, secular and national political authority.[29] Huntington's argument requires some qualifications, particularly with respect to a pseudo-federal state such as Nigeria. Even though the constitutional provisions for the protection of the rights of the minorities had always been enshrined in the constitutions of Nigeria, these constitutional provisions are, more often than not, mere embellishments of little political value or practical application.[30] The political leaders of the dominant majorities have often sought to assert dominance over minority groups in the competition for political power and state resources. Under these circumstances, there has been less inclination by political elites to work to eradicate primordial, sub-national, traditional, religious, familial and ethnic political attachments. It must be added however that the above is not an attempt to assert that the letter and spirit of the constitution with reference to minorities' rights is totally redundant, completely undesirable or wholly circumvented. Of course, the rights of the minorities are

enshrined in the constitution in order to create awareness and the *ideal* so that the minorities know, without any equivocation, what their rights are in all spheres, and since the minorities could always approach the courts for redress, these constitutional provisions had provided succour for the minorities and had given them a sense of belonging and a ray of hope.

In the Nigerian context, minority groups seeking to protect their common interest against the dominance of majority groups do not see the eradication of primordial interests as advocated by Huntington as being in their own interest. For example, one of the grievances of the non-Yoruba minorities in the defunct Western Region was the allegation that the regional government was bent on obliterating the separate identity, language, culture and institutions of the Mid-West. Representatives of the people of the Mid-West who appeared before the Willink Commission of Inquiry set up by the colonial government to look into the complaint of minority groups cited a pamphlet produced by the Western regional government as an example of their fears of marginalization. The pamphlet in question described the mace presented to the new parliament at Ibadan (headquarters of the Western Region) in 1957. The pamphlet made references to "traditional Yoruba patterns" and to "four ceremonial swords in silver symbolic of the authority of Chiefs in Yoruba land." Representatives of the Mid-West alleged that the pamphlet was worded as though Yoruba land was congruent to the Western Region, and as though there were no other inhabitants other than the Yoruba in that Region.[31]

In the period preceding the First Republic, the minority ethnic groups realized the futility of eradicating traditional, religious, familial and ethnopolitical attachments by persistently demanding the creation of their own states and regions. There were no fewer than 15 requests for new states at the 1957 Constitutional Conference, which was why Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, set up the Willink Minorities Commission in September 1957 "to ascertain the facts about the fears of minorities in any part of Nigeria and propose means of allaying those fears whether well or ill founded."[32] The setting up of the Commission itself was a clear indicator that majorities/minorities dichotomies were real. Indeed, the Commission admitted that even when allowance had been made for some exaggeration, there were genuine fears by the minorities that they would be dominated and "conquered" by the majorities in independent Nigeria. Nevertheless, the Commission did not recommend the creation of states. It merely recommended a Bill of Human Rights, which could not be enforced. This came as a disappointment to many minority

leaders who had demanded their own states. One historian dismissed the Commission's report as "an exercise in hypocrisy and ostrich posturism."[33]

In an attempt to secure the support of some minority groups, the predominant party in Western Nigeria, the AG, publicly and consistently supported their demand for state creation. It should be recalled here that the regionalization policy of the British colonial administration referred to above compelled a situation whereby the three major ethnic groups supported the dominant political parties in their respective regions.[34] In other words, all the parties were regionally based.[35] While it was therefore possible for these parties to win regional elections and form regional governments, with the exception of the Northern People's Congress (NPC),[36] neither of the remaining two parties could hope to win federal elections without coming out of its regional shells.

The attempt to accomplish the above had two main consequences: one, it made the major political parties more national in outlook than they would otherwise have been; and two, some of the minorities became beautiful brides with whom the majority groups sought political partnership. Thus, the AG, the National Council of Nigeria and Cameroons (later renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC) and the NPC formed alliances with some ethnic minorities from other regions, thereby making these minorities bridgesheads through which they (the majorities) became politically active in other regions. Because Nigerian minority groups are numerous, and as such, the majority political parties could not have reached out to all of them for political partnership. Various criteria were used in cataloguing the minorities in the different regions. As at 1957, there were 28 minority groups in the Eastern Region alone.[37] Minority areas there were designated as "areas unable to have a population of at least 37,500."[38] The largest and the smallest of the Eastern minorities were Asa and Ikom with 37,109 and 7058 inhabitants, respectively.[39] The same applied to the other regions with varying figures and specifications.

POLITICAL BRIDGEHEADS AND THE EMERGENCE OF "NATIONAL" POLITICS IN NIGERIA

Between 1946 and 1962, Nigeria was made up of three regions. A fourth, the Mid-West, was created in 1963. Throughout the First Republic, all these regions had what could be described as "minorities enclaves" because each of them had a dual ethno-geographical make-up: a "regional nucleus" inhabited by the cultural majority and a "peripheral" zone of

ethnic minorities.[40] Because of sociopolitical, cultural and economic deprivations, more often than not, these ethnic minorities allied with major political parties from other regions which opposed the major party in their own region. The leaders of the minority groups felt that the "tyranny" of the majorities could only be broken through the creation of their own states. Consequently, they supported the parties in power in other regions that supported or promised the creation of such new regions. Hence, minorities in the Middle Belt Region, where the dominant political party was the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC),[41] supported the AG, which advocated the creation of a Middle Belt State which would consist of the non-Kanuri, non-Fulani and non-Hausa groups in Northern Nigeria.[42]

The UMBC was formally inaugurated at Kafanchan, Northern Nigeria, on 10 January 1955. At the January 1957 Lafia Conference, Hon. Joseph Sarwuam Tarka was elected President-General of the party. Initially, the UMBC was a fissiparous conglomeration of tribal unions and autonomous local branches loosely coordinated and subject to no effective central authority. The party however experienced a new lease of vitality and vigour when, on 6 May 1957, it signed a formal accord and formed an alliance with the AG. The accord and alliance were officially announced in October and ratified at the May 1958 Minna Conference of the UMBC. Some leading members of the UMBC, however, opposed the AG–UMBC alliance and formed a splinter party, the Benue Freedom Crusade, which entered into alliance with the NCNC until it switched to the NPC in 1959.

The AG–UMBC alliance was a watershed in the history of both parties because of accusations that the dominant party in the Northern Region, the NPC, subjected opposition minorities in the North, particularly the UMBC, to great political persecution. Prior to the formation of the alliance, the UMBC groaned under the multifaceted attacks by the NPC, and with very lean financial resources at its disposal, it is doubtful that the UMBC would have survived the onslaught of the NPC without the support of the AG. The alliance gave the UMBC an invigorating infusion of financial and legal strength, in addition to the benefits of a systematic and efficient political organization. It has been estimated that the AG spent well over £150,000 on various forms of assistance to the UMBC during the 1958–59 fiscal year alone.[43]

On the other hand, the dominant party in the Western Region, the AG, enjoyed solid and unassailable support from members of the UMBC. Electorally, UMBC support for the AG was so overwhelming

that in the 1959 federal elections, the latter party obtained 559,875 votes (representing 17.2% of total votes cast in the Northern Region) and 25 parliamentary seats.[44] This was probably the highest any political party (apart from the NPC) obtained in Northern Nigeria up until 15 January 1966 when the military intervened in the country's democratic process. This was therefore an unprecedented political feat. The AG achieved this feat because of the UMBC on whose back it rode to penetrate Northern Nigeria. The UMBC was therefore the bridgehead through which the AG achieved what would have otherwise remained a political illusion.

The Borno Youth Movement (BYM), another minority party, also served as a bridgehead for the AG's penetration of Northern Nigeria. To put the discussion in proper context, it is necessary here to outline a brief history of the BYM. Ibrahim Imam, the man who formed the BYM, was a foundation member of the NPC who left the NPC in 1954. In his resignation letter, read by the leader of the NPC, Tafawa Balewa, at the 1954 NPC Jos Convention, Imam stated that he quit the NPC because the leaders were autocratic, irrational, disloyal and insincere to the party's cause. He said that the party found it difficult to accommodate his revolutionary and radical views, and as such, he could no longer reconcile with the "reactionary and imperialistic" policies of the NPC.[45] Thereafter, Imam formed the BYM and went into an alliance with the NCNC. This earned him devastating persecution and legal pressure by the NPC. The pressure climaxed in December 1957 when he was convicted by a Native Court and sentenced to six months' imprisonment for allegedly accepting a bribe four years earlier during his tenure as supervisor of the Native Authority Works Department. However, the Senior Resident of Borno Province found the conviction unjustifiable and a higher court consequently quashed it.[46]

The political landscape in Nigeria in the period just before independence was defined by alliances and posturing. The NPC and the NCNC formed the 1954–57 federal government, before the AG joined them to form an all-party national government. Students of Nigerian political history agree that from late 1957, the NCNC steadily worked towards the formation of an NPC–NCNC alliance for the 1959 federal elections; yet its alliance member, the BYM, was being brutally persecuted by the NPC. For a fairly long time, the BYM protested against the NCNC's political rapport with its archenemy, the NPC. All these protests fell on deaf ears. Moreover, because of the avowed opposition of the NPC to the creation of a Borno State, the NCNC did not support the BYM in

its agitation for a Borno State when the Willink Commission of Inquiry visited the Borno Province. The BYM accused the NCNC of not supporting minority elements in the Province so as to appease the more powerful NPC. On the other hand, the AG, which generally prided itself as the champion and defender of the rights of the minorities, particularly with regard to the creation of states, gave unwavering and unequivocal support to the creation of a Borno State.[47] Consequently, in June 1958, the BYM withdrew from its alliance with the NCNC and formed an alliance with the AG.

The *Ilorin Talaka Parapo* (ITP) was another political bridgehead through which the AG party penetrated the Northern Region. The ITP, which may be translated literally as Peasants' or Commoners' Party, was formed in 1955 to fight the corruption and repression unleashed on the common people by the officials of the Ilorin Native Authority. That the ITP was a commoners' party was evident in the composition of its founding members, which included one Quranic teacher, one tailor, one motor park tout, three traders, three cattle dealers and two cloth sellers.[48] Shortly after its formation, the ITP approached the NPC for an alliance, but the latter party turned down the proposal and asked the ITP to first hold consultations with the Ilorin Native Authority notables, the very people it opposed. Thereafter, the ITP formed an alliance with the AG, the dominant party in Western Nigeria. The AG–ITP Alliance was electorally rewarding, particularly for the AG, as it increased the strength and stretch of the party in Northern Nigeria.

The first election after the formation of the Alliance was into the Offa Town Council held in January 1956. All the 48 seats at stake in the election were won by the AG–ITP Alliance.[49] This was followed by the election into the Ilorin Town Council in April, in which the Alliance won 32 seats against the NPC's 19.[50] Again, in the Ilorin Native Authority election, the Alliance recorded another outstanding victory, winning 38 seats to NPC's 12.[51] Indeed, by 1958, the Alliance had 246 elected seats to the NPC's 149 and held a clear majority in 22 of the 31 Districts in the Ilorin Division.[52] Although, the population of Ilorin was 91% Yoruba (64% Muslim),[53] for the ITP bridgehead, it would have been altogether impossible for the AG to penetrate Ilorin in the manner it did. The NPC-controlled Northern Nigeria government destroyed the AG's bridgehead in Ilorin with the dissolution of the Ilorin Native Authority in May 1958.[54] In the following month, the Northern regional government set up a Commission to enquire into the

activities of the Ilorin Native Authority, and as many had expected, the AG–ITP-controlled Ilorin Native Authority was thoroughly indicted, with about 27 grave charges levelled against the ITP.[55] Nonetheless, for about two years, the ITP was an AG bridgehead in Ilorin, Northern Nigeria.

It should be fairly clear that the AG made a wide bid for support in the Northern Region not on any discernible platform of its own but by supporting and allying with ITP in Ilorin and Kabba, the UMBC in the Middle Belt area and the BYM in Borno. Through these political bridge-heads, the AG successfully penetrated the Northern Region. Indeed, by 1962, the AG had become the most national political party in Nigeria. It formed the government in the Western Region; it was the official opposition in the Federal House of Representatives, the Eastern Region as well as in the Northern Region. In the December 1959 elections, of all Nigeria's main political parties, the AG obtained a majority of its seats (39 of 75) outside the region of its traditional strength (i.e. Western Nigeria). Some of the AG's bridgeheads lasted till May 1962, when, because of internal schism which it could not successfully manage, the AG played into the hands of the NPC–NCNC coalition federal government, which was only too ready to help liquidate and send the party into extinction or at least make it a shadow of its former self.[56]

The immediate reason for the AG's popularity with the ethnic minorities in Northern and Eastern Nigeria was the party's support for the creation of states. Ironically however, neither the Middle Belt State nor the Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers State (whose creation was supported by the AG) was eventually created, whereas in 1963, the Mid-West Region was carved out of the Western Region. This was more the outcome of the politics of the struggle for supremacy and the creation of hegemonic spheres of influence between the three dominant ethnic groups than a genuine response to the demands of the minorities for their own regions. Indeed, the creation of the Mid-West Region seemed to have been motivated by two self-serving considerations by the ruling NPC–NCNC coalition. The first was the desire by the NPC–NCNC coalition to politically emasculate the arrowhead of state creation, the AG, so as to reduce its "national" reach and political relevance. The second consideration was to simultaneously open up the Mid-West to political incursion by other parties, particularly the NCNC. Ironically therefore, it turned out that only the Western Region, the smallest of the pre-1963 three regions, was dismembered, while the other two regions were left intact.

The majority ruling party, NPC, in the defunct Northern Region queried the right of the minorities in that Region to undertake any political course the latter thought was in their best interest. Thus, as pointed out already, the decision of the UMBC and the BYM to ally with the AG earned them the wrath of the NPC. Ibrahim Imam had identified five forms of political persecution of BYM members and supporters by the NPC. First, indiscriminate arrests and imprisonment "on the slightest pretext;" second, ejection of BYM tenants from their homes by NPC landlords; third, the organization of school children by members of the NPC to abuse and throw stones at members of the BYM–AG alliance anytime they were on political tour of the North; fourth, the use of pressure to compel members of the BYM to swear on the Quran that they would renounce that party; and finally, the refusal of District Heads to permit the BYM to hold public meetings in their areas of jurisdiction.[57] The vexed issue of political persecution of minorities was not peculiar to the NPC as minority parties were also victimized and persecuted in the other regions. However, the BYM and UMBC survived the onslaught of the NPC because the AG's support was as total and unwavering as the NPC's persecution.

Apart from its alliance with political (opposition) minorities such as the Northern Elements Progressive Union and the Ibadan-based *Mabolaje*, the most electorally viable bridgehead of the NCNC in the Mid-West area was the *Otu Edo*. From about 1948, the activities of the members of the Reformed *Ogboni* Fraternity in the Benin Native Administration had pitched many Edo people against the members of the Fraternity. By 1950, *Ogbonism* had become synonymous with oppression. Following the formation of the AG, a large number of its principal officers and members of the Fraternity supported the party. Thus, the political and other excesses of members of the *Ogboni* went unpunished because of the goodwill and support of the AG, the majority and government party in Western Nigeria. As a counterweight, the non-*Ogbonis* formed a popular party known as the *Otu Edo* (Benin Community) to check the continued stronghold of the *Ogbonis* on Benin politics. The *Otu Edo* later formed an alliance with the NCNC, which continued to win elections and rule Benin Division.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the contribution of the minorities to the emergence of "national" politics in Nigeria from the 1950s to about 1966. The chapter argued that because of the "divide and rule" tactics and the

regionalization policy of the British colonial administration, ethnicity became the hallmark of Nigerian politics so that, by 1951, the three major political parties corresponded almost exactly to Nigeria's three major ethnic majorities. Except for the NPC, neither of the other two main political parties could hope to win federal elections on the basis of appeal to ethnic sentiments and patronage.

Consequently, there was the need to shed their ethnic toga and launch into the other regions. In an effort to accomplish this, the three major political parties built political bridgeheads through which they penetrated the other regions. Thus, the AG rode on the back of such minorities' parties as the ITP, the UMBC and the BYM to penetrate Northern Nigeria while it obtained a fairly substantial political support in the Eastern Region through the AG–Calabar–Ogoja Union bridgehead. Also, the NCNC penetrated the Western Region through its grand alliance with the *Mabolaje* of Ibadan. Since the *Mabolaje* was formed and largely supported by Ibadan indigenes who stood opposed to the AG, the party may not perfectly fit into what this chapter calls minorities' parties. Nevertheless, the impact of the NCNC–*Mabolaje* grand alliance was virtually similar to those of the bridgeheads discussed here. Finally, the NPC, which was formed by Northerners for Northerners to pursue Northern goals, attempted to penetrate Southern Nigeria by riding on the back of some Southern minorities' parties, notably the Niger Delta Congress, the Mid-West People's Congress, the Mid-West Democratic Front and the Igbira Tribal Union.

Indeed, it is interesting to note that with the exception of the NPC–NCNC alliance, there were no alliances between the major ethnic groups in Nigeria throughout the period covered by this chapter. Even here, the Hausa/Fulani–Igbo alliance was an enforced association of incompatibles which was plagued by dissentions and which eventually ruptured over irreconcilable differences. Indeed, the desirability or otherwise of an NPC–AG alliance was one of the proximate causes of the famous Awolowo–Akintola political tussle which broke out in 1962. After the 1959 federal elections, which Chief Awolowo's party—the AG—lost, his deputy (Akintola) pushed for an NPC–AG alliance so as to prevent the virtual disappearance of the Yoruba from the federal level. On the other hand, Chief Awolowo felt that the structural and ideological contradictions in the two parties rendered them incompatible and would therefore not make it possible for them to operate on tolerably the same political wavelengths; therefore, he stood opposed to any political alliance between the Hausa–Fulani and the Yoruba. Eventually, Akintola broke ties with the

AG and formed the Nigerian National Democratic Party, NNDP, which formed an alliance with the NPC.[58] The formation and desire to sustain this alliance sounded the death knell of Nigeria's First Republic. Thus, while it was almost altogether impossible to form *majority–majority* alliances, several *majority–minority* alliances were formed in Nigeria during the period covered by this chapter. These alliances strengthened Nigerian democracy, promoted "national" politics and provided outlets through which the minorities ventilated their grievances against the majorities, at least by voting against them during elections.

Notes

1. The choice of these dates is not arbitrary: full party politics began in Nigeria in 1951. In addition to the National Congress of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), which had been formed in August 1948, two political parties, the Western Nigeria–based Action Group (AG) and the Northern Nigeria–based Northern People's Congress (NPC), were launched in that year. These parties and their allies dominated the Nigerian political scene until 15 January 1966 when the military intervened in the Nigerian democratic process.
2. Nigeria became a federal republic on 1 October 1963. However, the term "First Republic" is often used in the political discussion of the period from 1 October 1960 to 15 January 1966.
3. Nigeria's constitutional history dates from 1914, when, following the amalgamation that took place in January of that year, a Legislative Council was introduced. This was followed in 1922 by the Clifford Constitution, the Richards Constitution in 1946, the MacPherson Constitution in 1953 and the Lyttleton Constitution. The last, with a federal structure, became operational on 1 October 1954. Thus, the Federation of Nigeria was officially inaugurated on that date.
4. Colonial Office: *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allying Them* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1958), 52; Isawa Elaigwu "Nation-Building and Political Development in Nigeria: The Challenge of Unity in a Heterogeneous Society" in *Political Development I*, ed. J.A. Atanda and A.Y. Aliyu (Zaria: Nigeria Since Independence History Project, 1983), 468; Martin Dent

"Ethnicity and Territorial Politics in Nigeria" in *Federalism: The Multiethnic Challenge*, ed. Graham Smith (London: Longman, 1995), 131.

5. *Daily Times*, April 22, 1958.

6. For example, according to the 1952–53 census figures, out of a total population of 30.4 million, Northern Nigeria had 16.8 million, Eastern Nigeria 7.2 million, Western Nigeria 6.1 million and Lagos, the federal capital, 0.27 million: Ahmadu Kurfi, *The Nigerian General Elections, 1959 and* 1979 *and the Aftermath* (Lagos: Macmillan, 1989), 17; and National Archives, Ibadan PX\ H2A "Population Census of Nigeria, 1952–1953." A census was taken in May 1962 but was cancelled because of intractable disagreement over figures. The suppressed figures were North 22.5 million, East 12.3 million, West 10.5 million and Lagos 0.8 million. Again, the 1963 census, whose results were published in February 1964, showed that the population of the North was more than that of the rest of the Federation combined: North 29.8 million, East 12.4 million, West 10.3 million, Mid-West 2.5 million and Lagos 0.75 million: Remi Anifowose, *Violence and Politics in Nigeria. The Tiv and Yoruba Experience* (New York & Enugu: Nok Publishers International, 1982), 60. Thus, in 1959, 174 of the 312 seats in the federal parliament were allocated to Northern Nigeria. In 1964, the Northern Region was allocated 167 parliamentary seats in the federal legislature, while the East got 70, West 57, Mid-West 14 and Lagos 4. According to the 2006 census figures, the population of Northern Nigeria is still larger than that of the rest of the Federation combined: North: 73,637,065 (with 189 seats in the Federal House of Representatives), South: 64,978,686 (with 167 federal seats) and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja: 1,405,201 (with four seats in the central legislature): *The Nation*, April 1, 2009, 52.

7. According to AG leaders, the party was formed for the following, among other, reasons. One, to avert the danger of enthroning ignorant and unprincipled demagogues peddling nationalism for the sake of their stomachs. Two, to arrest the purposelessness which ensured that the country drifted on aimlessly. Three, to create an atmosphere in which honest and decent citizens and the brains in the country could come forward and work towards the installation of a democratic federal system of government in

Nigeria. Four, to achieve national progress and liberate the country from foreign yoke; and five, to develop and modernize educational and social services in the country. The foundation members of the AG were Obafemi Awolowo, Abiodun Akerele, S.O. Shonibare, Ade Akinsanya, J.O. Adigun, Olatunji Docemo, B.A Akinsanya and S.T Oredein. At its inaugural conference of 28–29 April 1951 at Owo, south-west Nigeria, officers for the new party were elected. Obafemi Awolowo became National President; Hon. Gaius Obaseki, Chief N.F. Mowarin, Chief M.A. Ajasin and Chief Arthur Prest became Vice Presidents; Chief Bode Thomas became the General Secretary; Anthony Enahoro and S.O. Sonibare were elected Assistant Secretaries; while S.O. Ighodaro became Treasurer; S.T. Oredein Administrative Secretary; and S.L. Akintola and M.E.R. Okorodudu Legal Advisers. See *Daily Service*, 21 March 1951, and Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties. Power in an Emergent African Nation* (New York & Enugu: Nok Publishers, 1963), 105–106.

8. *Daily Times*, April 22, 1958.
9. C.O. Ojukwu, *Biafra: Selected Speeches of Chukwuemeka Odumegu Ojukwu* (New York: Perennial Library, 1969), 1; C.O. Ojukwu, *Because I Am Involved* (lbadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1989), 8.
10. Martin Slan, *Introduction to Politics. Governments and Nations in the Post Cold War Era* (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 17.
11. Obaro lkime, *History, the Historian and the Nation (The Voice of a Nigerian Historian)* (lbadan: Heinemann, 2006), l21.
12. Bola Ige, *People, Politics and Politicians of Nigeria (1940–1979)* (lbadan: Heinemann, 1995), 35.
13. This was Margret Perham's description of Nigeria. Quoted from National Archives Ibadan: MN/B4A—*Memorandum on the Future Political Development of Nigeria* by His Excellency, the Governor, Sir Bernard Bourdillon, 1939, 5.
14. *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allying them*, op. cit. 3.
15. A good example was the political turbulence in Tiv Division of the defunct Northern Region in the 1960s. For a detailed discussion of the violence, see Martin Dent, "A Minority Party: The UMBC" in J. *Nigerian Government and Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1966), Chap. 11. See also Remi Anifowose, *Violence*

and Politics in Nigeria. The Tiv and Yoruba Experience (New York & Enugu: Nok Publishers International, 1982).

16. Otite defined conflict as "a struggle over values or claims to status, power and scarce resources in which the aims of the conflicting parties are not only to gain the desired values, but also to neutralize, paralyze, injure, maim or eliminate their rivals." Onigu Otite, *Ethnic Pluralism, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria* (Ibadan: Shanison C.I. Ltd., 2000), 61, 152.

17. Harry Eckstein defines a multi-ethnic state as one "divided by segmental cleavages." These segmental cleavages may be religious, ideological, linguistic, regional, cultural or ethnic in nature. See Harry Eckstein, *Division and Cohesion in Democracy: A Study of Norway* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 34. Eckstein's "segmental cleavages" are what Greetz calls "primordial loyalties," which, according to him, may be based on language, religion, custom, race or assumed blood ties. For this view, see Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1977), 1–20. For another comprehensive and authoritative discussion of the nature, structure and features of multi-ethnic states, see Richard Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria. The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Ltd., 1991).

18. National Archives Ibadan: SD/M3: Farewell Broadcast by His Excellency, the Governor-General, Sir John Macpherson, April 11, 1955, 2.

19. S.O. Arifalo, *The Egbe Omo Oduduwa: A Study in Ethnic Nationalism* (Akure: Stebak Books & Publishers, 2001), 81.

20. M.J.C. Vile, *Politics in the USA* (London: Hutchinson &Co. Ltd., 1976), 1.

21. Isola Olomola, "Roots of Contemporary Multi-Ethnic, Religious, Socio-Political and Government Politics in Nigeria" *The Herald*. 1, No.1 (September 2008), 1.

22. Siyan Oyeweso, "Causal Factors in the Nigerian Civil War: A Critical and Comparative Analysis of Some Nigerian Accounts," MA thesis, Department of History, University of Ife, Ile Ife, 1986, 14.

23. Some scholars have overestimated the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria. For example, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance puts the number of Nigeria's ethnic

groups at 374. See *Democracy in Nigeria* (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2000), 90. Also, Onigu Otite estimates that Nigeria has a total of 389 ethnic groups. See his *Ethnic Pluralism, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts in Nigeria* (Ibadan: SHANESON C.I. Ltd., 2000), Appendix II—"Nigeria's 389 Ethnic Groups at a Glance," 221–231. A federal government publication put the number of ethnic groups in Nigeria at between 250 and 400. See "Federal Republic of Nigeria: Report of Political Bureau" (Government Printer, 1987), 19–20. Whatever may be the number of the ethnic groups in Nigeria, one undeniable fact is that three out of the lot—the Hausa–Fulani, the Igbo and the Yoruba—are referred to as the majorities, while the rest, in varying degrees, constitute the minorities.

24. *National Concord*, May 29, 1992.
25. *Nigerian Guardian* February 9, 1983.
26. Quoted from *The Nation*, February 22, 2009.
27. The Lagos Youth Movement was formed in 1934 by Ernest Ikoli, H.O. Davies, J.C. Vaughan and Samuel Akisanya. It transformed into the Nigerian Youth Movement in 1936. See Oyeleye Oyediran, *Nigerian Constitutional Development* (Ibadan: Oyeniran Consults International, 2007), 9.
28. This author has attempted a fairly detailed historical analysis of the origins, growth and consequences of ethnicity in Nigeria. See, among others, his "The Politics of the Formation of Alliance Governments in Multi-Ethnic States: A Case Study of the Nigerian First Alliance Government, 1954–1957," *Canadian Journal of History/Annales CanadiennesD'Histoire*, Vol. 46, No. 2, Autumn/automne, 2011, particularly 335–351; "Leadership Crisis and Political Instability in Nigeria, 1964–1966: The Personalities, the Parties and the Policies," *International Journal of Social Sciences*, Centre for the Promotion of International Relations, Studies and Development, Accra, Ghana 4, No. 3 (2011), 105–132; "Secession Threat: A Potent Weapon in Nigerian Political Bargaining, 1950–1964," *Obitun Journal of the Humanities* 3, No. 4 (2004), 75–89; "Nigerian Colonial Constitutions and Nigeria's Political Polarization," *Journal of Arts and Humanities* 2, No. 2 (2005), 14–23; "Government-Opposition Hostility: The Bane of the Nigerian First Republic," *Babcock Journal of History & International Studies* (2006/2007), 44–67.

29. See Arend Lijphart, 20.
30. For example, the Willink's Minority Report, which saw the enshrinement of fundamental human rights in the Constitution as the most feasible safeguard against the domination of the minorities by the majorities, admitted that it was, at times, difficult to interpret and enforce the fundamental human rights. *Report*, 97.
31. *Report*, 13.
32. For the Commission's other terms of reference, see *Report*, iii. Other members of the Commission were Gordon Hadow, Philip Mason and J.B. Shearer. K.J. Hilton served as Secretary. See *Report*, iii and 106.
33. A.E. Afigbo, "Federal Character: Its Meaning and History" in *Federal Character and Federalism in Nigeria*, ed. Ekeh and E.E. Osaghae (Ibadan: Heinemann Educational, 1989), 14.
34. These were the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (after 1959, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, NCNC), which was formed in August 1944; the AG, which was formed in April 1951; and the Northern People's Congress (NPC), which was formed in October–November 1951.
35. While the Yoruba were the chief supporters of the AG, the NPC drew support mainly from the Hausa–Fulani. Following the formation of these parties and their ethnic tendencies, the Igbo became the major supporters of the NCNC after 1951.
36. The NPC was formed by the merger of two cultural groups—the Dr A.R.B. Dikko–led *Jam'yyar Tama'ar Arewa* (Northern Nigeria Congress) and the Mallam D.A. Rafih–led *Jam'iyyar Mutanem Arewa Yau* (the Association of Northern People of Today). On 12 October 1948, it was agreed by these two that their cultural associations merge into one. The new association that resulted from this merger was called *Jam'iyyar Mutanem Arewa* (Northern Nigeria Congress). The NPC held its inaugural meeting at Kaduna on 26 June 1949 where Dr A.R.B. Dikko was elected President. On 1 October 1951, it was announced that the NPC with 65 branches and 6000 members had been converted into a political party, with Alhaji Sanda as President and the Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello and Alhaji Tafawa Balewa as members. See Sklar, 91–96.

37. National Archives Ibadan: PR/A5A: Self-Government in the Eastern Region (Sessional Paper No. 2), 33.

38. Self-Government in the Eastern Region, 33.

39. Self-Government in the Eastern Region, 33.

40. In the Western Region, for example, more than two-thirds of the population was Yoruba—there were 4,302,000 Yoruba in a total population of 6,085,000. In the Eastern Region, there were more than 5 million Igbo, 71,000 Efiks and 747,000 Ibiobio. The same was true of the Northern Region: of 16,148,000 inhabitants, 8,441,000 were Hausa–Fulani, 1,175,000 were Kanuri while 347,000 were Nupe. See *Report*, 6, 34 and 53.

41. The UMBC was formally inaugurated at Kafanhan, Northern Nigeria, on 10 June 1955. It was a merger of two political associations—The Middle Zone League, MZL, and the Middle Belt Peoples' Party, MBPP. Specifically, the party was formed to cater to the peculiar problems of the ethnic minorities of Northern Nigeria inhabiting the Middle Belt area. The AG–UMBC alliance gave the latter an invigorating infusion of financial and legal strength, in addition to the benefits of a systematic and efficient organization. It has been estimated that the AG spent well over £150,000 on all forms of assistance to the UMBC during the 1958–59 fiscal year. See Alkasum Abba, *The Northern Elements Progressive Union and the Politics of Radical Nationalism in Nigeria, 1938–1960* (Zaria: The Abdullahi Smith Centre for Historical Research, n.d.), 206–210; *Action Group Papers: Action Group's Approved Estimates, 1958/59*. See also Sklar, 347–348; 375.

42. There were proposals for the creation of four new states in the Eastern Region. These were the Ogoja, Cross River, Rivers and Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers States. Even though none of the states was eventually created, it was to the last (COR), which would have probably been the largest and most viable, that the Eastern regional government stood adamantly opposed. The regional government argued that the demand for the COR State was inspired by and anchored on a thorough dislike for the Igbo tribe. What the Willink Commission recommended was the creation of a Calabar Area and the constitution of a Council to be headed by a Chairman who must be an indigene of the area: *Report*, 36 and 104.

43. See *Action Group Papers: Action Group's Approved Estimates, 1958/59*, 10. The author of this chapter assessed a few copies of

this document at Dideolu Library (located within the premises of Chief Obafemi Awolowo), Ikenne, Ogun State, on 15 April 2010.

44. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties,* 36–37. For the details of the results, see also *West Africa,* 26 December 1959; Claude Phillips, *The Development of Nigerian Foreign Policy* (Northwestern University Press, 1964), 23; F.A.O. Schwarz, *Nigeria: The Tribes, the Nation or the Race—The Politics of Independence* (Cambridge: Mass, MIT Press, 1965), 110–111; J. Mackintosh, "Nigeria's External Relations," *Journal of Commonwealth Political Studies II* (1963–1964), 194–200 and NAI: PX/G5*:* "Report on the Nigeria Federal Election, December 1959," 24.

45. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties*, 152 fn. 33.

46. *Nigerian Citizen*, December 12 and 21, 1957.

47. It must be stressed that the AG did not support and advocate the creation of states in the other regions only; it supported the exercise in the Western Region, its sphere of influence. For instance, on 14 June 1955, the Western House of Assembly unanimously passed a motion which called for the creation of the Mid-West State. Indeed, on 20 May 1957, a Ministry of Mid-West Affairs and a Mid-West Council were created. Thereafter, in addition to being the Home Affairs Minister, Chief Anthony Enahoro became the Minister for Mid-West. See *Report*, 11–12.

48. C.S. Whitaker Jr, *The Politics of Tradition Continuity and Change in Northern Nigeria, 1946–1966* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 138.

49. *Report of the Commission appointed to enquire into the fears of Minorities and the means of allying them*, 77.

50. *Report,* 78.

51. *Report,* 78.

52. *Report,* 78.

53. *Report,* 78.

54. The dissolution was ordered by Sir Gwain Bell, the Governor of Northern Nigeria, on the advice of D.A. Potts, the Resident, Ilorin Province: Alkasum Abba, 214, footnote 447.

55. Report

56. For details, see E.O. Ojo, "The 1959 Federal Elections: A Juxtaposition and Appraisal of the Action Group's Pre and Post Election Position on Some Issues," *Journal of Research and Contemporary Issues* 2, No. 2, 2006, 29–45.

57. *Daily Service,* September 15, 1958.
58. For details, see E.O. Ojo, "Leadership Crisis and Political Instability in Nigeria, 1964–1966: The Personalities, the Parties and the Policies," *International Journal of Social Sciences*, Official Publication of the Centre for the Promotion of International Relations, Studies and Development, CIRSD, Accra, Ghana, 4(3), 2011, 105–132; and "The Awolowo–Akintola Leadership Tussle: A Reinterpretation." *Journal of Arts and Humanities*, Maryland Institute of Research, 5(1), 2016, 79–90.

Minorities and Postcolonial Politics

The *Owegbe* Cult: Political and Ethnic Rivalries in Early Postcolonial Benin City

Joseph Nevadomsky

Studies of political mobilization in sub-Saharan African nation-states of the 1960s focused on identities and political interests as the basis for rivalry, dissension, and conflict. One cohort of scholars viewed ethnic coalescence as the key element around which Africans organized their social and political existence, and especially their relations with others. Ethnicity, or its less laundered form, tribalism, referred to an intense attachment to one's immediate kin group, or "tribe," and therefore to a hostility toward outsiders (recent theoretical formulations call this "ontological formations").[1] In this scenario, mutual suspicion and cultural incompatibility in a "we-versus-they" dichotomy had, until independence, been restrained by the presence of a neutral colonizing power. Writing on urban pluralism in

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Africa, Leo Kuper informed us that "prior to independence, the hostility tribesmen felt for their western overlords must have been great enough to overcome any repugnance for each other."[2] In this view, *ethnicity as cause*, or ethnic coalescence, offered the fundamental expression of primordial sentiments (cf. Clifford Geertz for the classic elaboration of this theme).[3] Ethnicity as cause focused on the continued primacy of traditional loyalties at the expense of other more broadly based, multiple, cross-cutting allegiances.[4]

Other scholars perceived ethnicity as an emergent and situational phenomenon (in recent framings, "representations,"[5] "subjective and ideological formations,"[6] and "orientations"[7]) emergent in the sense that, in securing valuable and scarce goods, an ethnic group is an interest group that mobilizes ethnicity to achieve its goals. While the roots of mobilization lie in economic interests, the outlet may be cultural or ethnic, or *ethnicity as consequence*. Ethnicity is situational in that it is one path of articulation by which secular interests are expressed and necessitate multiple responses,[8] or criteria of relevance.[9]

Owegbe is a Nigerian secret society that gained currency in the 1960s as a potent agency for political mobilization. I argue that both theoretical orientations -- ethnicity as cause and ethnicity as consequence -- are germane to an analysis of Owegbe, its dynamics, organization, and meanings. Nigeria is a heterogeneous society divided by distinct ethnicities and diverse religious and linguistic groups. Political ideologies typically follow the path of least resistance along traditional cleavages.[10] The fluidity of *both* shifting parochialisms and opportunistic pragmatism is essential to understanding the emergence of the Owegbe Society as a powerful political force in Benin City, center of the former Great Kingdom of Benin. The Benin Kingdom is famous worldwide for its brass art castings; its moats, which are part of the Guinness Book of Records; and a system of political centralization through kingship and primogeniture that dates from the ninth century AD.

In the context of Nigerian ethnic regionalisms as perceived at the time, Owegbe was described as a recidivist expression of primordial sentiments designed to maintain the hegemony of the dominant Edo ethnic group in south-central Nigeria. Though its origins are obscure, this secret society gained prominence in the early 1960s out of the political strife within the Benin Division of the then Western Region of Nigeria, and was touted as an instrument of terror against political opponents. Media reports regarded it as a classic example of tribal blood loyalties endemic in African

societies. The most lurid picture of the Owegbe Society was painted by *TIME* magazine:

> Owegbe was active as a kind of Ku Klux Klan to protect backward Beni (*sic*) tribesmen against the political inroads of their more aggressive, better educated neighbors, the Yorubas and the Ibos. When the pushy Ibos captured the post of provincial prime minister in the traditional home of the Benis—Benin City—Owegbe leaders were humiliated and ordered a rampage of terror, filling Nigerian newspapers with stories of Owegbe beatings and intimidation. Police raided shrines in Benin, discovered banned devices used in juju ceremonies and two human skulls, feeding rumors that the cult engaged in human sacrifice… To ensure compliance with Owegbe commands, initiates were ushered through a grisly ritual, cut three times on the cheek or chest, then made to eat the heart of a cockerel and down a loathsome liquid potion brewed from kola nuts and wine and the blood, hair, finger and toenails of a dead cultist. They finally bound themselves to Owegbe with 24 oaths, each ending with the chilling refrain: "If I refuse … let Owegbe make juju."[11]

This description fed into a western popular consciousness of atavism in sub-Saharan Africa. Devoid of purple prose and allusions to apotropaic rituals, however, it is not far removed, especially in its insinuation of tribal tit-for-tats, from "ethnicity as cause," with *Owegbe* expressing primordial loyalties and categorical sentiments.

A Note on Political Ethnicity Theory in the 1960s

Leaving aside *TIME* magazine's journalistic jingoism, the above passage suggests two conflated views of political ethnicity: ethnicity as cause and ethnicity as means. One view refers to tribalism and its corollaries such as nepotism as a moralistic condemnation in the same manner as racism.[12] It suggests an attachment to a particular group and therefore an inherent hostility to, or suspicion of, outsiders and cultural incompatibility.[13] This is ethnicity as generic.

Another view is ethnicity as artifact. Here, ethnicity is, as Henry Bretton says, "a nest egg or a political insurance to be drawn on when needed for added strength" utilized by politicians as "the simplest language one could relate to … [but] as soon as a public position has been attained … tribal spokesmen descry tribalism as divisive, enervating, and debilitating forces that must be discouraged."[14] Elizabeth Colson noted that political

leaders "mobilize a body of followers responsive to common symbols … It is the potential leaders' need for loyal followings rather than any ethnic groups' need for self-expression that lies behind the mobilization of tribes and the manifestation of tribalism in contemporary Africa."[15]

The way Owegbe played out in the media and by social scientists of the time turned on ethnicity as the basis for conflict. Primordial feelings explained political rivalries. Juxtaposed, however, appeals to ethnic loyalties served as a useful means to secure reins of power and prestige, an efficient avenue to aggrandizement that calls up attachments to the familiar and readily familiar bases of family, land, patrimony, and language. On the broader canvas of political activities in the Benin Division of the Western Region, communal loyalties were said to have been expertly juggled by adroit politicians to serve commercial, entrepreneurial, and bureaucratic regional interests. Owegbe offered a way for achieving political control and separation from the Western Region, and securing the new opportunities that colonialism afforded, with Owegbe expressing instrumentality.

The meanings of Owegbe lend credibility to both ethnicity as cause and ethnicity as consequence. Owegbe can be glossed as "strong body." As a member of the Otu-Edo Divisional Committee reported during testimony before the Alexander Commission, set up to investigate alleged atrocities by Owegbe:

> Owegbe has variable meanings. It is a strong shrub in the desert which resists all weather. Owegbe is a strong person. In another reference when there is a dividing line between two properties and anything happens to fall on the boundary Owegbe takes possession of that thing as his own; hence, the man who takes possession … is referred to as the Owegbe. In Benin it is said: "*Owegbe Orheimioin no/re/uvow.*" (Owegbe takes what is in no-man's land).[16]

Actually, it is *Owegbe ọrhiemwin nọ re uviẹn*, or "It is the strong man [body] that takes what is on the land." It means ownership of the land by indigenes. The relationship between land (in terms of personal) property and kingdom (in terms of identity) is an historical one. The courts now adjudicate property rights, but there remains a sense in which the king is the owner of the land, at least the rightful guardian of it. The patrimony of the Benin Kingdom includes citizenship as in *ovien oba*, "slaves of the king." This is acknowledged in the title of the king: *Ọmọ n'Ọba n'Ẹdo*, "the Child that is the King that is the Land." The king is the dynastic overlord of the land from time immemorial into perpetuity.

Politics in the Midwest Region of Nigeria

In 1963, three years after Britain granted independence, Nigeria had about 40 million people divided among three political regions: North, East, and West. There were three political parties, each nominally in control of a region: the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the North, the Action Group (AG) in the West, and the National Council of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) in the East. Each region had a complex makeup, generally a preponderant majority of culturally related ethnic groups and linguistic minorities. The major groups were the Hausa–Fulani in the North, the Igbo in the East, and the Yoruba in the West. None of the regions could be described as homogeneous in religious or ethnic terms, and minority groups added to this diversity.

On August 9, 1963, following a referendum favored by 89% of the voters, the Midwest Region was carved from the Western Region. It consisted of two provinces, Benin and Delta, and a number of divisions. The largest consisted of Edo-speaking peoples, including Benin Division, Ishan Division, groups in Afenmai, and the Urhobos, sometimes regarded as a separate "tribe" (though they are village-based politically), with a form of "Edo" that is unintelligible in Ishan (another Edo group) but politically linked to the historical Benin Kingdom. A large Ijaw population lives in the Western Ijaw Division, and Western Igbo live in the two eastern Divisions of Asaba and Aboh. The Western Igbo have affinities to the Edo and notions of kingship, and also to the Eastern Igbo, with a traditional egalitarian village structure.

The census for 1952 (Table 5.1) lists the following ethnic groups, of which the first five are regarded as Edo. Tables 5.2 and 5.3 are ethnic groups by political divisions.

By 1965 the Midwest House of Assembly had 63 NCNC members, the AG and the Midwest Democratic Front (MDF, a local constituent of the NPC) one member each. The situation was more complex than these figures indicate. The NCNC was national; Benin Division was a special area in which the NCNC allied with the Otu-Ẹdo, a local and ethnocentric party, meaning "Benin Society." Notionally fused with the NCNC, Otu-Ẹdo enjoyed autonomy as the Benin Branch of the NCNC. The NCNC–Otu-Ẹdo represented the parochial interests of the Edo (mainly Bini), while the NCNC-Pure, as it was known, represented the interests of Igbo living in the Midwest Region and outside the fold of Otu-Ẹdo. To understand this alliance and its relationship to the Owegbe Society, we need to discuss the Minority States Movement.

Table 5.1 1952 census by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Benin Province	Delta Province
Edo (or Bini)	420,842	6608
Urhobo	27,893	244,755
Etsako	90,000	–
Akoko-Edo	17,788	–
Ivbiosakan	47,788	–
Igbo	150,409	139,068
Ika	113,114	–
Ijaw	6035	66,175
Itsekiri	3042	28,295
Yoruba	10,979	5031
Isoko	–	93,740

Source: Population Census of Western Nigeria 1952. Lagos: Government Printers. 1959:17

Table 5.2 1952 census by mainly Edo-speaking divisions

Division	Edo-speaking	Non-Edo-speaking
Benin	225,000	67,000
Ishan	184,000	8000
Afenmai	172,000	32,000
Urhobo	295,000	28,000

Source: Willink Commission: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allaying Them. London: HMSO. 1958:7

MINORITY STATES MOVEMENT

From the 1940s both Nnandi Azikiwe and Obafemi Awolowo, Nigerian nationalists, looked to a future independent from Britain and proposed creating states along broad cultural and linguistic lines. Their immediate concern was that new states and national–regional sentiments would emerge more easily if ethnic diversity—to avoid particularism—was taken into account. Nigeria has more than 300 ethno-linguistic categories, each with localized sentiments. However, by the 1950s, as greater political power devolved on the three existing regions—North, West, and East—the movements for separation from these three regions gained ground

Table 5.3 1952 census by mainly non-Edo-speaking divisions

Division	Edo-speaking	Non-Edo-speaking
Asaba	6000	206,000
Aboh	19,000	111,000
Western Ijaw	18,000	65,000
Warri	13,000	41,000

Source: Willink Commission: Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Fears of Minorities and the Means of Allying Them. London: HMSO. 1958:7

among the non-Yoruba of the West, the non-Igbo of the East, and the non-Hausa Middle Belt of the North. Aware of these sentiments, the NCNC and the AG acknowledged minority interests to achieve a national following. The AG forged links with proponents of a non-Igbo Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers State in the Eastern Region, while the NCNC, based in the East, led the drive for a non-Yoruba state in the Western Region. Igbo in Benin and Delta provinces looked for support from the NCNC, which they saw as their party. So long as the NCNC fought for the creation of a Midwest State, and vicariously identified with Edo interests, the Edo accepted their support.

The success of the Minority States Movement in the Midwest provinces resulted from crises in the Western Region: the split between Awolowo and his successor as premier, Samuel Akintola, and the investigation of illegal financial practices of the AG government. By 1962 the AG had lost its political grip in the region.

It was also a result of popular sentiment in Benin and Delta provinces. Many Midwesterners, especially the Edo, felt that the AG had concentrated development in Yoruba West while neglecting them. They directed their hostility at the Benin Branch of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity (ROF), an exclusive society that had been founded by aspiring Yoruba in Lagos, the federation capital. In the Benin Division, this included Edo men of repute. Ogbonis, as members of the ROF came to be known, controlled the markets, the tax system, and influential businesses. Ogbonis are reported to have violated the law with impunity, not difficult where civil law is weak.

At first a revival of an old secret society, based on a cult of the Yoruba gods, the ROF later evolved into an elite social status club, with initiation

rituals that mimicked Masonry. Eventually, the ROF transformed into a political organization that came to dominate the administration of Benin Division, much to the chagrin of its traditional ruler, the Oba of Benin, Akenzua II, and the people. The ROF spread among officials of Benin and Delta provinces, who sought membership to curry favor that advanced their mobility. Edo cringed under what they saw as Yoruba domination. Locals feared domination by non-natives. Many feared a permanent AG majority in the Western House of Assembly, with the AG drawing its backstage supports from the Egbe Omo Oduduwa, an organization that fostered pan-Yoruba unity in a region of religious and cultural complexity. The Egbe Omo Oduduwa (lit: "body of the children of Oduduwa," the presumptive progenitor of all Yoruba) manifested its public activities through the ROF by controlling boards of directors, commissions and corporations, the magistracy, and customary courts. Although the Willink Commission dismissed charges against the ROF as baseless, the popular belief in their validity affected local attitudes. By the 1950s Ogbonism had become synonymous with oppression. That the AG still succeeded at the polls reflected the party's control over the police and harassment of opposition candidates, preferential treatment for party candidates, and heavy tax assessments on nonsupporters. Voters also turned against known Ogboni members rather than the AG itself. Voting patterns focused on local rather than regional and national issues.

The widespread influence of the ROF among chiefs and civil officers roused popular resentment in Benin City. This antipathy led to the formation of the Otu-Ẹdo, an organization that supported Edo cultural and commercial interests, support for the traditional form of kingship and the Oba, and independence from Yoruba and Ogboni influence. Members leaned toward the NCNC as a buffer. Otu-Ẹdo leaders hoped to wrest power from the Ogbonis in particular and the AG generally. Under the leadership of Chief Omo-Osagie, the Otu-Ẹdo affiliated with the NCNC, made more palatable because the Oba of Benin, no longer a member of Otu-Ẹdo and therefore no longer perceived as a patriot for Edo advancement, had accepted a position as minister without portfolio in the AG, thereby automatically becoming an AG member.

These paradoxical actions—the AG's promise to support the creation of a Midwest State, a reappraisal of the reality of power by the Western Region, Ogboni intrusions—became highly suspicious among local Edo, who maintained their allegiance to the Otu-Ẹdo, their perceived communal party, and shied away from their traditional loyalty to the Oba of Benin. As a powerful member of the NCNC (he served as Federal Minister

of Internal Affairs) and the Otu-Ẹdo, Chief Omo-Osagie filled a vacuum of leadership left by Oba Akenzua II, and the general feeling that he provided a realistic link between local and national levels of government.

The Oba saw many of his affluent chiefs aligning themselves with AG patronage. More germane, Omo-Osagie represented the loyal opposition, the traditional "town chiefs versus the palace chiefs" separation that had been a hallmark of society for centuries. This often worked very well, with the town chiefs offering useful governance on behalf of the citizenry and they served to blunt the autocratic powers of the king in an elegant balance of power. The Oba appointed the Iyase, head of the town chiefs, and in ordinary circumstances, this worked to support the king at the same time that it allowed for popular sentiments and expressions of popular disapproval.

But in times of extraordinary change, the delicate balance of power shifted from mutual accommodation to adversity. Town chiefs in the past, notably the Iyase, challenged the king, even the system of kingship itself. Town chiefs rallied against inept kings; the uneasy transition to colonial rule offered new ways to usurp the kingship. Colonial rule provided a fluid landscape of numerous avenues of negotiation and redefinition never before available. New elites attempted to rearrange the traditional landscape while following traditional procedures governing the separation of powers.[17]

The king endeavored to remain a father to his people so that when they requested jobs, he could pass on these requests to the government with some chance of success. Political alignment with the AG boosted palace authority as the font of patronage, as had been done in the past, and then adjusted to present circumstances. It offered an oppositional base to Omo-Osagie and the shifting venues of political authority in Benin City, font of Edo kingship. However, election results thwarted the Oba. Following the demise of the AG as a significant political force in the Midwest, the NCNC–Otu-Edo won overwhelmingly.

NCNC AND *OTU-ẸDO* CONFLICT

Although Otu-Ẹdo, and its militant supernatural branch, Owegbe, came to the fore in opposition to the Ogboni Society, it is in the context of its alliance with the NCNC that it gains special relevance. Tension arose between the Otu-Ẹdo and what was known as NCNC-Pure. The rising crescendo and press publicity given to alleged atrocities by Owegbe members, and reports of secret initiations and the taking of oaths of allegiance, proved

a threat to the NCNC-Pure. The NCNC ineffectually hoped to control Otu-Ẹdo and bring it into conformity with the NCNC constitution.

An obvious manifestation of this focused on changing the name of Otu-Ẹdo. Instead, the local branch of the party should be referred to as NCNC-*Simpliciter*. However, Otu-Ẹdo leaders insisted that NCNC–Otu-Ẹdo was the equivalent of NCNC-*Simpliciter*, and that, in any case, the name would not be dropped because it had political significance and emotional appeal for adherents. Particularly virulent was the animosity between the *Midwest Voice*, mouthpiece of the Osadenis Crusade (the militant arm of the NCNC)[18] and instrumental in highlighting the activities of the Otu-Ẹdo, and the *Midwest Champion*, the mouthpiece of the Otu-Ẹdo that accused the political enemies of Otu-Ẹdo of political discrimination and recrimination.

Reasons for this mutual antagonism between allies are not hard to surmise. Butted between the cheeks of the AG Ogboni and the local victories of the mostly Igbo NCNC, frustration raged among the Edo. They were not privy to the spoils of politics. Although Dennis Osadebay, as the Igbo premier of the region, had garnered the gratitude of many Edo in his support for a Midwest State, and as president of the Midwest State Movement beginning in 1956, it became increasing galling to them that he was responsible for the sharing of patronage, senior civil service appointments, and other amenities on a presumably disproportionate ethnic basis.

As Osadebay's interests were intimately tied to NCNC leaders in the Eastern Region on a national level, many Edo sensed a lack of relevance in his local leadership. Galling, too, his residence in Asaba Division, the easternmost sector of the region and one populated almost entirely by Igbo, meant that the Edo could not readily appeal to him. They felt insulted that he did not reside in Benin City, the seat of traditional Edo supremacy. To counteract a perceived Igbo domination and neglect, Otu-Ẹdo leaders made increasing use of Owegbe rituals and intimidation. The militancy of Owegbe and the fear of ritual means for political usurpation created a miniature reign of terror in Benin City and areas under Owegbe influence.

Origins of Owegbe

Some secret societies are propelled into political prominence with/through deep cultural and historical roots. The Ogboni Society originated as a cult to/of the earth. Embedded in the fabric of society it garnered

allegiances that skirted colonial authority. Both before and after independence in 1960, the AG employed it as a means for political solidarity as Nigeria moved rapidly to parliamentary self-rule.

Owegbe has a more recent, but murky, history. Its genesis can be traced anywhere from 1944 to 1954. In 1944 Chief Omo-Osagie brought together a consortium of traditional ritual practitioners or "native doctors" to help him win a civil libel action that had gotten him into some difficulty. They concocted various assortments as protective medicines that were rubbed into body cuts, a series of "X" patterns made with razor blades or needles on the chest, back, arms, and legs of initiates. The concoctions of herbs were believed to make individuals impervious to machete cuts and gunshots. Procedures included bathing in traditional *Osun* water, a fetid mixture of dead animal parts such as crocodile heads and dead birds, and forest ingredients. Osun water warded off harm while the "marks of Owegbe" served as a visible warning for others to beware.[19] After the libel action of 1944, Owegbe survived as a secret cult.[20] As independence neared, and political rivalries intensified, Owegbe became a counter to the AG backed by the Ogboni Society.

As head of a new regional party, Omo-Osagie sought the premiership of the Midwest Region. Omo-Osagie's seniority as a 70-year-old chief, backed by the medicines of Owegbe and supported by the NCNC, engendered fear, and with a supernatural base, he could directly challenge the ancestral powers of the Oba of Benin. How this could be played out became apparent in the pompous but effective number plate of his car. This could not be B1, reserved for the Oba, so Omo-Osagie took B2, a signature of power and a modern competitive advert.

The Owegbe Society offered the Otu-Ẹdo a powerful weapon to effectively block inroads made by the AG and the Ogboni Society (ROF). The formal structure consisted of 13 enclaves covering Benin Province, with Benin City as headquarters. Influential villagers controlled the enclaves. Each enclave was self-contained and met independently. With its autonomous structure, the center in Benin City exerted a kind of loose, amorphous control. The supreme authority for Owegbe existed in the form of a Divisional Executive Committee of Otu-Ẹdo, headed by Omo-Osagie. Below this executive committee, the enclaves were the individual chairmen of the respective branches or *Ogua*, initiating shrines, constructed in all the wards of Benin Division and many other wards in other divisions of Benin Province.

This structure mimicked the traditional hierarchy in the kingship system. At the center resided Omo-Osagie, in a position of authority not unlike that of the Oba of Benin, the traditional ruler. At the other end were local shrines and a system of village control by elders or influential villagers such as the traditional *enigie* (singular*: enogie*). As half-brothers of the Oba of Benin, the enigie did not often live in any of the villages they supervised but received tribute from them, and reported on problems to the central authority. That kind of loose structure combined a system of kingship with autonomous villages, a neat blend of two seemingly opposed forms of political authority that could be manipulated and required extraordinary astuteness to artfully operate within it.

Ritual Features of *Owegbe*

Owegbe leaders used shrine initiations and administration of oaths. The use of traditional forms of "juju" (i.e., magical medicine) established a cohesive political organization that tied villagers into an association of commitment for candidates. Initiation also ensured an unquestioning obedience to the Owegbe Society. Common features of induction included: (1) members initiated at night at an Ogun shrine. Ogun is the god of iron and, by extension, of war. Ogun is a hot god, the patron saint of warriors, metal workers, and blacksmiths. Devotion to Ogun calls for (2) dog sacrifices—heads of decapitated dogs appear as offerings; (3) initiates paid between five to ten pounds sterling (British and Nigerian currency were equivalent in value) and other animals such as a chicken and goat, which were bled over the shrine and then cooked for feasting; (4) initiates swore oaths of fidelity over a stone vessel (akin to a large bird bath) dedicated to Osun deity of the forest and its herbs/leaves that protect one; (5) and washed with the sacred protection of Osun water; (6) an initiate ate the heart of a cockerel; (7) initiates stood on a large flat stone—indication of inviolability—and were marked with knife or razor blade cuts that rendered them invulnerable to machete cuts or gunshots, and gunpowder was rubbed into the wounds; (8) initiates swore oaths of secrecy and obedience; (9) initiates lay on broken bottles with a mortar on their chests while herbs placed in the mortar were pounded with a pestle and the ground herbs later rubbed into the cut body of the person; (10) initiates danced on broken bottles, as testified to by one member of the Owegbe Society.[21]

For some of these people can have broken bottles all over the floor of any place and when they shoot their guns they dance on these broken bottles and they are not cut. Some of them among the "Ewaise" [medicine men]—they can have somebody lying on the ground—a mortar placed on his chest and they will be beating it—I mean many people will be pounding and pounding a pestle in a mortar while it is on his chest, a big mortar. Well, all these terrified the Action Group and they feared.[22]

In a modern twist, each initiate was given a fidelity ring that bore one of the following inscriptions: "V," "BI," or "CII." The significance of these inscriptions could not be determined during the course of the inquiry into Owegbe activities, though such rings served as court exhibits.[23] One guesses that B stood for Benin, BI for a new dynastic oba-ship, V may have stood for victory, and CII is unknown.

Owegbe Society Objectives

Besides resisting the AG and the Ogboni Society pressures, Owegbe served as a social help organization for "any member of Otu-Ẹdo in financial difficulties [and] to combat collectively, robbery, stealing and immoral practices" through a supernatural agency for the punishment of wrong-doers.[24] Owegbe had not initially employed initiations and the taking of oaths (not to mention the fealty identity rings). This lack of supernatural sanctions led to "weather-cocking" (i.e., carpet-crossing, switching political affiliations). Initiation centers (shrines) soon opened in Benin City and spread to outlying areas, and terrorized those who failed to comply.

An early reluctance to use rituals and large-scale swearing of oaths was the fear that any outrageous attempts to create a subversive political interest group with a solid infrastructure of adherents bound by oaths of allegiance and cultic practices would have alarmed the Western regional government and/or the federal government. An Order in Council (1959) had prohibited the worship or invocation of any Owegbe "juju." The Oba of Benin regarded Owegbe rituals as dangerous, a violation of Benin native law and custom and, incidentally, a threat to his authority:

May I say the self-made President-General of the NCNC/Otu-Ẹdo Alliance and his lieutenants are the people who have violated fundamental human rights because they have been goading, instigating and coercing the simple pagan folks in the rural areas and the impetuous and unthinking youths in the Benin Division to take oaths or swear by Owegbe juju that they will do this or that thing and will follow this or that way against their conscience.[25]

As the NCNC–Otu-Ẹdo Alliance became more powerful, and the creation of Midwest State imminent, Otu-Ẹdo/Owegbe leaders assumed they were safe in tailoring the aims of the society to their objectives. After 1963, oaths taken by initiates assured election success for Otu-Edo candidates and an unquestioning loyalty to the organization. The main goal was to build up a strong base of supporters with unswerving obedience to Otu-Ẹdo leadership in Benin Division and other divisions where Owegbe influence was having an impact. The tempo of initiations into Owegbe, sometimes including non-Edo, dramatically increased after its success against the AG and Ogboni in the Midwest Region. Initiations escalated following the installation of a new regional government in February 1964; by 1965, there were more than 300 initiation shrines, each with about 200–250 members, or anywhere from 60,000 to 75,000 members in Benin Division alone—a sizable and significant militant wing.

By this time, too, Owegbe controlled the customary courts and had made inroads into other governmental agencies and statutory corporations. These activities occurred after the need for recruitment of members to combat alleged persecution by the AG had disappeared. The reasons that initially gave impetus to the development of a militant arm had ceased as the NCNC–Otu-Edo Alliance now effectively controlled the political apparatus of the Midwest State. The reasons for this jump in recruitment are not hard to find. When the perceived enemies were the AG and the Ogboni Society, expediency dictated an alliance with the NCNC as the surest way to undermine that political superordination. Once the Midwest State became a process in becoming, Otu-Ẹdo discovered again that the fruits of their labors had again eluded them, and resided this time in the hands of the NCNC, a predominantly Igbo-dominated political party. To counter this threat, Otu-Ẹdo, through the Owegbe Society, sought to increase its core of adherents, bound by ritual and oaths, to usurp power in the Midwest. For Chief Omo-Osagie, control of the government in Edo hands, with himself as premier, was an important personal goal. At 73, he was still politically astute and ambitious but complained that his lack of the premiership had denied him the *fons et origio* for the distribution of patronage. He felt unable to adequately fulfill promises made to "his people."

For the Edo, a very proud people with an illustrious history and not far removed from ancestors that had held hegemony over a kingdom that include Lagos and part of the Yoruba West, and Igbo areas to the river Niger, the lack of political control was frustrating. So long as outsiders did

not figure prominently in the political, economic, and social landscape, no one cared and there was little, if any, animosity. Personal contacts were remote, or instrumental, or unimportant. But in the ensuing struggles over new strategic positions of power (taxation, public works, employment, and education), Edo coalesced for mutual interest.

As the AG influence waned, Owegbe supporters rioted against the Ogboni, physically inflicting punishment on them to make up for years of oppression. Now the economic threats by the Igbo demanded action. Commentators argued that any tour of Benin and its districts would show that most were foreign natives (i.e., Igbo). Interviewees noted that the Igbo had tapped the resources of the state, especially rubber production. Leases of landed property to non-Edo were on the rise. The Igbo, instead of maintaining a subservient attitude and occupational relationship (as menials, or as household servants), were becoming politically uppity. Worse, their economic inroads devastated the proud Edo. Ethnic articulation, by means of powerful agencies that employed supernatural means for political solidarity, served as a response to potential domination, from wherever it came.

Analysis of Owegbe

In the politicized atmosphere of Midwest Nigeria, Owegbe allegiances provided an effective political weapon that, by reconstituting and reinventing certain traditional features of Edo ritual practice, bound adherents collectively. However, to understand the Owegbe Society as a political interest group in which ethnicity was articulated as a political weapon rather than as an atavistic arrangement in which endemic tribal animosities were carried over into the present, one must distinguish between the form and the meaning of the Society's rituals. A preoccupation with only the ritual and traditional aspects of Owegbe obscures the deeper significance of the rituals as organizational features of political mobilization.

The initiations and taking of oaths under impressively secret circumstances served as both a sacred and a social event not unlike the inductions performed by fraternities and sororities, and freemasons. By taking an Owegbe oath, the initiate associated himself with certain sacred symbols. Oaths acquired a sanction that went beyond the individual, and established a sacred tie to others in the group. Initiation ceremonies were also social events, a consciousness-raising feature that solidified the initiate to the party. Such social solidarity raised the level of political commitment.

A reciprocal function of oath-taking bound individuals firmly to the group and made them susceptible to group demands. A member of Otu-Ẹdo pointed out in testimony that the deterrent effects of taking oaths were achieved as a result of auto-suggestion. A high level of conformity to principles became necessary as ordinary villagers and townspeople had, at times, to defy constituted authority. Initiation and the taking of oaths became imperative to overcome fragmentation, weather-cocking, and passivity. Any political unit had therefore to employ all the symbols recognized as commonly sanctioned. The form of oath that Owegbe initiates undertook deterred defection, and that if the initiate defected from the Otu-Ẹdo and the NCNC or contested as an independent candidate, food would kill him.[26]

For members of Owegbe, such practices ensured solidarity. For Otu-Ẹdo, Owegbe provided a militant means to manipulate ethnicity, an available all-encompassing political symbol. Ethnicity offers individuals a distinctiveness and continuity in aspects of life untouched by instrumental organization or ideological commitments. Ethnicity consists of untransformed, nonideological identifications and cultural values. Ethnicity is not in itself productive of conflict because different groups express amorphous and sometimes incompatible values. They become coherent and conflict producing values when manipulated by individuals employing organizational strategies, or where there are perceived economic threats to security and well-being.

In the classical "folk" sense, ethnicity, or its popular counterpart "tribalism," is a primordial holistic guide to behavior—an encompassing constellation of integrated beliefs, an environment not complicated by juridical principles of various allegiances, limited in internal differentiation and certainly constrained by a limited consciousness of self. Outside the folk model, life is more complicated. The contemporary utility of an ethnic paradigm is circumvented by segmental ties of friendship, occupation and association, and a multitude of cross-cutting affiliations.

Not all Edo belonged to Otu-Ẹdo or Owegbe. One could belong to Otu-Ẹdo without belonging to Owegbe, but to belong to Owegbe, one had to belong to Otu-Ẹdo. While some joined out of fear of reprisals, others disliked the secrecy, the rituals, or Omo-Osagie, and even when threatened, they refused to join.[27] Others maintained their affiliation with the AG, the anti-NCNC MDF, or, as with Chief Gaius Obaseki, as head of the ROF. Some experienced a feeling of terror and insecurity, not as a

result of Yoruba or Igbo domination, but because of Owegbe victimization. Forced initiations were not unknown.[28]

If ethnicity is thought of a matter of degree, or part of a complex flowchart, rather than an all-or-none categorical concept, we are closer to understanding the nature of social action and political dynamics as evidenced in the raucous context in Midwestern Nigeria. Each individual, in that highly charged atmosphere, held multiple loyalties and social identities, the prominence of which varied by situation. At any moment each actor was a member of a family, religion, village or town, division, province, culturally defined loyalty (traditional palace loyalty and/or political elites), and an imposed nationality (citizen of Benin and/or citizen of Nigeria). The relative salience of each reference point shifts according to the changing political situation and defined personal interests. As Mitchell has noted for his Rhodesian materials, an alien in one situation could be a political ally in another[29] and parallels his and others "situational analysis."[30] In the political sociology of the time, social scientists focused on which ethnic groups lived in which area, or to which ethnic group did an individual belong, as though this automatically determined one's actions. Often left out of this simple tabulation was the more difficult task of inquiring the extent to which ethnicity operated as a significant (or not significant) variable in intergroup relations. In this sense ethnicity is a dynamic phenomenon, not a pigeonhole to which data can be assigned on the basis of nominal criteria.

The exploitation of ethnicity for political and economic interests explains the development of the Owegbe Society. Owegbe leaders made use of cultural idioms to morally bind members to the Society's political interests. Less an end in itself, ethnicity offered an expedient route to power. Its successes were due to disparities of power and conflicts of interests far more than due to a *gemeinschaft* participation in a unified moral universe similar to a symbolic universe of primordial sentiments.

Concluding Remarks

In the traditional sense Owegbe is a fortifying ritual for personal protection involving body modification procedures that offer a kind of spiritual armor against physical harm, and making a person impervious to gun wounds or machete cuts. Owegbe is also socially transformative. As a group rite of passage, the political enterprise of Owegbe inducted entrants into a secret

but powerful collectivity. The historical changes over the last half-century had led to new social and political formations.[31]

Owegbe was one of those formations. With the Oba of Benin aligned as a token of the AG and its affiliate, the ROF, and continued Yoruba hegemony, on the one hand, and the NCNC party, dominated by the Igbo, on the other, Edo citizens of Benin found themselves hedged between their traditional loyalties to the king and notions of identity, and allegiances to a bureaucratic modernism. With ethnicity as a salient political feature of the landscape instead of a sense of innateness, primordialism had become politicized. In situations like this, ethnicity as cause and ethnicity as consequence are conflated, intertwined as expressions of both affiliation and interests.

Owegbe has reemerged several times even during the Nigerian Second Republic (1979–1983) and afterward, usually under extraordinary circumstances. Outbursts of Owegbe activity on occasion reappear when it seems that the very fabric of society is threatened either from inside (disputes between the Bendel State governor and the Oba, for example) or from outside (conflicts between Benin and Urhobo, Ijaw, or Igbo usurpation). Owegbe has also emerged as a university student secret society, similar to a fraternity but more politically oriented. Like other Nigerian university fraternities (e.g., the Pirates at the University of Ibadan, or the Leopard Society at the University of Calabar)—associated with Yoruba politics in the case of the Pirates or traditional initiations in the case of the Leopard Society,[32] Owegbe as a university phenomenon has its roots in the traditional politics of Midwestern Nigeria, now Edo State.

In the contemporary context, it is evident that traditional Nigerian society has provided the impetus for fraternity groups in tertiary institutions to assimilate easily the secret, cultic aspects of traditional groups.[33] Although administrators in Nigerian universities downplay the associations between the names of fraternity groups and secret societies, and formerly dismissed such groups as harmless or even progressive, there are resemblances in initiation practices, oath-taking, identification marks, and symbols that, at times, include violence, force, and intimidation.[34] The Internet has now been employed as a means of conveying secret messages by members.[35]

This chapter calls into question some widely held assumptions that have guided analyses of political conflict and ethnicity in Africa. The data presented here runs counter to the view that political rivalries are solely the result of tribal animosities and primordial sentiments. The analysis also runs counter to the view that tribal differences are solely the result of material and political interests. The analysis of political dynamics in

Midwest Nigeria, and especially the dynamics of *Owegbe*, suggests that the causes of conflict lie in divergent economic and political interests *and* in cultural or ethnic ones.[36]

Notes

1. Paul James, *Globalization, Nationalism, Tribalism: Bringing Theory Back In* (London: Sage, 2006).
2. Leo Kuper, "Sociology: Some Aspects of Urban Plural Societies," in *The African World: A Survey of Social Research,* ed. R. Lystad (Praeger: New York, 1965), 67–95.
3. Clifford Geertz, *Old Societies and New States* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1966).
4. In a typical comment, W. Arthur Lewis wrote: "Plurality is the principal problem of most of the new states created in the 20th century. Most of them included people who differ from each other in language or tribe or race; some of these groups live side by side in a long tradition of mutual hostility, restrained in the past only by a neutral power. French writers use the word 'cleavages' to describe a situation where people are mutually antipathetic, not because they disagree on matters or principle … but simply because they are historic enemies. Cleavages cannot be overcome by argument and economic concessions … because it is not based on disputes about principles or interests." W.A. Lewis, *Politics in West Africa* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), 65.
5. Adam Kuper, *The Invention of Primitive Society: The Transformation of an Illusion* (London: Routledge, 1988).
6. Paul James, "The world is seething is a modern abstract barbarism … relations of tribalism and traditionalism that were once derided for their backward primordial 'savagery' have not disappeared as proclaimed by the many soothsayers—from the Social Darwinists to the End-of-History ideologues." Ibid., 2006: 3–4.
7. John Camaroff and Jean Camaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.; On Indigenity and Its Interpretations.* The David Skomp Distinguished Lectures in Anthropology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).
8. J. Morrison, *Ethnicity and Political Integration: The Case of Ashanti, Ghana.* Foreign and Comparative Studies/African Series, 38 (Ithaca: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 8–9. This is a consistent theme in studies of African and other ethnicities.

9. James Watson, *Between Two Cultures: Immigrants and Minorities in Britain* (Blackwell: Oxford, 1977). Situational analysis continues to be an important concept and method in comparative anthropology and urban sociology. See A. Rogers and S. Vertovec eds., *Urban Context: Ethnicity, Social Networks and Situational Analysis* (Oxford: Berg, 1995).

10. Chima Njoku, "Awo Destroyed Nigerian Unity" (BNW: Biafra World Message Board: The Voice of a New Generation. http://messageboard.biafranigeriaworld.com, Jan. 4, 2005).

11. Anon., "Tribal Cults and Politics," TIME Magazine (New York: Time, Inc., Sept. 3, 1966), 36.

12. E. Huxley, "Death in Nigeria" (New York: National Review, Feb. 22, 1966), 163.

13. Simon Ottenberg, "Ibo Education and Social Change," in *Erziehung und Politik in Nigeria*, ed. H. Weiler (Romback Frieburg in Breisgau: Verlag, 1964), 28.

14. Henry Bretton, "Political Influence in southern Nigeria," in *The Primacy of Politics*, ed. E. Spier (New York: Random House, 1966), 120–132.

15. Elizabeth Colson, "Contemporary Tribes and the Development of Nationalism," in June Helm (ed.) *Proceedings of the 1967 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968), 205. Gerhard Lenski's comments on categorical concepts versus variable ones: "Categorical concepts, by their very nature, force one to think in limiting either-or terms." But, he argues, when categorical concepts are transformed into variable ones, we cease to ask whether ethnicity exists or not, but rather the extent to which it is present and influences interpersonal relationships. Gerhard Lenski, *Power and Privilege* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 20.

16. D.A.R. Alexander, *Report of the Commission Appointed to Enquire into the Owegbe Cult* (Lagos: Ministry of Internal Affairs), D.21.114–5.

17. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963). Writing about these processes, Sklar argued that Oba Akenzua II joined the Action Group (AG) as a member of a rising "class." Class in a Marxist sense is a misnomer. But differences in attitude and social status distinctions in the American sense are apropos. The Oba joined the AG, and also by

implication the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity (ROF), not in support of *Ogboni* class interests, but to align himself with whomever was in power and in opposition to Omo-Osagie. Like many other traditional rulers, the king felt insecure under colonial rule, especially since the British had sent his grandfather into exile after the Punitive Expedition of 1897. Although the kingship system was reinstituted in 1914, the lull gave opportunities to those savvy enough to take advantage of the conquest. See Richard Sklar, "The Contribution of Tribalism to Nationalism in Western Nigeria," *Journal of Human Relations* 1960, 8:407–418. Richard Sklar, "Political Science and National Integration—A Radical Approach," *Journal of Modern African Studies* 5 (1967), 1–11.

Britain sought to combine bureaucratic efficiency with the recognition of "natural rulers" according to the doctrine of indirect rule formulated by Lord Lugard, and designed for India. The policy emphasized colonial control through local intermediaries. In southern Nigeria, the colonial government created or supported chiefs amenable to their policy. In the former kingdom of Benin, the effects of indirect rule exacerbated the traditional cleavages of town and palace. This carried right up to the eve of independence and the creation of political parties. Although one can overtly divide conflicts in terms of "traditionalism" versus "modernity," in fact, contentions actually represented the multiple economic and political goals of different groups, as adjudicated within a known frame of reference.

18. Not proved one way or another, the Crusade's name lends itself to speculation. Osa is the first three letters of Osadebay's surname, a variant for the word "God" in several southern Nigerian languages. Might the name of this organization have been a subliminal association with divinity, or royalty like the Oni (king) of Ife or the Oba (king) of Benin? It is supposed that, traditionally, the Igbo had no chiefs and are egalitarian, but their oracular shrines (Arochukwu, and a kind of sacred kingship at Nri) supported by archaeological excavations, suggest otherwise. Whatever, the Igbo have caught up in allocating chief-ships to all and sundry as patronage and social status yearnings.

19. The author underwent this initiation and therefore has firsthand knowledge of the ritual aspects and the implications.

20. Another origin story of equal credibility is that *Otu-Ẹdo* created *Owegbe* from a cult practice in Ishan Division, an Edo-speaking area to the north of Benin. Prince Shaka Momodu, known as the "Lion of Ishan," and a former Midwest Minister of Internal Affairs, denied that he was a member of *Owegbe*, but claimed that Ishan militant youth under his employ had initiated into a cult offering invincibility greater than its offshoot, *Owegbe*. Prince Momodu insisted that, like *Owegbe* members, he was impervious to machete cuts and gunshot wounds. At the Alexander Commission inquiry, set up to investigate alleged *Owegbe* atrocities, the presiding judge remarked that even lions are not gunshot proof, to which Prince Momodu appealed that he was a special lion and offered to give a demonstration of his invincibility. According to the report of the Commission, it is noted that the tactful judge did not pursue the matter.

21. Owegbe Inquiry Transcripts, *Daily Transcripts of the Owegbe Commission* (Benin City: Ministry of Information, 1965), Ex. 63/3.

22. Alexander, D.5.7–9.

23. Owegbe Inquiry Transcripts, *Daily Transcripts of the Owegbe Commission* (Benin City: Ministry of Information, 1965), Ex. 63/3.

24. Owegbe Inquiry Transcripts, Ex. 63/3.

25. Owegbe Inquiry Transcripts, Ex. 63/4.

26. Alexander, D.16.15.

27. Alexander, D.12.22, D48.2.

28. Alexander, D. 3.4; D56:99; D.54.159–60.

29. J.C. Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance*. Rhodes Livingstone Institute, Paper no. 27 (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 46.

30. J.C. Mitchell, *The Kalela Dance*. Rhodes Livingstone Institute, Paper no. 27 (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 46. A native physician, a sort of spiritual councilor, typically offers this type of protection to a client. The X body markings are specific to *Owegbe*. The author is the recipient of such markings and other body transformations that include eyelid cuts for a sort of x-ray vision that allow one to recognize a potential enemy, parallel leg and arm cuts for protection from road accidents (and public signatures of *Owegbe*), and 201 (= an infinite number) scalp cuts that protect the head, the seat of a person's wisdom, authority, and maturity.

The tensions between the Oba and his Iyase, the king and senior town chief, respectively, which had figured prominently in the configuration of local politics for hundreds of years, resurfaced immediately after colonial usurpation with the exile of Oba Akenzua's grandfather, Ovonrramwen, the latent fluidity of a 17-year interregnum, and a new sociopolitical system in the context of colonial rule allowed for considerable situational maneuvering and shifting political orbits.

31. The emergence of a literate population, an educated and entrepreneurial elite, a politically aware press and public discussion, a stable colonial polity, a post–World War II forum for party politics, and the contentious environment of Nigerian politics, ethnically and socially, allowed for historical, and conflicted, oppositions to reassert themselves in reinvigorated and collective formations.

32. For instance, the Ogboni, Sango, and Gelede among the Yoruba; the Odumu in the Cross-Rivers area; the Okija in the Delta; and the Amadiora and the Okija among the Igbo.

33. Stephen A. Oyebade, "From Society into the Schools: How Tradition and Leadership Failure Breed Violent Cultism and What to Do about it," *Geneva: International Cultic Studies Association Congress*, July 2–4, 2009.

34. Adewale Rotimi, "Violence in the Citadel: The Menace of Secret Cults in the Nigerian Universities," *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 14, no. 1 (2005): 79–98.

35. Valentine Ojo, "IBK Afis the Con+To Chukwuma's Rabbies Odera … and other Ethnic Cyber-Warriors" (USA Africa Dialogue Series, http://groups.google.com/group/USAAfricaDialogue/browse, February 4, 2009).

36. These interests—the distribution of patronage—may be expressed along ethnic, religious, or other cultural lines. As has been argued so often, in conflicts over scarce resources, ethnic groups are interest groups that articulate ethnicity to obtain desired goals. As Cohen (Abner Cohen, *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa: A Study of Hausa Immigrants in a Yoruba Town* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968]) informs us, as an interest group, an ethnic group has the advantage of possessing some of the basic requirements for developing a political organization: identity, language, cohesion, and location.

The assumption of incompatibility between ethnic loyalties and nonethnic ideological commitments, instrumental activities, or identities is at best an oversimplification. Ethnicity is variable rather

than constant, a shifting allegiance rather than a categorical one. Political interests are negotiable, as are material desires. To understand the political dynamics of the Midwest State, it is not sufficient to think in terms of massed ethnic groups, primordial loyalties, ingrained sentiments, innate values, or social stereotypes. Nor is it only the objective material circumstances of a particular group(s) that are required. Instead, one considers the variable situations in which people are "mobilized by different goals and values out of a medley" (Gluckman, 379). Political mobilization may be operationally ethnic, and ethnic values may be politicized; the two sides of the coin serve as a vehicle for self-interests *and* ethnic values, and are more sophisticatedly varied. In contemporary jargon (Camaroff and Camaroff, 2008, the complex senses of social and material interests are reduced to fabrications of collective consciousness, ideology feeds into ideas of ethnic preservation, and notions of ethnicity feed into social and political action, which feed back into collective identifications.

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Midwest State's Non-Igbo Minorities' Responses to the Biafran Occupation and Federal Liberation in the Nigerian Civil War, 1967–1970

Uyilawa Usuanlele

In recent times, the Nigerian Civil War has begun to receive renewed attention from scholars. One notable tendency in the historiography of the war is the increasing re-characterization of the war as genocide against the Igbo ethnic group who are identified as the sole victims.[1] This perspective may be traced back to Biafrans' war claims, which was popularized by the international (especially Western) media covering the war and by humanitarian organizations operating inside the secessionist Biafran enclave.[2] Both the Biafran war propaganda and some recent scholarship have rendered the war in terms of Nigerian (identified personalities and ethnic

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113

groups) as victimizers and perpetuators of genocide, on the one hand, and Biafrans (particularly Igbo) as victims, on the other. For instance, the eminent scholar Chinua Achebe explained the war as motivated by ethnic jealousy and hatred of Igbo culture–induced achievement drive versus the lethargic culture of non-Igbo Nigerians, which has constrained the latter's achievement in their competition with the Igbo in virtually every sphere in the ongoing modernization process in Nigeria.[3] Achebe further claimed that the non-Igbo Nigerians used every opportunity, particularly the failed Igbo secession bid and the civil war, as a means of pushing the Igbo out of the coveted positions they occupied in the Nigerian political economy.

Contrary to Achebe's claim, the conflict and war were not this simplistic and straightforward. It was a complicated belligerency that victimized many Igbo and non-Igbo ethnic groups as well. In addition, the Igbo also victimized their fellow Igbo and non-Igbo ethnic group members. Apart from Northern Nigeria, which recorded incidents of violent conflicts with the Igbo prior to the 1966 coups and pogrom against the Igbo that culminated in the war, there had been no violent conflicts between other Nigerian ethnic groups and the Igbo. Only with the civil war (1967–1970) did violent conflicts with the Igbo occur in Midwest State. This followed the invasion and occupation by the secessionist Biafran army of the Midwest Region for some weeks under the guise of liberating Midwest from the Northern Nigerian military junta domination. Biafra secessionists later declared the Midwest Region the new Republic of Benin. But the predominantly non-Igbo minority ethnic groups that make up the Midwest State celebrated neither the "liberation" nor the "new republic." Rather, the minorities of the Midwest joined the federal army in routing the occupying Biafran troops, during which some Igbos and non-Igbos who were alleged to have collaborated with the Biafran occupying force were killed. It was based on this routing of Biafrans and collaborators that Chima Korieh argued that "the Midwest region towns remain the most visible evidence of what Okocha called the 'first black on black genocide in Africa.".[4] He substantiates his claims with evidence from the Dr Mensah–led International Committee on the Investigation of Crimes of Genocide's (appointed by the secessionist state of Biafra) *Investigators Report* of 1969, which he paraphrased:

> In Benin, the Federal Capital of the Midwestern region, evidence indicates that Biafran residents of the town were called out into the open, where they were exterminated. Conor Cruise O'Brian reported the barbarity of

this incident. It appears that this type of mass extermination of Biafrans started in the Midwestern region, and the process became widespread in other regions. At Sapele, for instance, Biafran residents of the town were assembled in a school three miles from the town, where they were executed with machine guns fired by Federal soldiers. Witnesses reported two thousand as the number of Biafrans exterminated in this incident. Similar methods were used in Warri and Koko, where over 2500 Biafrans were executed. In Ogwashi Ukwu about two hundred Biafrans, mostly teachers and civil servants were shot in the month of May 1968. The explanation that the Federal Military authority gave was that the victims were guilty of having consorted with the enemy.[5]

That some Biafran soldiers, including Igbo civilians, were killed in the non-Igbo towns of the Midwest is not in doubt, as happens in any war. However, the patterns and figures presented by Korieh's sources neither provide evidence nor inform the readers about how they arrived at these patterns and figures of killings. They neither show that the killings constituted genocide according to the United Nations definition, which has been used since the end of the Second World War, nor identify what provoked these killings and participation of the non-Igbo minorities.

A similar tribunal of inquiry established by the Midwest State government after the federal liberation and headed by Justice Omo-Eboh to inquire into the activities of rebels of East Central State (Igbo area of Biafra) during the occupation found the Biafran army guilty of gross war misconducts, including mass killings in the Midwest.[6] In addition to the report of the tribunal, a few authors have also drawn attention to the atrocities committed by the Biafrans during the occupation.[7] But the newer writings that re-characterize the war as genocide against the Biafrans are either silent on or ignore Biafran and Igbo activities before and during the occupation and their effects on the people of the Midwest, or deny them entirely. Chinua Achebe, who served as a Biafran top official, claimed that Biafran infractions on the people during the six weeks of occupation and over four weeks of fighting, and the Biafran retreat from the Midwest were never confirmed.[8] It is apparent therefore that scholarly concentration on Biafran victimhood draws away from seeing those equally victimized by the so-called victims. Perspectives such as this confirm Garrath William's thesis on the psychology of self-acclaimed victims and how victims tend to absolve themselves from agency and responsibility for similar crime committed against them.[9] This view also overlooks the complexity of the war;

the fluidity of identities, personalities, groups and territories involved; and the shifting forms of loyalties and resistance over time, which meant that agency and victimhood cut across all sides of the conflict.

In determining the complicated roles of the Midwest during the Nigerian Civil War, this chapter contextualizes the peoples' responses to war-time developments. Thus, contrary to assumptions and claims that the Midwesterns collaborated with Nigeria against close Igbo kins, this chapter argues that the non-Igbos of Midwest attitude towards Biafra and Igbo people was neither priori planned nor organized, but was a spontaneous reaction to the atrocities they suffered during the Biafran invasion and occupation, and during the shooting war of the federal liberation of the Midwest State. The chapter provides a historical context of the fear of Igbo domination, in the event of the Biafran secession, as well as a view of the pragmatic calculations of the cost of the war on the Midwest should it become the outpost of Biafra closest to Lagos. The Biafran occupation of the Midwest and the style of government it instituted justified these fears and reinforced older historical convictions of Igbo domination. In spite of the predilection towards Nigeria, Midwesterners suffered atrocities from Biafran soldiers and their collaborators, and were victims of both the Biafran army and the federal army.

Writing about the Nigerian Civil War is fraught with some problems of the sources, their inherent biases and dearth in some cases. Though there is a lot of documentation and a spate of writings by participants, there is a problem of balance and representation. The documentation and participants' writing is largely skewed against the Biafran side, and there is a dearth of writings from most of the principal actors, particularly in the case of the Midwest. Similarly, there is a dearth of Biafran newspaper and official reports. Thus, one is left largely with documentations and writings from the federal side, requiring critical assessment before use. This is supplemented with reports of foreign newspapers and magazines and other writings, which can assist in achieving some level of objectivity and balance. This method has been adopted in this chapter. The first section of this chapter provides a background into the ethnic relations in the Midwest. It details the making of a minority consciousness as the Igbo, numerically a minority in the Midwest became a regional ruling majority, thereby reducing non-Igbo ethnic groups to minorities. The second section examines the the changing fortunes of the Midwest Igbo under military rule in Midwest Region and accounts for the renewed agitation for merger of Midwest Igbo areas with Eastern Region and their support for the secessionist Biafran State. The third and fourth sections examines how Biafran occupation was achieved and the resistance as well as the

organization and activities of Biafran administration during the occupation and places claims of atrocities in context and in comparison with the federal army liberation.

Pre-War Midwest Region: The Politics of Eastern Igbo Majority Interest and Midwestern Igbo Minority Rule

The Midwest Region was a misnomer in Nigerian post-independence regional politics. Contrary to the convention where majority ethnic groups ruled and dominated the minority ethnic groups in their regions,[10] the Midwest was ruled by an Igbo minority group. The Igbo population in the Midwest amounted to 342,503, compared with the majority Edo-Benin, Afenmai and Esan: 688,404; Urhobo and Isoko: 323,315; Ijaw: 82,284 and Itsekiri: 54,284.[11] Understanding the cause of this political misnomer requires an examination of the nature and character of ethnic relations in the Midwest and Nigeria during decolonization and the immediate post-independence period. This period witnessed the injection of the concepts of majority and minority into Nigerian politics. The majority/minority divide is a known social construct associated with modern democracies and societies. It is defined by the demographic strength of groups and their use of numbers to capture and control power and resources. Though demography is known to be critical in achieving majority status and in accessing and controlling power and resources, exceptional cases exists where demographically superior groups were accorded minority status in society, such as the example of women as a group in the pre-universal suffrage United States.

Oded Haklai has drawn attention to the process of minority domination and control of power and resources at the expense of majority groups, and argued that such domination was achieved largely through peculiar historical circumstances, which were in most cases created by colonialism.[12] Societies characterized by a majority/minority divide are prone to conflicts if not well managed. Such conflicts can be worse in very complex countries made up of multi-ethnic and multi-religious groups of uneven population sizes such as Nigeria. Colonial administrative arrangements bequeathed the country and its regions not only with multiple majorities and minorities struggling between and within themselves for domination or autonomy, but also with unequal electoral seats to acquire and maintain power. In order to understand this misnomer of minority rule and minority domination of the majority in the Midwest Region, it is necessary to

look at how this situation emerged from the politics of decolonization and majorities' competition for dominance of Nigerian politics.

Minority agitations in Nigeria predates the 1939 division of Nigeria into three groups of provinces and their adoption as three regions, namely Eastern Region, Northern Region and Western Region, with the Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba as dominant majority ethnic groups, respectively, in 1948. This tripartite division by British colonial authorities was for political and administrative purposes. The various small- to medium-sized ethnic groups that consequently became regional minorities immediately commenced agitation for the creation of their own autonomous ethnic or multi-ethnic regions/states. Of the three regions, only the Western Region was dismembered to create a new region known as the Midwest Region.

The creation of the Midwest from the numerous minority groups of unequal demographic sizes, differing levels of educational attainments, ethnic affinities and political alliances (with majority groups in other regions) created problems of inter-ethnic relations. Though the Midwest Region had a plethora of minority ethnic groups, the Igbo and Itsekiri had cultural affinities with the larger Igbo and Yoruba of Eastern and Western Regions, respectively, while the other minorities, that is, Afenmai Edo, Akoko Edo, Benin-Edo, Esan-Edo, Ijaw, Isoko, Owan-Edo and Urhobo, were self-contained within the Midwest. All the Midwest groups feared perpetual Yoruba domination due to the latter's demographic and educational advantages. Many also feared the Benin-Edo ethnic group, which was the former hegemon in the area. When the King of Benin, Oba Akenzua II, implored the minorities of the Western Region to unite and demand the creation of an autonomous Midwest or Central State under the umbrella of the Benin Delta Peoples Party (BDPP), leaders of some of the minority ethnic groups became suspicious and viewed this act as a ploy to resurrect the former Benin Kingdom that had dominated them in the past.[13]

Although all the minorities desired independence from the Yoruba, leaders of some groups classified as Western Igbo were divided on whether to join the Midwest movement, and some actually demanded for a separate Western Igbo state in the 1940s and early 1950s.[14] This changed when the Yoruba-dominated Action Group (AG) made electoral gains in the 1955 election in the traditional Igbo-dominated National Council for Nigeria and Cameroons (NCNC)–controlled non-Yoruba areas of the Western Region. The Igbo-led NCNC shifted its position towards support for the agitation for creation of Midwest Region. This was born out of the need to maintain and expand Igbo–NCNC power base in Nigerian

politics. The Western Igbo elements (who had agitated and failed to real-ize the merger of western Igbo with the Eastern Region Igbo) with ethnic affinity to the Eastern Region Igbo became the arrowhead of the Eastern Igbo power bloc expansion bid. To this end, the Eastern Igbo leadership of the NCNC secretly sponsored these Western Igbo elements that were deeply entrenched in the pan-Igbo State Union and the NCNC under the leadership of Dennis Osadebay[15] to form the Midwest State Movement (MSM) and wrest the leadership of the movement agitating for the new region from the non-Igbo leadership.[16] The purpose was to undermine the independent non-Igbo-led BDPP of Oba Akenzua II of Benin, which was championing the agitation for creation of the Midwest Region. The NCNC viewed both the BDPP and Oba Akenzua II as impediments to NCNC control of the non-Yoruba areas of the Western Region, and the MSM consequently excluded Oba Akenzua of Benin from its leadership in 1955–1956. In this way, the NCNC was able to bring the alliance of non-Yoruba minorities' agitators under the control and leadership of the Western Igbo, represented by Osadebay and the Obi of Agbor, who was Ika (Igbo).[17]

According to J.I.G. Onyia, the Midwest Region held a particularly bet-ter prospect for the Western Igbo as they had better "supply of brain and trained manpower."[18] At the same time, the Western Igbo had the least natural resource endowment compared with other ethnic groups and divisions.[19] The Western Igbos' earlier contact with European Christian missionary education had resulted in the production of more literate personnel who were better positioned to take advantage of employment opportunities in the colonial enterprise.[20] Their educational advantage and affinity with the Eastern Region Igbo, particularly membership of the Igbo State Union, greatly enhanced their position in the Eastern Region Igbo-led NCNC during the period of nationalist agitations and decolo-nization. In this way, the Western Igbo were able to dominate the MSM and the NCNC in the Midwest Region while being a minority among the other non-Yoruba minority groups.

The MSM consequently negotiated and secured approval for referendum on the creation of the Midwest Region from the majority ethnic groups and parties, and the people voted overwhelmingly for the creation of their own Midwest Region. The Western Igbo leader of the Movement, Dennis Osadebay, became the interim Premier of the newly created Midwest Region. With subsequent NCNC victory in the election in the Midwest Region, the Eastern Igbo leadership of the NCNC appointed Osadebay as Premier,

to the chagrin of some non-Igbo leaders of the Movement and party.[21] The demographically superior ethnic groups who were the new majority in the newly created Midwest Region lacked such political and ethnic connections in the larger political context of Nigeria (dominated by three majority ethnic groups—Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba), and found themselves at a political and social disadvantage, becoming the new political minorities in the Midwest. This was particularly due to their lack of resources to dispense political patronage which characterized majority-group politics in Nigeria. These political developments helped turn the (former Western Igbo, now known as) Midwestern Igbo minority groups into the dominant and ruling political force over the majority population of Edo-speaking people and the smaller minorities Ijaw and Itsekiri in Midwest Region.

The Igbo leadership of the NCNC also affected relations between the groups in the Midwest with their perceived favouritism towards the Igbo members. For instance, the sharing of ministerial portfolios enraged some minority groups. The government that emerged privileged the Igbo with the highest number (5 out of 19 executive portfolios, including the 3 most powerful—Premier, Education, and Finance and Chief Whip), while 5 other ethnic groups shared 14 other portfolios regarded as less powerful.[22] Emma Okocha best captured this Igbo advantage and dominance when he enumerated the privileged offices they occupied in the administration:

> On the transfer of all civil servants of Midwest origin from the former Western Nigeria to Benin, it was clear that the bureaucratic control of the administration swung far to the Western Ibos. The influence of the Western Ibos diluted within the Western Nigeria civil service became concentrated in Benin. Out of twelve permanent secretaries, nine were Western Ibos. Of all the nine doctors available in the Health ministry eight were Ibos … The General Hospital in Benin became known as the "Kedu" [euphemism for Igbo] hospital … Following a general election with a National Council for Nigerian Citizens' victory, Chief Osadebay became the first Premier of the region. Subsequently, Justice Chike Idigbe, an Ibo like Osadebay was appointed the first Chief Justice of the Midwest.[23]

These patterns of appointment were seen as an attempt at emasculating ethnic political and cultural organizations such as the Otuedo of Benin and other groups allied with the NCNC ruling party. This created an attitude of distrust towards the Igbo-led administration and fear of an Igbo agenda for domination in the Midwest.

Ethnic Politics Under Military Rule: Western Igbo Aspirations and the Biafran Occupation of the Midwest State

Against the background of deteriorating ethnic and political relations in the Midwest Region, the military overthrew the civilian government in a violent coup on 15 January 1966. This coup ended the rule of the Igbo leader of the Midwest Region, which then came under the military administration of Lt Col David Ejoor (an Urhobo). The accompanying countercoup of July 1966 and the assassination of Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, the Igbo Head of State and Commander in Chief, and some Igbo officers created a crisis within the military hierarchy, particularly between the new Head of State Lt Col Yakubu Gowon (an Angas from a Northern Region minority group) and the Military Governor of the Eastern Region, Lt Col Odumegwu Ojukwu, an Igbo. Various efforts to resolve the ethnic division at the top echelon of the Nigerian military and work out a political administrative arrangement that would restore order and peace led to the hardening of division in the military along ethno-regional lines. The preceding killings of Igbos in the Northern Region in May 1966 and during the countercoup of July 1966 resulted in the redeployment of military officers to their regions of origin. This brought many officers of Midwestern Igbo origin into the Midwest administration.

The redeployment of Midwestern Igbo military officers to the Midwest Region reinforced the pre-existing overwhelming influence of the Midwestern Igbos in the administration by adding a military dimension to their power. Hence, the military coups of January and July 1966 only removed the Midwestern Igbo as the overall head of government of the Midwest Region, without bringing about a significant change in the administration. In his account of events, Emma Okocha made this point when he stated: "Even though the Midwest government, like other states within the Nigerian Federation, was overthrown by a coup … on January 15, 1966, the bureaucracy remained an exclusive preserve of the Western Ibo."[24] With the exception of the Military Governor, Lt Col David Ejoor, almost all the senior military officers were of Midwestern Igbo extraction.[25] The Midwestern Igbo not only dominated the military council but also resented the idea of representation of members of other ethnic groups in the council. Ejoor reported the protest of Midwestern Igbo officers against the appointment of Majors Samuel Ogbemudia (Benin-Edo) and

Eremobor (Esan-Edo) into the council because of their junior rank, but he had to do it for purposes of ethnic representation and to safeguard himself from the Igbo.[26] Ogbemudia also hinted that one of the Midwestern Igbo officers, Lt Col Conrad Nwawo, bore a grudge against Lt Col Ejoor because the former claimed that he was the most senior officer and ought to have been appointed the Military Governor.[27] Ogbemudia's suggestion was corroborated by Onyia, who claimed to have mediated the dispute between Nwawo and Ejoor over the former's disobedience and disrespect towards the latter.[28]

In addition to domination of the military council, the top echelon of the civil administration remained under Midwestern Igbo domination. Of the 13 Permanent Secretaries in the regional government, 6 were Igbo, whereas the Igbo inhabited only 3 of the 11 divisions of the region.[29] Similarly, 40% of the civil service was Igbo, and they also constituted the majority of the police force.[30] It was also alleged that the Igbo Permanent Secretaries were assigned to the most strategic ministries and offices.

There was also the problem of Igbo and non-Igbo refugees relocated to the Midwest Region from the North as a result of the political crisis. With a huge refugee problem and the tension between Igbos and Northerners on their hands, the Eastern Region's government ordered non-Igbo people to leave the region.[31] This further increased the refugee population of the Midwest and brought associated problems. By November 1966, 40,000 returnees were registered in the Midwest, of which 1392 were civil servants, 1181 were corporation employees/workers and 13 were military officers of the ranks of Captain to Lt Colonels who had returned to the Midwest.[32] This number of registered refugees rose to 45,000 by March 1967.[33] The administration was faced with the responsibility of assisting them with jobs, basic necessities and accommodation. The worsening refugee problems in the Eastern and Midwestern Regions further incensed the populace and exacerbated ethnic tensions. Col Ojukwu's expulsion of the non-Easterners from the Eastern Region heightened existing tension and ethnic relations between the Igbo and non-Igbo Midwesterners. There were reports of Midwestern traders being molested and deprived of their goods and properties in the Eastern Region markets, particularly in Onitsha. Government reports noted the "persistent reports of seizure of foodstuffs and other goods, without payment or compensation from Midwesterners returning from Markets in Eastern Region" as well as the destruction of stalls of Midwesterners in Onitsha Market.[34]

With the growing chasm between the federal military government and the government of the Eastern Region, both the Midwestern and Eastern Igbos in the Midwest engaged in open and clandestine activities against the federal and the Midwest Region's government. Firstly, some of the Midwestern Igbos started to agitate for their excision from the Midwest and a merger with their kith and kin in the Eastern Region. J.I.G. Onyia claims that this agitation was motivated by the conspiracy of non-Igbo Midwesterners to deny the Midwestern Igbo membership of the Midwest delegation to the Ad-Hoc Committee for Nigeria's Constitution in August 1966.[35] Achuzia attributes the formation of the Ika–Ibo Association and agitation for merger with the Eastern Region to the discrimination against Midwestern Igbo refugees from the pogroms in the North in the provision of relief materials and employment in Benin City, who were told "to go and meet their people in Enugu."[36] Both claims would seem to be post-war afterthoughts used to justify the Midwestern Igbo support and involvement in Biafra.

To actualize the agitation for merger of the Midwestern Igbo areas with the Eastern Region, some Midwestern Igbo residents of Enugu and Igbos of the Eastern Region soon infiltrated the Midwest and started propagating Arochukwu origin for all the Midwestern Igbos and denying the cherished affinity of some of them with the Edo people.[37] This agitation was re-echoed in the United Kingdom by Western (Midwestern) Ibo Students Union of Great Britain and Ireland.[38] Ejoor alleged that the agitation was sponsored by the Eastern Region's government, which promised to contribute £2 million to the development of the Midwestern Igbo area.[39] In addition, the agitators demanded the government of the Midwest Region to support the position of the government of the Eastern Region and rebel against the federal military government. The propaganda of the Igbo agitators created more tension. Some of the Igbo involved in the propaganda activities were promptly arrested for organizing meetings to incite people into supporting the Eastern Region's cause and merger with the Eastern Region.[40]

The refugee problem and the ensuing struggles over employment and trading opportunities fuelled conflicts between the Igbo and the non-Igbo in the Midwest. Disputes at the African Timber and Plywood Company (ATP) in Sapele (the largest employer of labour) quickly resulted in violent attacks on the Eastern Igbo, who were accused of bringing arms to the town, and policemen had to be deployed to Sapele and Benin City to keep the peace.[41] In spite of the police deployment, violent demon-

strations were staged in Benin City in mid-December 1966 against the Igbo for debarring non-Igbo Midwesterners from markets in Eastern Nigeria, hostile activities of Igbos in the Midwest and, particularly, the rampant confiscations of goods of non-Igbo Midwesterners in Onitsha. The Governors of both the Midwest and the Eastern Region consequently met and agreed to deploy administrative and police officers on both sides of the Niger Bridge boundary to ensure that "the movement of foodstuffs by any means is not allowed from one region to the other."[42]

The increasing confrontation between the Eastern Region's government and the federal military government and the failure of mediation in Aburi, Ghana, in January 1967 hardened positions of the opposing sides and the Midwest Region's government was caught in the middle.[43] This was because of the Midwestern Igbo minority population's divided loyalty towards the federal and Eastern Nigerian governments. The expectation of the Eastern Region was for the Midwest Region's government to reciprocate the Eastern Region's support for the creation of the Midwest Region by joining the opposition against the federal military government.[44] The Midwest Region's government opted for neutrality and maintenance of the federal system, in opposition to the confederation option demanded by the Eastern Region. As the confrontation worsened and both sides accused each other of arms build-up and planning attacks, Lt Col David Ejoor, the Military Governor of the Midwest reiterated the neutral position of the Midwest: "the Midwest will never accept being used as a base to fight another. The Midwest cannot be used for this purpose."[45] Ejoor's stance was unacceptable to the Igbo leadership of the Eastern Region and their Midwestern Igbo sympathizers. The Igbo leadership were sure that they had the Midwest under their control through some of the Midwestern Igbo military officers, defunct NCNC politicians and other Eastern Igbo resident migrants acting as proxies.

The Midwest Region's government proclaimed neutrality was therefore not taken seriously by the Eastern Region's government, not only because of the support among some of the Midwestern Igbo soldiers in the Midwest Military Area Command but also due to the known weakness of the newly formed Midwest Military Area regional command. These factors bolstered Eastern Region's Military Governor Ojukwu's confidence and readiness to take on the federal military government. This is evident in Ojukwu's statement: "The actual situation is that Gowon commands troops stationed in the North, in Lagos and the West. Though the Midwest tended to agree with Lagos, he [Ejoor] is not really in effective control there."[46] Ojukwu's statement was most likely based on the fact that the predomi-

nantly Igbo-dominated officer corps and men of the Midwest Military Area Command were divided over support for the Eastern Region's government stance and almost along ethnic lines on the matter. The Midwestern Igbo military officers' political ambitions were motivations for their support and loyalty to the Eastern Region's government. Other factors were also at play. The Midwestern Igbo civilian politicians who lost their political offices and were under investigation for corruption and misconduct were also desperate to regain control of power in the Midwest. This drove them to support the Eastern Region's government, whose larger and stronger military force could help restore their power and protect them from probes. As a result, many of the Midwestern Igbo military officers and politicians fraternized with and worked for the government of the Eastern Region before the occupation and prosecution of the war.

It was against this background of increased tensions and clashes in the Midwest and the increased intransigence of the Eastern Region's government that the federal military government abolished the regional structure and split 3 of the regions into 12 states, while Midwest region remained intact and renamed Midwest State on 27 May 1967. This act granted autonomy to the minority areas of the Eastern and Northern Regions and freed them from Igbo and Hausa political domination. The Igbo dominated leadership of the former Eastern Region government immediately followed the abrogation of the regional structure with a declaration of secession of the region from Nigeria and adopted the name Republic of Biafra on 30 May 1967. The federal government responded with police action against Biafra from the northern and coastal boundaries to recapture the oil-producing areas inhabited by the ethnic minority.

BIAFRAN OCCUPATION, ATROCITIES AND ADMINISTRATION IN MIDWEST STATE

The leadership of Biafra under Ojukwu not only claimed the right to self-defence, but went further in assigning itself the task of "liberating" Southern Nigeria from the "feudal Muslim" Northern forces that, it alleged, controlled Nigeria. Since 1964, the Eastern regional government had not only threatened succession but also undertaken studies on the economic viability and survival of an independent Eastern Region. One such study showed that an independent Eastern Region's survival would be dependent on the vast oil resources of the minority areas (57.1%) since the Igbo areas had only 5.8% oil and a large population suffering from land hunger and declining agricultural productivity.[47] But undergirding Biafran "liberationist" war aims was

the control of the resource riches of the minority areas. Biafra's interest in the oil resources of the Midwest is attested by Ejoor's allegation of Ojukwu's proposal for the two regions to form an Oil Consortium (for which all operational details had been worked out) to exploit their oil resources.[48] The oil and other natural economic resources of the Midwest were then located in the non-Igbo areas. With the significant refugee problem and its virtual encirclement, Biafra's only outlet to the world was the neutral Midwest, which was also the source of most its resource needs located in the non-Igbo minority areas of the former Eastern and Midwest Regions. The neutral and resource-rich Midwest had 37.1% of Nigeria's oil export and 75% of Nigeria's timber and rubber exports, as well as foodstuffs, which had always been in short supply in Eastern Nigeria. In the apparent bid to capture Lagos and overthrow the federal military government, Biafra invaded and occupied the (former Midwest region now renamed) Midwest State.

The ease of invasion and occupation of the Midwest was facilitated by the weaker military force and armaments of the Midwest Military Area Command and, more importantly, by the connivance of the most senior Midwestern Igbo officers, who had almost complete control of the armoury. Ogbemudia, one of the senior non-Igbo officers, alleged that the Midwestern Igbo officers tricked the non-Igbo officers to hand over the keys of the armoury and remove most of the magazines on the eve of invasion.[49] There are also accounts of lax security in Asaba, the Midwestern Igbo major town and gateway to the Midwest State, resulting in clashes between the police and the army on the eve of the Biafran invasion over the security of the bridge.[50] Ogbemudia also alleged that Col Nwawo, a Midwestern Igbo officer, showed a lackadaisical attitude towards the invasion and only called a meeting after Biafran troops had effectively occupied the state. Nwawo quickly switched sides and defected to Biafra.[51] Other Midwestern Igbo officers who worked for Biafra stated their different reasons for supporting Biafra. An instance is Col Okwechime, who justified his (Okwechime) support for Biafra with the allegation of a secret landing of federal naval ships in the Midwest that violated Midwest State's declared neutrality.[52] Support for Biafra was not limited to Igbo politicians and military officers as some non-Igbo politicians also welcomed Biafra's invasion of the Midwest Region.[53]

The Biafran invasion of the Midwest, which was led by Col Victor Banjo and Lt Col Fola Oyewole (both Yorubas) and other Igbo military officers, was virtually without incident and welcomed in the Midwest Igbo areas. In his study of the Biafran War, Michael Gould claims that "Banjo took Benin without the loss of a single life; indeed the inhabitants gave the

invading troops a jubilant welcome."[54] But this claim of Biafran occupation is not true for all areas of the Midwest and its people as it caught the non-Igbo areas unawares and was achieved through sporadic fighting and violence. An Irish priest reported the violence that was perpetuated by the Biafran soldiers who took Benin:

> The leper settlement in Ossiomo had about 1200 residents before the war. Divided by the Ossiomo River, the Ibos lived on the east bank and Binis, Yorubas and others on the west bank. *When Biafrans invaded in August, they swept through the Ibo side and, crossing the river to the west side, killed all the Binis and Yorubas they could find. (my emphasis)* Six weeks later the Federals came from the other direction, set up their artillery on the Bini side and shelled the Ibo side, after which they crossed the river and killed any Ibos remaining.[55]

Virtually all the newspapers, including Nnamdi Azikiwe's (Igbo) *West African Pilot*, reported fighting in some towns in the Midwest during the invasion.[56] The Biafran capture of Benin City (the capital of the Midwest State) was not without resistance and violence. *West Africa* magazine described it as the mutiny of the Midwest Military Area Command, which involved "street fighting for several hours between mutinous and loyal troops of Benin Garrison," resulting in the Biafran overpowering and disarming of the police and loyalist Midwest soldiers.[57] Ejoor claimed that while the invaders were busy occupying Benin City, Lt Col Ochei of the Midwest Area Command, acting on instructions from Biafra, launched an attack on the Government House with the intention of capturing or killing him (Military Governor) but that he fought his way out with a gun.[58] Similar fights took place in Auchi, Ubiaja, Ughelli and Warri, while the massacres of Northerners by Biafrans were recorded in Benin City and Sapele amidst rioting in Urhobo areas.[59] The number of deaths from this first day of invasion and occupation is not known. The major victims of this fight were officers of the police force, which was reported to have lost many men during the occupation.[60] Since the over 250 police men of Eastern Nigerian origin in the Midwest were redeployed to Biafra in May 1967, it is safe to assume that the majority of those killed were non-Igbo officers.[61]

The entry of Biafran troops into Midwestern towns and villages was characterized by search for, and torture and killings of suspected Northern Nigerians, conscription of soldiers, and the seizure and looting of food, livestock, vehicles, machinery, money and any item that caught their fancy, as well as raping of women. Eyewitness accounts and newspapers reported

that the Biafrans targeted the Hausa quarters of most towns. Igbo residents pointed out the residence of Northern Nigerians in addition to searching the houses of Midwesterners suspected of hiding Northern Nigerians.[62] In Benin City, many resident Northern Nigerians were loaded into trucks and taken out of the city by the Biafran soldiers, and it is not clear what happened to them. Some personal accounts provide clues as to the fate of these residents. Sixty-five-year old Labo Sokoto, a Northern Nigerian, claimed that he was shot in the chest and dumped in the bush, but helped by local people to later escape to the North.[63] The Northern Nigerian government newspaper *New Nigeria* reported various atrocities allegedly committed against Northern Nigerians in the Midwest.[64] Some Ika Agbor people (an Igbo-speaking group) confirmed that they helped to hide and protect non-Igbos, which included Northern Nigerians, from being killed by Biafran soldiers.[65] The atrocities were also extended to all non-Igbo groups who showed signs of hostility from the moment of the occupation.

The fighting and violence that characterized the invasion and occupation frightened many non-Igbo people and foreigners into fleeing the major towns without their valuable properties. These properties became the immediate target of the Biafran soldiers and their civilian Igbo and non-Igbo accomplices. The *West African Pilot* newspaper reported that Biafrans confiscated foodstuff and other commodities, which were immediately taken to Biafra.[66] Oyewole, who led one of the columns of invading Biafran soldiers, corroborated newspaper reports on how the Biafran army treated properties in the Midwest:

> Troops of the Liberation Army did not behave in a manner likely to improve their relationship with the people of the areas they occupied. The worst hit towns were Warri, Benin and Sapele. Men of 18th Battalion based in Warri were notorious, looting anything they could turn into cash. Abandoned commercial houses were indiscriminately broken into and emptied by looters. Nothing was considered too big to be removed-vehicles, bags of salt and provisions of all sorts were favoured commodities. Some of the things were either sold on the spot at give-away prices, or sent to Biafra to be sold later. It was not difficult to find ready markets in the Midwest, with thousands of Biafrans streaming into the "liberated" state to do business. It was not an uncommon occurrence to see a soldier in Warri "dash" another one the sum of fifty or even a hundred pounds. Most of the beneficiaries were those who visited either from Biafra or some other operational areas within the Midwest, where there were no opportunity for looting.[67]

He went further to report: "All the cars that were abandoned in Warri, including those of people (mostly expatriates), who had left Warri by boat, disappeared fast … The easiest excuse for stealing a car was to claim that the car was required at Enugu."[68] He also observed: "The few who manned checkpoints when they existed used the opportunity to terrorize and extort money from innocent civilians."[69] Biafran soldiers also engaged in outright seizure and confiscation of motor vehicles from their owners and drivers. Their excuse was that they were for military operations and were never seen again. The owners who resisted such seizures were killed. Benson Ibude, the son of one of the victims, alleged that his 39-year-old father was dragged out of his vehicle in Ugo by Biafran soldiers and killed.[70]

Though Oyewole did not report the killings by Biafrans, he noted their indiscriminate shooting at the slightest provocation. Numerous deaths occurred from such incidents which were common under occupation. Defiance, resistance and sabotage took various forms in various parts of the non-Igbo areas, while the Biafran soldiers and collaborators detained and killed arrested resisters. This is confirmed by James Akpeninor, a teenager during the occupation, who stated:

> Outright molestation, harassment and killings of non-Ibo (*sic*) civilians became a common feature on daily basis; in fact the Biafran occupation was a nightmare of brutal excesses from Biafran soldiers on non-Igbo speaking indigenous people of the state. At night "suspected saboteurs" were fished out of their homes, arrested and often times summarily executed.[71]

Senior non-Igbo civil servants such as Imokhuede, Secretary to Government; Joseph Adeola, the Commissioner of Police; Olu Akpata, a Permanent Secretary; and Samuel Umweni, Engineer at Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation, were arrested, taken to Biafra and detained till the end of the war.

The Biafran invasion of the Midwest was also regarded as "an Ibo affair."[72] As a result, many more Igbo were sent to the Midwest by the Biafran government. One instance of this was the appointment of senior Eastern Igbo civil servants into the Midwest Public Service without due process on orders from Biafran authorities in Enugu.[73] Other Igbos on their own moved into the Midwest to seek their fortune.[74] These made the local non-Igbo people perceive the Igbo as bent on domination and oppression of the people of the Midwest. The people's perception and

negative attitudes towards the Igbo was made worse by the fact that some of the Igbo who were perpetuating these atrocities were their former acquaintances, neighbours or friends. The Biafran soldiers included many Igbo who had lived in the Midwest before the crisis and knew the terrain and were well acquainted with the local people.[75]

The Igbo community was soon divided into two groups, those who were not connected with or active in Biafran activities and those who were active agitators on behalf of Biafra known as "Enugu Clique" (named after Enugu—the capital of Biafra).[76] There were also some non-Igbo who saw the occupation as their opportunity to gain position and/or material benefits. This later group and members of the "Enugu Clique" were responsible for gathering and passing information to the administration for action, particularly arrest, detention and killing of "suspected saboteurs."

To worsen the situation, the local administration appointed by the Biafran authorities demanded and appealed for donation of foodstuffs and money to help Biafra at a time when Biafran forces had looted the properties and food was running short in the Midwest. The administration even compelled the Oba of Benin to broadcast an appeal to the people for donations to Biafra. By the end of August, the shortage of food and materials was so acute that the *West Africa* magazine reported that "the invasion has brought Midwest to a standstill."[77]

The Biafran authorities also embarked on a recruitment drive for soldiers. This attracted unemployed youths and Biafra sympathizers, including some non-Igbo. Recruitment was more successful in the Igbo areas, which was home to most sympathizers and agents of Biafra. In the non-Igbo areas, incentives of as much as £130 per month (which was more than double the salary of a university graduate) were promised to volunteers.[78] Forced conscription of some of the known opponents of Biafra was reported along with conscription of even teenagers of Midwestern origin into the Biafran army.[79] These conscripts were quickly trained and deployed to guard duties and the Western front to fight the advancing federal army, which entered the Midwest on 13 August, and subsequently to other fronts in Biafra.[80] Over 500 of such conscripts from the Midwest were later rescued as prisoners of war and evacuated to Makurdi.[81]

The non-Igbo peoples of the Midwest at home and abroad were united in their condemnation of the Midwestern Igbo betrayal and treachery in the invasion of the Midwest. Various Midwestern Igbo groups resident in various Nigerian towns outside the Midwest were just as vociferous in their condemnation. Some such as the Aboh (Igbo speaking) and the Ika

(Igbo speaking) similarly deplored the looting of their farms by Biafran soldiers.[82] With grievances against the oppression and depredation of Biafran soldiers, resentment of the occupation, growing insecurity and propaganda of the federal government, the non-Igbo people resorted to active and passive resistance, including sabotage of the Biafran administration. Most civil servants deserted their urban offices and relocated to rural areas and outside the Midwest. Similarly, many Midwestern Igbo relocated to their homeland and commuted to work when they could, especially because of increasing hostility of the non-Igbo. Some of the rural communities that experienced the Biafran depredation were deserted by the inhabitants who took to the bush.[83] This desertion created difficulties for the Biafran administration and the Administrator had to continuously appeal to the civil servants to return to work and view the occupation as non-tribal domination but as an effort to keep the Midwest neutral in the war.[84] When the federal troops began to make incursions into the Midwest, incidents of clashes between non-Igbo youths and Biafran soldiers were recorded in Sapele, in the Urhobo areas and in Uromi in the Ishan area.[85] It was even reported that there was fear of a general uprising against the administration, which had become panic-stricken before the capture of the major towns by federal troops.[86]

The Federal Liberation of Midwest State and the Biafran Response

The Biafran invasion and occupation of the Midwest immediately changed the relations between the federal military government and Biafra, from police action to declaration of total war on Biafra. The federal government deployed the army, navy and air force to push back the Biafran army that had crossed the Midwest State into Ore and Okenne in Western and Kwara States. By 19 August, the federal army entered the Midwest from the North, with the capture of Ososo, followed by strings of successes in capturing more towns in subsequent days.[87] They were aided by guerilla activities, clandestine intelligence work and sabotaging of Biafran soldiers and administration by non-Igbo volunteers. The federal air force bombing of Benin Airport on 30 August, combined with the successes of the naval attacks from the sea, emboldened the local people to riot and attack Biafrans in Warri.[88] In spite of the deteriorating relations with the non-Igbo people, the Biafra-appointed administration further alienated Midwesterners by signing a cooperation agreement with Biafra on eco-

nomic, finance and related matters, which included the use and acceptance of Biafran currency and free movement between the Midwest and Biafra. In addition, corporations and industries in the Midwest were required to remit their revenue to Enugu in Biafra.[89]

With the routing of Biafran troops in Ore and Okenne, the retreating Biafrans forces resorted to the destruction of the bridges and culverts between Ore and Benin to delay federal advance.[90] Lt Col Murtala Mohammed, who led federal troops from Okenne, informed of the "inhuman atrocities of the rebels" on the road down from Okenne in the North, claiming that they sometimes "killed whole families who refused to give them food."[91] In Sabongida-Ora, the federal army uncovered a Biafran detention and execution camp and freed the surviving local Midwestern and Northern Nigerian inmates.[92] The impending collapse of the occupation force in the Midwest became imminent by mid-September with the increasing diminution of non-Igbo areas under Biafran control and the advance of the federal army in the Midwest. As Orobator noted, losses of Biafran troops were blamed on Midwestern saboteurs and this increased their atrocities in the Midwest.[93] The Biafran forces increased their screening of movement of the non-Igbo[94] and killing at the slightest provocation and suspicion. These restrictions and killings, particularly in Benin City, led to demonstrations against Biafrans by women in Benin City.[95]

As federal troops closed in on Benin City, the Biafran troops became disorganized and retreated haphazardly.[96] Since they were not very conversant with the terrain, they either shot their way through, and in the process killed innocent civilians, or became easy victims of the federal troops and non-Igbo mobs that aided them. One *West Africa* Magazine correspondent was told "that when the federal troops arrived and the crowd was jubilating, a vehicle full of enemy [Biafran] troops drove up the Sapele Road, apparently unaware that Benin had fallen. The fighting that followed accounted for twenty or more bodies seen by many outside the general hospital."[97] In addition, the large number of Igbo killed by the federal forces was a direct result of the difficulty in differentiating between Biafran soldiers and Igbo civilians. Even before the entry of the federal army into the Midwest State, Biafran soldiers were known to wear civilian clothes to disguise their presence, particularly when searching for Northern Nigerians and "saboteurs" among the non-Igbo.[98] After the federal troops entered the Midwest, the *West African* correspondent reported that "the Biafrans drop their uniform and wear civilian clothes, so when there is any doubt about a man's allegiance, they [federal soldiers] have to

shoot."[99] Moreover, some Biafran recruits had no uniforms and this made it difficult to differentiate between Igbo civilians and Biafran soldiers.

The killing of "civilian" Igbo was also influenced by a directive from the federal army leadership. On entering Benin City, the General Officer commanding the federal troops gave directives to the inhabitants to "assist the federal troops in locating and eventual destruction of the rebels that may be hiding around the Midwest."[100] This was the signal for the non-Igbo to search and point out the Igbo, both soldiers and civilians, to the mobs and federal soldiers who then killed them. Some Igbo refugees in Benin City told a newspaper reporter that "the Binis did the pointing and the soldiers did the shooting."[101] There are indications that the federal soldiers initially did not discriminate or exercise restraint in their killings. As documented by Akpenino, they also killed innocent non-Igbo civilians who "looked like Igbo," were suspected of hiding Igbo or were identified as "collaborators."[102] The first two days following the federal army's capture of Benin City were characterized by indiscriminate killings by federal soldiers, who were assisted by civilians, many of whom seized the opportunity to settle personal scores and loot Igbo properties. Reports of these atrocities committed by federal soldiers and appeals by religious leaders, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, resulted in new orders being given to the soldiers. There were repeated announcements of punishment for people who pointed out Igbos and looted their properties, and instructions to report or hand over captured Igbos to the police.[103] Given the haphazard and uncoordinated nature of the killings, it is difficult to ascertain the precise number of Igbos killed in these towns. While early reports claimed that hundreds of Igbos had been killed, later reports cast doubts on this. What was certain, however, was that Igbo civilians were killed and some of their properties were looted.[104]

Amidst the chaos, some non-Igbo protected Igbo from attacking mobs and soldiers, and even disguised them to facilitate their escape. Many Igbos were saved in this way. Even in those terrible first two days, one newspaper correspondent reported: "some two hundred men, women, and children have sought protection from the Military Administrator and are being lodged at the Benin District School." On 27 September, the number had risen to 600.[105] By October, the number had fallen to some 300 Igbo refugees because some had been repatriated home or to safe places, while those who could not be repatriated were housed in the Benin City prison for their security.[106] Their relocation to the prison was also to reopen the schools (where the protected Igbo civilians were initially accommodated),

which had been closed throughout the period of the Biafran occupation. Within a few days, the killings and lootings in the non-Igbo areas had stopped, and even the Igbo who were captured in other major non-Igbo towns such as Sapele were repatriated to Benin City for protection by the government.[107] Nonetheless, there was ill feeling and hostility between the Igbo and the non-Igbo, and this made living together difficult. It was reported that the non-Igbo people were apprehensive of the Igbo, who were feared and suspected of "sabotage," while the many Igbos remained distrustful of non-Igbo.[108] This left the government with the task of restoring the administration, winning back the confidence of the people, and reconciling the people and rehabilitating the refugees.

While the federal government and the local Midwest administration were reining in the federal army and non-Igbo mobs, the retreating Biafran soldiers were attacking civilians in the non-Igbo areas, particularly in the villages. There were reported cases of seizure of vehicles and other properties by the retreating Biafrans and killing of the owners. In Abudu, a Benin-Edo border town with the Ika (Igbo speaking), retreating Biafran soldiers were alleged to have killed one Anthony Stephens (a British teacher) and stolen his car. They were also accused of killing over 300 inhabitants, whose bodies were dumped in the river, destroying the bridge, and vandalizing and looting the teachers college.[109] In Urhonigbe, another Benin-Edo border town with the Ukwani (Igbo speaking), similar atrocities of killings, looting and vandalization were reported.[110] These reports suggest a pattern of killings of non-Igbos in the Midwestern Igbo areas before these areas were liberated from Biafra and came under full federal control. Like the number of Igbo civilians killed in the reprisal attacks, the exact number of non-Igbo killed by Biafran soldiers is difficult to determine. This is largely because, after the war, both the federal government and the Midwest government concerned themselves with reconciliation and reconstruction rather than documenting the atrocities for the purpose of punishing the perpetrators.

Conclusion

This chapter argues that colonial administrative divisions, characterized by regions with multiple minorities and majorities, as well as the inequality of regional electoral representation, created a situation where ethnic majorities sought minority groups as proxies for expanding their electoral and power bases. The Igbo majority of Eastern Nigeria foisted minority Midwestern Igbo leadership on the non-Igbo majority ethnic groups of

the Midwest. This created ethnic and political tensions, which were exacerbated by the military crisis, the refugee problems and the Igbo demand for a Midwestern support for the Eastern Region's confrontation with the federal military government and the eventual Biafran bid for secession. The consequent Biafran invasion and occupation of the Midwest was achieved with the support of some Midwestern Igbos who sought to sustain their leadership position in the administration. Contrary to some contemporary accounts of the war, which tend to emphasize Biafran victimhood, Biafra's occupation of the Midwest Region was characterized by looting, killings and other atrocities against the non-Igbo Midwesterners and Northern Nigerians in the Midwest. The feeling of betrayal, distrust and bitterness against the Igbo, as well as the federal army's directive for assistance in locating and identifying Biafrans during the liberation, provoked and enabled the killings of some Igbos in non-Igbo areas. Similarly, the retreating Biafrans and Midwestern Igbos committed atrocities against the non-Igbos in the villages and border areas and in the Midwestern Igbo areas. Most of these killings were unplanned and were the results of the chaos of the war situation. Victimhood in the context of the war was therefore more complex and diffused than has been presented in recent studies of the war, which have tended to emphasize Igbo victimhood over non-Igbo victimhood.

Notes

1. Chima Korieh, *The Nigeria-Biafra War: Genocide and the Politics of Memory* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2012), and a special issue on the Nigerian Civil War and genocide published in *Journal of Genocide Research*, 16, no. 2–3 (2014).
2. For details of the characterization of the war as genocide against the Igbo, see Emma Enekwenchi, "Did the Federal Government of Nigeria in Igbo Genocide," *Pambazuka News: Pan-African Voices of Freedom and Justice*, 629 (May 9, 2013), http//www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/87285
3. Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), 74–89.
4. Chima J. Korieh, "Introduction: History and the Politics of Memory" in *The Nigeria-Biafra War: Genocide and the Politics of Memory*, ed. Chima J. Korieh, (New York: Cambria Press, 2012), 15.

5. Korieh "Introduction: History and the Politics of Memory" in *The Nigeria-Biafra War: Genocide and the Politics of Memory*, ed. Chima J. Korieh, 15.

6. Midwest Nigeria, Daily Proceedings of the Tribunal of Inquiry into Rebel Activities, Day 1, November 17, 1967, 1.

7. Only a few know works allude to these Biafran atrocities in passing such as John de St. Jorre, *The Brothers War: Biafra and Nigeria* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972); Stanley Orobator, "The Biafran Crisis and Midwest" *African Affairs*, 86, no. 344 (1987) and James O. Akpeninor, *Merger Politics of Nigeria and the surge of Sectarian Violence* (UK: Authorhouse, 2013).

8. Chinua Achebe, *The Trouble with Nigeria* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishing Corporation Ltd, 1982), and Chinua Achebe, *There Was a Country: A Personal History of Biafra*, 133.

9. Garrath Williams, "Dangerous Victims: On some political dangers of vicarious claims to Victimhood," *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 9, no. 2 (2008), 87; and Daniel Bar-Tal, Lily Chernyak-Hai, Noa Schori and Ayelet Gundar, "A sense of self-perceived Collective Victimhood in intractable Conflicts" *International Review of the Red Cross*, 91, no. 874 (2009), 232.

10. The governments were under the Igbo majority ethnic group in Eastern Region, the Hausa–Fulani majority ethnic group in Northern Region, and the Yoruba majority ethnic group in Western Region. See James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), 386–388.

11. For population figures, see Regional Census Office, *Population Census of the Western Region of Nigeria, 1952, Bulletin No. 1*, The Government Statistician, Lagos, 9–12.

12. Oded Haklai "A Minority rule over a hostile Majority: The case of Syria" *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 6, no. 3 (Autumn 2000), 28–20.

13. Dennis Osadebay, *Building a Nation: An Autobiography* (Lagos: Macmillan Nigeria Publishers Ltd, 1978), 60.

14. Rufus Akinyele "A Western Niger Province or Constitutional Safeguards: The Search for an Effective Remedy to the fears of the Igbo west of the Niger, 1941–1954" *Immigrants and Minorities*, II (July 1992), 156–170.

15. Osadebay was well connected with the larger majority Eastern Igbo group and the pan-Igbo ethnic association as the pioneer president and a beneficiary of their education scholarship. See Ejitu Nnechi Ota, "The Igbo State Union and the evolution of Igbo Ethnic identity in Nigeria, 1936–1966," *Nssuka Journal of the Humanities*, no. 10 (1999), 57, 62. He was to be the bridgehead of the Eastern Igbo in forging common identity with the western Igbo groups, some of whom resented Igbo identity and commonality. In addition, he was to help expand the political base for the Igbo-led and dominated NCNC towards eventual leadership of Nigeria.

16. Michael Vickers, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Midwest State* (Oxford: Worldview Publishing, Oxford, 2000), 110–114.

17. Vickers, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Midwest State*, 112–113.

18. Ibid., 83–85; interview with J. I. G. Onyia in Vikers, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria*, Footnote 25, 121.

19. The Midwest Igbo area produced little lignite and palm oil, while the non-Igbo areas of Midwest produced food crops, oil palm and kernels, rubber, cocoa, timber and petroleum.

20. Uyilawa Usuanlele, "State and Education in Benin Division, 1897–1959," in Adebayo Oyebade (ed.) *The Transformation of Nigeria* (Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press Inc., 2002), 60.

21. Note that there were no party primaries or elections. Michael Vickers, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Midwest State* (Oxford: Worldview Publishing, 2000), 308.

22. Vickers, *Ethnicity and Sub-Nationalism in Nigeria: Movement for a Midwest State*, 333–335

23. Emma Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: An untold story of the Nigerian Civil War* (USA Africa in association with GOM SLAM, Washington D.C., 1994), 1–2.

24. Okocha, *Blood on the Niger: An untold story of the Nigerian Civil War*, 3.

25. Abdul Oroh, "Refreshing reflections: A people cast a glance on their past struggles, intrigues and triumphs," *The African Guardian*, August 15, 1988, 25.

26. David Ejoor, *Reminiscences* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 1989), 58.

27. Damola Awoyokun, "Biafra: Ogbemudia clarifies US Secret files," *PM News*, March 19, 2013. http://pmnewsnigeria.com/2013/03/19/biafra-ogbemudia-clarifies-us-secret-files/replytocom=556448

28. J. I. G. Onyia, *My role in Nationalism* (Asaba, Iloeji Odibosa House, 1986), 48.

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Ethnicity, War and Military Politics in Nigeria

Sanya Osha

After almost five decades of "constitutional federalism" and an even longer history of colonial regionalism, Nigeria is still frantically grappling with the hydra-headed problems associated with the multi-ethnic state. These problems manifest in a variety of ways and the factors responsible must be sought within the decisive context of colonialism and its legacy. Nigeria, just as other African nations, is solely a construction of the European colonial enterprise and is, to employ a more apt term, "a geographical expression," as claimed by the Nigerian statesman Obafemi Awolowo. But for several reasons, different categories of political actors have sought to change or at least undermine this telling perception of the nation. The price of keeping the nation intact has undoubtedly been a high one. Various competing interests and historical antecedents have

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combined to direct or misdirect the course of Nigeria's political destiny according to the changing demands of expediency. To comprehend the perplexities of the country's evolving history, we shall have to examine, at some length, her pluralist nature and the various attempts by different political leaders to implant the seemingly necessary yet problematic concept of federalism. In doing this, we shall come to understand the apparently intractable nature of multi-ethnic societies and perhaps, eventually, we shall be able to discern measures that augur well for conflict management in those societies.

This chapter examines a variety of sociopolitical configurations in which the Nigerian experience of federalism was forged. It suggests that the ongoing Nigerian experiment with federalism can be understood by confronting the confluences of militarism, ethnicity and religion. In addition, the Nigerian Civil War has also had a tremendous impact on how the contours of Nigerian federalism were shaped. The chapter begins with an examination of federalism itself as it relates to the Nigerian nation and then moves on to address the political instrumentalization of religion and ethnicity. Indeed, the history of political events and categories such as militarism, ethnicity, religion and the imperatives of the nation-building project play against one another in a context that is never even and which is shaped more by factors of political expediency than anything else. In addition, the trauma of the Nigerian Civil War is partly responsible for the various pressures for the federalization of the polity.[1] At many moments during periods of militarism, unitarianism appears to be more dominant than the practice of federalism successive military regimes claim to uphold. In relation to the dominant discourse on ethnicity in Nigeria, this study suggests that an unyielding focus on the primordiality of ethnicity does not do justice to the manner in which waves of contemporary globalization reconfigure the contours of personal and collective identity. In this respect, the limits of political economy become clear when the economy fails to account for the migrant dimensions of identity construction in the current global age. Thus, the expatriation of the struggles relating to the construction of Nigerian identity has become a legitimate source to examine what shape the pressures for the federalization of the polity will take. Indeed, migrant Nigerian identities operate within diverse categories in terms of class, gender and ethnicity, and with a wide range of professional affiliations, some of which are legitimate while others are not. The literature that is analysed in this study does not address this important dimension. More specifically, the final sections on the nature of Nigerian

ethnicity in this study suggest that apart from concentrating on the more primordial manifestations of ethnicity (*the politics of the soil and blood*), there is also the need to examine the expatriation of the struggles for the construction of identity, that is, the virtualization of experiences by which the politics of identity construction is manifested in order to discern how those experiences resonate within the "bounded" Nigerian nation.

Federalism as a Special Brew

The notion of federalism in Nigeria has obviously become a handy political tool. Even after many decades of political engineering, federalism as a political concept remains in the main, elusive. The continuous problematization of the concept is reflected by the fact that a Federal Character Commission was constituted again in December 1995 by the military regime of Sani Abacha. Among its terms of reference were to work out an equitable formula for the distribution of all cadres of offices in the federal and state public services, as well as government-owned companies and agencies; promote and enforce compliance with the principles of proportional shaping of all bureaucratic, economic, media and political posts at the levels of government; and take such legal measures against any individual, ministry, government body or agency which fails to comply with any federal character principle or formula prescribed or adopted by the commission.

The Federal Character Commission had hardly settled to fulfil its mandate when charges that it had become "an arena of intrigues bordering on crisis of confidence, ethnic jingoism and favouritism"[2] were levelled against it. To make matters worse, Dr Sabo Bako, the Commission's Secretary, was compelled to resign. Among his reasons for resigning were "the manner in which the former Secretary to the Commission, Miss Anna Pepple, was appointed and removed." This angered some Southern members of the Commission, who saw the appointment of a Chairman and Secretary from the northern part of the country, though from different geopolitical zones, as a negation of the principle of the federal character by the Commission itself.[3] Bako, who had been a prominent Marxist at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, in the mid-1980s also stated that his tenure as Secretary of the Commission had been "horrendous and disappointing." On another level, the Commission was plagued with problems of logistics concerning funding, accommodation, administrative organization and terms of contract regarding hired personnel. This surely

was no way to put the Commission on a sound footing and inspire public confidence. It also confirmed a certain view that a degree of levity or indecisiveness afflicts Nigerian political leadership generally in relation to the issue of federalism.

However, before we examine the issue of federalism any further, we ought to also examine the problem of ethnicity, which must be seen in conjunction with the foregoing connection as a fundamental nexus of discursivity, as well as a major conundrum within the Nigerian polity. Ethnicity has been defined in various ways, including categories of: collective consciousness, bases of affinity and behavioural inclinations.[4] At a more basic level, Eghosa Osaghae posits that ethnicity "is a derivative of ethnic group which may ensue when two or more ethnic groups (identities) are involved in a competitive setting."[5] He also asserts:

> An ethnic group may be defined as a group whose members differentiate themselves from others on the basis of certain common objective criteria like language, culture and territory, and subjective criteria like the myth of common origin … which provides the basis for forging a common destiny for the people who can lay no claim to actual kinship.[6]

Thus, the ethnic quest is essentially a "primordial attachment" to a given culture and social structure. Osaghae also points out that ethnicity "is more of a political than a cultural phenomenon."[7] Ethnic affiliations become strengthened through the need to acquire political relevance, or even power. From a certain angle, it may even be argued that the ethnic question is nothing more than a "will to power," to employ a popular Nietzschean expression. Unfortunately, there are several drawbacks that militate against ethnicity as a basis for political activity, especially on the Africa continent, where it has been conceived in more ways than one, as the scourge of democracy and a truly enlightened and inclusive political practice. Okwudiba asserts that "Ethnicity is … seen as one of the main obstacles to democracy because it leads to the substitution of ethnic interest for the national interest, favouritism, nepotism, and the accentuation of social inequality."[8]

African socialists had made fervent attempts to downplay the phenomenon of ethnicity within the African political scene.[9] In what Basil Davidson calls "the poverty of ideological thought" on the part of African political theorists and intellectuals, attempts were made to wish ethnicity away into the primordiality of prehistory. The explicit objective was to cast "African-

oriented" ideologies into categories recognizable to the scientific Western mind. But in the event of imposing supposedly scientific modes of analyses on obviously novel, and also apparently problematic, African conditions, these African political theorists committed a key error, one from which they are yet to recover completely. So, in order to understand ethnicity in its multifaceted manifestations, and also through its possibilities, we are compelled to look further back into the profound dislocations wrought by the colonial encounter.

It is instructive to first turn to Basil Davidson's famous book, *The Black Man's Burden*. Davidson reveals that the colonial European often found it convenient to refer to the diverse African ethnic identities as tribes; hence, the now pejorative term tribalism, which is no different from the prototype species of European nationalism and what is now referred to as ethno-nationalism. In colonial Africa, tribalism became a suitable platform to launch the numerous nation-statist programmes that were to bring about independence for the colonially created African geographical entities. So, rather than being a disincentive for mass political mobilization or a source of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic confrontation, tribalism became a veritable organizing force. However, this cannot be said of the present-day understanding or colouration of the term. To be precise, Davidson argues that modern tribalism flourishes under conditions of sociopolitical disorder, that it is destructive of civil society and that it undermines public morality and the rule of law.

It is also argued that this modern version of tribalism discourages the institution of a suitable democratic ethos for Africa. Expectedly, post-colonial African nations have become the sites of the most virulent cases of clientelism, in which cunning and aggressive rulers can turn the instruments of state (the privatization of public authority) for purely personal usage, motivated in addition by favouritism, nepotism, graft and also the concomitant brutality necessary to maintain political power. Several case studies testify to this assessment; Liberia (under Samuel Doe), Uganda (under Idi Amin and Milton Obote) and, even to some extent, Nigeria, where clientelism has become one of the surest means of economic and political survival. These are all nation-spaces ravaged by the fallouts of political mismanagement. Consequently, the political centre, or to be more exact, the state, has become the site of violent contestation in which a winner-takes-all mentality not only prevails but is also enacted incessantly to the detriment of what has been called "the nation-statist project."

The discussion here, however, is limited to the geographical space called Nigeria. During the colonial era, the British colonialists needed to operate a mode of governance that would serve their economic and administrative purposes, and this task was considerably difficult given the diverse, multi-ethnic character of the territory. As Osuntokun contends, the pluralistic nature of the territory was tackled by a tried-and-tested approach through which ethnic and cultural diversities "existed as separate units."[10] This approach had worked in Canada, Australia and South Africa, so it was assumed that it could also work in Nigeria. The adoption of the principle of federalism marked the origins of its exportation by the colonial superpower of Britain. Indeed, federalism serviced another related need and objective since it was

> more or less an evidence of some form of disunity, political weakness and uneven economic development, the British definitely wanted to keep the federating units as apart as possible. In this way, the British might continue to meddle in the internal affairs of their former dependency to their own economic and political advantage after they would have granted the dependency her independence.[11]

In 1912, the two large territories of Northern Nigeria and Southern Nigeria were placed under the control of a single colonial official: Sir Fredrick Lugard. For reasons pertaining to administrative expediency and economic efficiency, the two disparate provinces were amalgamated two years later. Thus, began a bold, if reckless, experiment in social and political engineering that would change permanently the course of the lives of various peoples who make up modern-day Nigeria. This step, needless to say, failed to consider several serious implications it was certain to bring in its train. The two old protectorates of Nigeria were not only diverse in terms of culture, religion, language, political organization and aspirations but also in terms of land mass, which as a result triggered apprehensions of domination in different parts of the country. Subsequently, during the sociopolitical evolutionary process that started during the tenure of classical colonialism, or more precisely during colonial regionalism, Northern Nigeria made up 79 per cent of the nation's territory, while the Eastern part of Nigeria accounted for 8.3 per cent, and Western Nigeria made up on its part at 8.2 per cent.[12]

Consequently, these disparities generated ambivalent attitudes from the various ethnic groups towards the federation. These fundamental

differences were accentuated in turn by highly diverse historical imperatives such that the colonial situation failed to negotiate. Thus, the failure of the colonial encounter to recognize certain basic African historical realities has become the bane of the nation-building process all over the continent in relation to the enduring problems of [de]territorialization engendered by various stages and histories of failed states and the new political economy of war in post-colonial Africa.

In Northern Nigeria, where the emirate system existed and continues to endure to this day, the hierarchical structure of rulership was not entirely uniform as the zone that came to be known as the Middle Belt presented an intractable administrative problem to Lugard and the British administrators who followed his administrative line of thinking.[13] Lugard chanced upon an "unimaginative panacea to this administrative bottleneck by the choice of indirect rule." It has been argued that "This system of indirect rule was to put in action "an entrenched local aristocracy which shared power with agents of an army of occupation … but it later acquired an aura of orthodoxy among both officials in Northern Nigeria and principal clerks of the British Colonial office."[14]

The European colonial enterprise was notorious for resorting to such arbitrary acts of political and administrative dislocation. A celebrated instance of this arbitrariness is the case of the Belgian colonial authorities in the territory known as Rwanda. In his book *The Comfort of Strangers*, Jimi Adisa undertakes a study of the Rwandese refugee situation in which he demonstrates the process by which "the politicization of ethnicity" came into existence. In his words: "The Belgian colonial authorities erected their power based on an ethnic analysis of society, control being exercised through the dominant Tutsi minority; this ethnic difference was sharpened by (among other things) the introduction of ethnic identity cards in 1930."[15]

It is this same administrative inconsiderateness that is responsible, in no small measure, for the genocidal ethnic wars that have now torn Rwanda apart and has resulted in a particularly disconcerting refugee problem which Adisa's study describes. Mahmood Mamdani deals with the Rwandan crisis even more exhaustively in his 2001 magisterial book, *When Victims Become Killers*. The point is that, by and large, European colonialism made way for the immensely destructive chancre of ethnicity that currently plagues most African nations from Rwanda and Burundi to Ghana, Uganda to Liberia, and of course Nigeria.

The same politicization of ethnicity occurred in Nigeria through the activities of Sir Richmond Palmer, "who indoctrinated Northern emirs about their total difference not only politically but even racially, from their Southern compatriots."[16] While Western Nigeria possessed established systems of traditional governance, this was not as true of the Igbo and Ibibio areas, which were especially intractable for the purposes of administration. In the later areas, the British colonial authorities had created what were known as "warrant chiefs" to administer the somewhat individualistic, if not exactly democratic, peoples of the Eastern Region. Once again, an established mode of existence was thrown into disarray and another was hurriedly established without due cognizance of what those peoples actually required. But in real terms, the modes of traditional rulership in Northern and Western Nigeria differed. First, none of the Southern communities had a tradition of taxation, and "in none of them existed a ruler approximating in personal authority to that of a Fulani emir."[17] By extension, it may be argued that Northern Nigeria was at a more developed stage of feudalism. This disparity in structures of traditional rulership can be observed even now with the Sultan of Sokoto exhibiting virtually unchallenged dominance over his subjects and other brother emirs while the Alafin of Oyo and Ooni of Ife continually argue over who is supreme in spite of the fact that several other Yoruba Obas fail to acknowledge the superiority of either of them.

The myth of separate development of the South and the North was reinforced at every given opportunity by the British Colonial Office, which fought against any attempt to foster a unified approach to development on the part of any sceptical colonial administrator. The success of this political separation would plague Nigeria to the extent that during the First Democratic Republic, Sir Ahmadu Bello, the powerful premier of the Northern Region, continued to entertain grave doubts about the possibilities of maintaining a unified nation. He was definitely not alone in this regard. Indeed, fear was the predominant emotion that all but crippled the confidence of the principal political actors who negotiated the federation out of British colonial dominion. Isawa Elaigwu puts it succinctly when he submits that Nigeria was a federation based on psychological fears of political and economic domination. Southern Nigeria was dominated by fears regarding the size and the numerical strength of Northern Nigeria, and given the ethno-regional realities of the country, the South saw no possibilities for it to acquire real federal power. The North, on the other hand, was intimidated by the level of modernization the South had

attained through the benefits of Western education. However, the source of these legitimate fears must essentially be sought, as Osuntokun posits, in "the reality of Nigerian politics of divide and rule, which the British did everything to foster."[18] Consequently, "in spite of all the nationalist forces that were working in the direction of unity and independence, about half a century of British rule had ensured that the task of national unification must of necessity be an arduous one."[19]

Having created this certainly conflictual political scenario, the British colonialists could then sit back and watch the effectively dichotomized North and South begin a gruesome struggle for their various objectives of economic development, in addition to initiating strategic manoeuvres to gain political power at the centre. The colonialists merely watched as they continued to pursue their own predetermined economic interests. In this heated political atmosphere that involved a frenetic "triangular squabble between the North, West and East,"[20] the less prominent ethnic minorities began to display displeasure at the clearly inequitable nature of national development. Their displeasure would become even more intense and vociferous as the years rolled by and political awareness became more widespread.

After the Second World War, "tribal unions" with unmistakable nationalist objectives were formed. In this way, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), representing mainly the east; the Northern People's Congress (NPC); and finally the Action Group, which had its cultural and political beginnings in the *Egbe Omo Oduduwa*, were launched between 1948 and 1949. We must not view these ethnic-based political parties as merely tribal unions since they were indeed more than just mere ethnic associations. They also espoused powerful nationalistic sentiments that went a long way in securing political independence for Nigeria. For instance, the young Anthony Enahoro of the Action Group had moved a motion for national independence on the floor of the Central Legislature as far back as 1953. Paradoxically, in post-independence Nigeria, Enahoro became one of the federal military government's most persistent gadflies by virtue of his unrepentant pro-democracy stance. But more importantly, the post-colonial period, beginning in 1960, did not heal the incisive wounds made by the inherently lopsided federalism created by British calculation and destructiveness. As we shall see, various colonially created political centrifugations had and would continue to have devastating reverberations on the evidently quixotic Nigerian polity. The point is that like any pluralistic society ridden with the natural divisions to be found within

a truly multi-ethnic context, Nigeria has always tended to dwindle away from itself, unless when held together by potent authoritarian systems.

It is from this vantage point that we shall look into another area of discourse: public finance. In traditional fiscal methodology regarding revenue allocation in a federation where the three tiers of government are present, namely, federal, state and local government, Akin Olaoloku explains the primary reasons for government's fiscal policy as the following. The first is the need to redress the incidence of financial imbalance between the various levels of government. The second motive is triggered by the difference in the revenue-raising capacities of the lower levels of government. The final reason is the necessity to promote certain specific local or state projects. Hence, we can then proceed to distinguish what have been termed "conditional" and "unconditional" transfers from the federal level. Given the complex character of fiscal relations within a federation, it becomes imperative to evolve some sort of theoretical matrix for the analysis of economic affairs. As a result, in the 1950s, "the prevailing theory of fiscal federalism among public finance experts was no more than their view of federal and state government operating as separate units with each adhering to the principle of horizontal equity."[21] However, the principle of horizontal equity can be faulted on the grounds that if a state or locality is a poor relative, the level of taxation needed in the former to bring the level of public services to that existing in the latter will be much higher, thereby imposing a heavier tax burden on the citizens of the relatively poor state.[22]

Beginning from the colonial era, Nigeria has had quite a chequered history of fiscal restructuring, as there have been several economic development periods beginning with the 1946–1952 financial plan. Other economic development plans followed until the crisis in the global petroleum sector, coupled with the world economic recession, inflicted a decisive and deleterious impact on the national financial barometer, one from which the country has unfortunately not been able to recover since the 1980s and 1990s.

During the initial period of national economic development, planners of fiscal policy placed greater emphasis on the principle of derivation and also sought to grant the federating regions greater financial autonomy. However, the advent of independence brought about a change in orientation from a clear emphasis on derivation to an elevation of the population factor in economic planning. And then again, after the transition from civilian governance to military rule, "the period between 1969 and 1974 relied on an interim allocation arrangement which was largely based on

the principle of derivation and that of need to a lesser extent."[23] Shortly after, the 1975 Revenue Allocation Decree de-emphasized the primacy of the principle of derivation as it was discovered to be responsible for the variegated picture of national economic development.

It has been necessary to situate the nation's fiscal development within historical perspective because it has recently become a vehement source of minority agitation, especially among ethnic identities that are also oil-producing communities. In other words, the agitations for resource allocation and control have become a crucial national issue. Indeed, we must recognize the fact that the very phenomenon of ethnicity in Nigeria has been accentuated by resource competition and the unending quest of various ethnic groups for a piece of "the national cake." It is against this seemingly peripheral background that we shall now embark upon a more detailed appraisal of ethnicity itself. More specifically, we will be examining the measures advanced for the resolution of ethnic conflicts and the attributes that induce destructive ethnicity.

Militarism and Ethno-religious Politics

The ethnic disturbances that occurred in May 1992 in Zango-Kataf, Kaduna State, exemplify the nature of ethno-religious conflict in Nigeria. First, they demonstrated the extent to which the Nigerian state is willing to go to punish those it considers to be a menace to the federation. Major-General Zamani Lekwot (rtd), a former military governor of Rivers State, was in the eye of the communal storm. Lekwot, a prominent Kataf leader who rose to the top echelons of the Nigerian army, was singled out for punishment for the Zango-Kataf communal clashes. Southern Kaduna in northern Nigeria, the area in which the disturbances occurred, is widely known to have experienced some of the most violent cases of ethnic violence in the country, such as the Kafanchan crisis of 1987. On the other hand, the Zango-Kataf disturbances were essentially ethno-religious in nature, and the major actors were the Muslim Hausa–Fulani (majority) and the Kataf (minority), who are regarded as pagans by the former. In the crisis, several lives were lost and considerable property was destroyed. What incensed the ruling administration of General Babangida was the perceived threat to the ethno-regional status quo. A dangerous precedent would have been set if strong punitive measures were not taken to forestall future reoccurrences, so the administration promptly swung into action by setting up a tribunal to investigate the disturbances. The Babangida regime

also promulgated Decree No. 55 which subordinated the Constitution to decrees passed by the military government. The nation ceased to have a recognized constitutional basis and became in effect a de facto martial state, although this fact was obscured by clouds of rhetoric and propaganda professing an earnest transition to civil rule. At the end of a charade trial, Major-General Lekwot and five others, namely, Major Atomic Kude (rtd), Yohanna Karau Kibor, Marcus Mamman, Yahaya Duniya, Julius Sarki and Zamman Dabo, were sentenced to death without rights of appeal. This verdict was challenged by civil society groups. The African Democratic League (ADL), led by the author, activist and Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka, denounced what appeared to the imminent judicial murders. Public protests declaiming the judgements also followed. Human rights organizations such as the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) and the Universal Defenders of Democracy (UDD) took legal measures to forestall the impending executions. Eventually, the Attorney-General Clement Akpamgbo announced a general amnesty for prisoners.

This was not before the religious undercurrents of the crisis were unearthed and transformed into instruments for national polarization. Alhaji Ibrahim Dasuki, the deposed Sultan of Sokoto and former President-General of the National Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA), released a statement to the press over the death sentences expressing his view that the law ought to be allowed to take its course; in effect, the death sentences should be carried out. He branded the Katafs as "the perpetrators of the Zango-Kataf genocide." On the other side of the religious divide, Christian clerics reacted with the same degree of disapproval of the commutation of the death sentences. The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) decried the partiality which influenced the administration of justice. CAN specifically alleged that pogroms had been carried out upon Christians in Northern Nigeria and not a judicial finger had been lifted on each occasion. It had become an instance of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Eventually, Lekwot and the others had their death sentences commuted to five-year jail terms, and then after a few years in prison, Lekwot was released by the Abacha regime. The Zango-Kataf saga had the prominent markings of an ethnic conflict, in addition to being fuelled by religious differences. It can be read as a confrontation between two distinct ethnic identities: one, a dominant group and, the other, an evidently aggrieved minority, and both within the supposedly monolithic North. This raises questions about the very idea of a homogenous Northern geographical

and cultural entity, and amplifies the problematic features of the nation's multi-ethnicity. So far, no precise strategy has been devised to combat similar disturbances in the future. In the main, official responses have been made on an ad-hoc basis, which means that the possibilities of such future clashes are indeed immense. This fact was borne out when an apparently minor incident in the ancient city of Kano triggered off another outbreak of ethno-religious violence in 1994 when an Igbo trader accused of desecrating the Qur'an was beheaded. In some respect, this incident was a continuation of the spate of religious disturbances that began in the North with the 1980 Maitatsine riots of Kano and others that occurred in Jimeta-Yola, Zaria, Katsina, Kaduna and Bauchi.

Given the divisiveness of ethnicity and the challenges of development, one recourse may be to reimagine the ethnic group as a framework for individual and collective development. Rather than curb the ethnic humbug, the creation of several states within the federation has worsened the problems of nepotism, clientelism and ethnicity. Since the country at federal and state levels alienates the citizen, the latter in turn creates alternative social arrangements and comfort zones to regulate her/his existence and to minister to her/his needs. These social formations are what provide the citizen with the succour and assistance that the state is reluctant or is unable to provide. In this sense, they serve a crucial function and are likely to continue to endure as long as people still feel disenfranchised by the state.

Nigeria, with well over 250 known ethnic groups, is still battling with most of the problems of ethnicity and post-colonial political reconstruction. One is inclined to disagree with Eghosa Osaghae when he states that Nigeria "has developed perhaps the most elaborate system of ethnic management on the continent."[24] The same can be said of Michael D. Levin's claims that "Nigerian politics and constitution making has transformed the state to a point where ethnic politics as such have been accommodated in the political system." Levin argues that although "sharing the national cake" remains central to politics, ethnicity is being muted in favour of regionalism and representation on the basis of population.[25] There are many reasons to doubt Levin's claim. The Ogoni crisis in the Niger Delta, for example, simply negates such assumptions.

Equally false is the presupposition that ethnic conflicts can be totally eradicated. The very dynamics of social and political struggle tend to amplify the spectre of ethnic conflicts. As long as various ethnic groups within a multi-ethnic context have to jostle for scarce employment

opportunities, inadequate protocols and stipulations of revenue allocation, basic amenities of existence and, of course, the kind of political power in which winner-takes-all, ethnic agitations will not cease to occur. Africa, by the realities of its political landscape, would continue to be a fertile site for ethnic conflicts since forms of authoritarianism still prevail and also due to its relatively weak practices and traditions of contemporary democracy. African modes of governance often do not heed problems pertaining to minority rights, and when they do, it is usually through autocratic and repressive means. Studies have shown that these kinds of approaches only aggravate ethnic tensions.

There are, of course, many other factors that generate tensions or apprehensions over ethnicity, and the case of Nigeria is no exception. Most indications, sadly, reveal that the nation's capacities to effectively manage ethnic problems are rapidly being eroded in spite of all the measures—most of them merely cosmetic—taken by the government to check the situation. A few reasons should suffice to lend weight to this assertion. Osaghae, for instance, makes the all-too-glaring observation that the federal character principle has continued "to further the political dominance of the Hausa–Fulanis rather than resulting in the much needed devolution and decentralization of federal power."[26] He notes that Northern military officers control the nation's armed forces (although this assertion ought to be mediated by circumstances of political expediency which can change the stakes abruptly).[27] We can then go on to conclude that most of the conditions that give rise to ethnic conflicts are present within the Nigerian polity.

It would not be correct to assume that successive governments in Nigeria have not attempted to address the destructive effects of ethnic politics. However, in a structurally and ethnically diverse nation such as Nigeria, it is easy for several ethnic groups to become alienated from the centre; hence, the daunting plethora of requests for the creation of states and local councils. The objective for most aggrieved segments of the polity is to obtain a better share of the "national cake." The discomfort and agitations also reveal a certain ambivalence regarding federalism and popular perceptions regarding the nation. The vast majority of people evidently feel disenfranchised by the omnipotent federal seat. This lack of confidence in the existing federal structure has transformed the peoples' psychology, reducing the nation to one plagued by mistrust, insecurity and harmful competition.

In order to put this discussion in context, it is necessary to understand the workings of the federal structure within the Nigerian context. Isawa Elaigwu had described the Nigerian federal structure under successive military regimes as "military federalism." According to him:

> Military federalism in Nigeria has two conspicuous features. The first is the military superstructrure: a military regime in which institutions of popular participation are suspended. In the military hierarchy of authority, the Head of the Federal Military Government appoints all the State Governors who are responsible to him. This negates the traditional principle of federalism and fits into Apter's model mobilization with a hierarchical chain of command and "minimum accountability" to the people.[28]

This view, in essence, reveals the Nigerian federal structure. Over time, all these attributes have become more enlarged so much so that statist/regional autonomy has now become a virtual impossibility. The Nigerian Civil War which erupted soon after independence did not resolve the perennial issue of federal devolution of powers. Instead, there has been an even greater concentration of federal powers at the centre because of the peculiar characteristics of military rule. Militarism requires extreme centralization of political authority and forces. Force, essentially, is its *raison d'être*, and to go against the grain of this tenet is more or less a contradiction in terms of its constitutive elements. This fact was demonstrated by the fall of the Yakubu Gowon regime soon after the civil war. Regional military governors came to wield more political power than was good for the federal government. Governors paraded themselves like autonomous dukes in their domains, and values such as governmental responsibility and public accountability were simply ignored. Indeed, the failure of that administration is attributable in part to the weakening of the central government and the breakdown of military federalism. The major point, however, is that the Nigerian Civil War did not lead to an enhancement of the constitutional features of federalism.

Another aspect of ethnic identity politics that is often overlooked relates to the ethno-nationalism within the Biafran side of the civil war. Eastern Nigeria's bid to secede from the federation is viewed as "the most defined episode of ethno-nationalism in Nigerian history."[29] Yet this historic attempt was also ridden with the same political chauvinism from which it sought to escape. The Eastern Region's minorities accounted for between 40 and 50 per cent of the population.[30] As the Igbos, who were

the majority ethnic group agitated for self-determination, the minorities also began to feel uncomfortable with their marginal status within the Eastern enclave. In fact, the drive to overcome this perceived marginalization began as far back as the 1950s.[31] In his analysis of the ethnonationalism and self-determination in Nigeria, Michael Levin examines the case of the Bette, an ethnic minority. He writes:

> The ethnodrama of victimization, of mob and military murders affected them differently. Bette were not Igbo; they had suffered as Easterners in some places, but had been distinguished from the Igbo in others. In Biafra, Igbo chauvinism competed with Eastern or Biafran, solidarity. Igbo policemen, Igbo officials, Igbo shopkeepers and traders represented a dominant majority; the Igbo language became a symbol of solidarity that the English-speaking Bette elite had to reject.[32]

This, indeed, is the paradox of the Igbo ethno-nationalistic quest. It was evidently incapable of the self-critique required to ensure that the well-being and interests of the minorities within its sphere of influence were adequately maintained. With time, minorities within the old and Eastern Region would seek to avoid the generally assumed Igbo proclivity to dominate less prominent ethnicities. However, the need to dominate is not exclusive to any ethnic group. It is an imperative of virtually all modes of social and political existence. The federal structure as it is now constituted is a glaring reflection of this fact.

To return to an issue raised earlier, Ibrahim Dasuki, the former Sultan of Sokoto, had, while urging that death penalties be visited upon the defendants of the Zango-Kataf crisis, made a pledge to "the sovereignty and indivisibility of Nigeria." The "indivisibility of Nigeria" is a boastful yet ominous phrase that frequently emanated from the often alienating precincts of Nigerian officialdom. The fact that Nigeria is only just "a geographical expression," like Obafemi Awolowo called the country, only matters within the context of changing political circumstances. Ahmadu Bello, another architect of modern Nigeria, was also sceptical of the possibilities of accomplishing national and federal unity. Apparently, the repressive might of military federalism is what has kept the Nigerian nation together. Of course, with the discovery of oil and the 1970s era of the oil boom, struggles for the control of national resources intensified inter-ethnic tensions and political factionalism.

The Nigerian political experience with ethno-nationalism reflects the African post-colonial experience in many ways. The African statesmen who

defined the shape of the anti-colonial struggle and who also inherited the legacies of colonialism, such as Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikwe and Obafemi Awolowo, all understood the tensions and contradictions between different types of nationalisms—ethnic, regional and state centred. Their shortcoming, essentially, was the inability to evolve feasible strategies to pull out the continent from the quagmire of the colonial legacies of ethno-nationalism and competing visions of the state. Nonetheless, their political education and preparedness was infinitely better than that of the later-day military adventurists who ruled the continent for much of the early post-colonial period. The cumulative result in the Nigerian case is what has been described as "a sense of structural alienation under the present federal system."[33] If that is the case, what measures can be taken to ameliorate the situation? Scholars have proffered several solutions, including "the institution of a market-decentralist approach of federal governance; the rationalization or politicization of revenue allocation and population census exercises; the reconstruction, revitalization and fortification of the local government system; the reorganization of state and local boundaries on a more ethnically equitable and politically acceptable basis; the resolution of the place of religion in the federal political process; and the federalization of the party systems."[34] Although the military regimes of Babangida and Abacha undertook some of these measures, these did not address the endemic problem of federalism and ethnic politics. For example, when the Abacha administration came to power through palace coup of November 1993, it promulgated the Constitution and Modification Decree 107 in that same year which suspended the national constitution. This proved to be a dramatic shift in the much publicized democratization process. Again, instead of adhering to the provisions of the draft constitution which was derived from the Constitutional Conference of 1995, the government elected to rule through military decrees. When the local government elections were conducted during the first quarter of 1996, there was an indiscriminate spate of disqualifications of electoral candidates on the grounds that they were security risks. This undermined the credibility of the regime's transition-to-civil-rule process. There was also a tendency for the military to subordinate the federal administration system to a unified command structure, the arbitrary and repeated dissolutions or redeployment by the centre of the leadership at state and local levels, and the creation and proliferation of new and increasingly unviable states and local government areas by military fiat.[35] These features of military federalism have impeded the democratization process. Military federalism in Nigeria

has created structural and political challenges for civilian political arrangements. Democratic rule often becomes a victim of the unitary authoritarian, anti-democratic political traditions of military rule.

In conclusion, it is evident that militarism, which has become the entrenched mode of governance in Nigeria, has made it impossible to adequately address the structural inadequacies of the country's experiment with federalism, the challenges of ethnic politics and conflicts arising from ethno-religious rivalry. To address these issues, it would be necessary to fundamentally re-evaluate the entire federal structure that has defined Nigerian politics since independence. It would also be important to address the grievances of ethnic minorities in a way that takes account of their sense of alienation from the country. This requires creating a socio-political environment that fosters continual debate about the country's federal structures and addresses contentious issues such as state creation and resource control and distribution. These issues have not been fully addressed by successive military and civilian governments. The result is that the ethnic and religious tensions that have caused political instability in Nigeria since the colonial era have persisted through the civil war in the immediate post-colonial period to undermine contemporary nation-building efforts.

However, Nigeria has learnt a bitter lesson from General Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi's disastrous adoption of unitarism prior to the bloody January 1966 coup d'état. A multi-religious, multi-ethnic and highly complex and conflict-prone entity such as Nigeria could never take its diversity for granted. The subsequent adoption of federalism after the failed experiment with unitarism was the most obvious option to bolster heterogeneity as a source of collective strength and cohesion. Increasingly, Nigerians are sensing that there is no other way to probe fresh approaches for consolidating the federal system, no matter how lopsided or dysfunctional it might be. The probable only alternative to this would be another civil war.

Notes

1. One of the reasons Wole Soyinka established his so-called Third Force during the Nigerian Civil War was because of his dissatisfaction with the federal arrangement. See Biodun Jeyifo, *Wole Soyinka: Politics, Poetics, Postcolonialism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 7.
2. *The Guardian on Sunday*, March 10, 1996.

3. *The Guardian on Sunday*, March 10, 1996.
4. Ralph Premdas, "The Anatomy of Ethnic Conflicts: Domination versus Reconciliation" in *The Enigma of Ethnicity An Analysis of Race in the Caribbean and the World Trinidad*. Ed. R. Premdas (Trinidad: School of Continuing Studies, 1993), 7.
5. Eghosa Osaghae, *Trends in Migrant Political Organisations in Nigeria: The Igbo in Kano Ibadan* (Ibadan: IFRA, 1994), 2.
6. Osaghae, *Trends in Migrant Political Organisations in Nigeria*, 2–3.
7. Ibid., 6.
8. Okwudiba Nnoli, *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* (Lagos: Malthouse Press, 1994), 10.
9. Osaghae, op. cit., 215.
10. Jide Osuntokun, "The Historical Background on Nigerian Federalism," in A. Akinyemi, P. Cole, and W. Ofonagoro (ed.) *Readings on Federalism*, (Lagos: Nigerian Institute of International Affairs, 1979), 91.
11. Osuntokun, "The Historical Background on Nigerian Federalism," 91.
12. Isawa Elaigwu, "The Military and State Building: Federal-State Relations in Nigeria Military Fedralism 1966–1976" in A. Akinyemi et al. (ed.) *Readings on Federalism*, 159.
13. Osuntokun, op. cit., 94.
14. Ibid.
15. Jimi Adisa. *The Comfort of Strangers: The Impact of Rwandan Refugees on Neighbouring Countries* (Ibadan: IFRA, 1996), 19.
16. Osuntokun, op. cit., 95.
17. Ibid., 95.
18. Ibid., 98.
19. Ibid., 98.
20. Ibid., 100.
21. Ibid., 111.
22. Ibid., 112.
23. Ibid., 119.
24. Osaghae, *Trends in Migrant Political Organisations in Nigeria*, 26.
25. Basil Davidson, *The Black Man's Burden* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, 1993), 155.
26. Osaghae, op. cit., 225.

27. Ibid., 230.
28. Elaigwu, op. cit., 151.
29. Michael Levin, "Biafra and Bette: Ethnonationalism and Self-Determination in Nigeria" in *Ethnicity and Aboriginality: Case Studies in Ethnonationalism*, ed. Michael Levin (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 156.
30. Levin, "Biafra and Bette: Ethnonationalism and Self-Determination in Nigeria," 156.
31. Levin, op. cit., 156.
32. Ibid., 163.
33. R. T, Suberu, "Federalism and Transition to Democratic Governance in Nigeria" in *Democratic Transition in Africa*, eds. B. Caron et al. (Ibadan: IFRA 1992), 316.
34. Suberu, "Federalism and Transition to Democratic Governance in Nigeria," 316.
35. Ibid., 322.

Minorities and Contemporary Nation-Building

Willink's Report, Niger Delta Region and the Nigerian State 50 Years After: Any Hope for the Minority?

Emmanuel Osewe Akubor

The history of minority agitations in Nigeria can be traced back to the period of colonial rule, when ethnic minority groups demanded the creation of exclusive regions independent of majority ethnic groups, with whom they had been joined in the three regions of colonial Nigeria. Apart from merging the minority with the majority ethnic groups, the minority groups had other grievances, which were peculiar to some regions. In Northern Nigeria, for example, minority grievances centered around the imposition of Hausa–Fulani Muslim rulers on the non-Muslim and non-Hausa–Fulani populations. This meant the exclusion of the indigenous non-Hausa–Fulani ethnic groups from political and economic opportunities, including the control of markets. In the case of the Niger Delta

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region, the minority grievances centered on the fear of being dominated by the majority Igbo ethnic group as well as the latter's exploitation of their resources, which was not being used for the development of the region.

The promise of independence in the 1950s further heightened the fears of the minorities as to their future after colonial rule. The minorities in various regions across the country did not exclusively experience oppression and exploitation. They felt particularly insecure in their relations with the numerically stronger ethnic groups, known as the majority groups, to strongly agitate for the creation of Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers state from the Eastern Region, the Midwest state from the Western Region and the Middle Belt state from the Northern Region, which were to cater to the needs and fears of the ethnic minorities. In 1957, the Henry Willink's Commission was established to look into the authenticity of the fears and agitations of the minority groups in Nigeria and to find means of allaying their fears. The Minorities Commission report of 1958 did not recommend the creation of any regions for the minorities, but instead recommended the establishment of a Bill of Rights to protect and assuage their fears. In the case of the Niger Delta area of the Eastern and Western Regions, the Willink's Minority Commission Report characterized the Niger Delta as infrastructurally and generally poor, backward and neglected, and advised the government to establish a Federal Board to address the problems of the area. The problems of minorities and their agitations have persisted in spite of the attempts by successive regimes in the country to permanently ameliorate them. These attempts have included the creation of separate states and local governments, the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB, created in 1960), followed by the establishment of the Niger Delta Basin Development Authority (NDBDA), as well as the establishment of the defunct Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) and the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC).

However, over 50 years after the Commission made its recommendations, the Niger Delta region is yet to witness the much-needed peace and level of development recommended by the report. This chapter examines the recommendations of the Willink's report vis-à-vis the historical and contemporary realities of the Niger Delta region of Nigeria and analyzes issues that have impeded the full implementation of those recommendations. The chapter also explores the prospects of finding solutions to the recurring developmental challenges in the region.

Historicizing the Problems of Minorities

In his analysis of the problems of minorities in Nigeria, Badmus argued that most African states are multi-ethno linguistic societies where both the 'major' and 'minor' ethnicities are locked up in a protracted competition for the control of state power and larger access to scarce resources, both social and material, at the expense of others.[1] A typical feature of this kind of society is constant inter-ethnic conflicts, especially from the ethnic group that feels deprived. Such conflicts, sometimes, result in full-scale wars if they are not properly checked. Nigeria is one of the numerous African countries with such gory picture painted above. The potency of ethnicity in Nigeria can only be meaningfully understood within the context of interrogating the emergence of ethnic consciousness in Nigerian society. This becomes quite clear when seen in light of the fact that Nigeria has evolved over time as a federal system of government, from 3 regions in 1946 to 36 states in 1996. The bureaucratic and political changes associated with these developments have influenced not just the location, but also the identities of the ethnic groups, as well as the opportunities open to them. In this way, three majority groups were consolidated in the context of the creation of the three regions in 1946, which resulted in each majority ethnic group constituting a 'core' ethno-political group in its respective region, namely the Hausa–Fulani in the Northern Region, the Yoruba in the Western Region and the Igbo in the Eastern Region. These ethno-regional blocs were further strengthened with the devolution of financial powers to the regions in 1954. As a result, 'minority' identity within each region intensified as the core group's hold on power increased. In this way, different ethnic minority groups in each region developed a second, generic identity of being minorities. It is therefore not surprising that some political organizations such as the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC) in the North, the Midwest Movement in the West and the Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers (COR) Movement in the East gave organizational expression to this newfound common identity.

From this, it is evident that the modus operandi of the colonial administration, especially its self-centeredness, brought out ethnic consciousness in the indigenous people, which ingrained in the thinking of some groups as belonging to the minority. This minority status survived the colonial period itself, and has after independence, become one of the major problems threatening the corporate existence of the nation. Minority fears further intensified after 1951, when nearly all Igbo supported the National

Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC), most Yoruba backed the Action Group and the majority of the Hausa and Fulani were associated with the Northern People's Congress (NPC). Thus, ethnic minorities within each region of the federation saw their interests being sidelined and at the mercy of the majority ethnic groups, who were becoming dictatorial in their dealings.[2]

In line with this position, Mustapha argued that minority identity developed not necessarily as a question of number or cultural differences, but as recognition of their 'powerlessness' in the face of ethnicized electoral politics, even when the 1960 Constitution under which Nigeria gained political independence expressly forbade any discrimination against 'a particular community, tribe, place of origin, religion or political opinion.'[3] There was therefore no formal constitutional restriction on minority political rights. However, this general constitutional principle of non-discrimination was operationalized within the context of intense competition and conflicts over political and economic resources by the three majority ethnic groups, known in local parlance as *Wazobia* (an acronym formed from the indigenous words for 'come' in the three languages, viz.: Yoruba: *wa*, Hausa: *zo* and Igbo: *bia*), that is, ethno-regional blocs. Thus, even within the context of an open and competitive political system and explicit constitutional provisions, the ethnic minorities suffered from different degrees of discrimination and neglect, largely because of the 'majoritarian' tendencies of a political and social system with scarce economic and political resources. As a result, jobs, scholarships, political appointments, government infrastructure and contracts, and social amenities, all became the focus of intense competition, often structured around competing ethnic and regional demands. A consequence of this political dynamic was a three-sided cleavage that developed, particularly between the three majority ethnic groups, between the three majority ethnic groups and the rest of the minorities groups, and between the North and the South.[3] In order to extricate themselves from the majoritarian stranglehold of the three ethno-regional blocs, in the run-up to decolonization, many minority group politicians pointed to and demanded the creation of regions of their own as the guarantee of their freedom. The immediate result was the formation of the COR Movement and the Niger Delta Congress in the Eastern Region, the Midwest Movement in the West, and the Middle Belt Congress in the North.[4]

In the view of Ekeh, the case of the minorities became obvious when, in the course of the agitation for the independence of Nigeria from British

colonial rule, it became apparent that Nigerian political arrangements would be heavily weighted in favor of the three groups that dominated the three colonial regions—North, East and West—into which the British imperial government had divided Nigeria.[5] In the North, the Fulani allied with the Hausa, whom they had ruled for a century before the onset of British colonialism in 1903, dominated the affairs of the Region and persecuted the Tiv and several other minorities. In the East, there was ethnic tension between the Igbo and the Ibibio and other minorities. In the West, the Yoruba captured power and showed great disregard toward the Urhobo and Benin, especially. Consequently, there were widespread fears among the demographically smaller groups, which became political minorities as a consequence of the 1954 federal arrangements in Nigeria, that they would become politically endangered after the exit of the colonial authorities.

As a way of addressing these agitations, the Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, instituted a Minorities Commission headed by Sir Henry Willink on September 25, 1957, to examine the grievances and demands of the ethnic minorities and proffer solution. This was in accordance with the recommendation of the Lancaster House Conferences in London in 1957 and 1958, where the federal constitution for an independent Nigeria was drafted. The meetings which were presided over by the British Colonial Secretary had in attendance Nigerian delegates selected to represent each region and to reflect various shades of opinion. The delegation was led by Abubakar Tafawa Balewa of the NPC, and included party leaders and regional premiers such as Obafemi Awolowo of the Action Group, Nnamdi Azikiwe of the NCNC and Ahmadu Bello of the NPC.[6] Apart from the fact that the Commission investigated and ascertained the fear of ethnic minorities, it also confirmed the backwardness of the Niger Delta region and the neglect of its people. According to the Commission's Report, the ethnic minorities' fear arises from two circumstances: firstly, the division of the whole country into three powerful regions, in each of which one group is numerically preponderant; and secondly, the approach of independence and the removal of the restraints which had operated so far.[7]

The expectation was that the Commission would recommend the creation of a Niger Delta State in the Nigerian Federation; however, this was not done. Instead, the British government agreed with the Commission on the backwardness of some of the minority groups and the neglect of the development of the Niger Delta, and suggested that the best way to

stop the agitation of the minorities was to embark on massive infrastructural development of the area. To implement this recommendation on infrastructural development, the federal government set up the NDDB in 1961 to meet the peculiar developmental needs of the area and people.[8] The ineffectiveness of the NDDB led to its replacement with the Niger Delta Development Authority (NDBDA) in 1976. Later, the OMPDEC was set up in 1992 and the NDDC inaugurated in 2000. All these government organizations failed to provide the required infrastructural development largely due to the lack of political will and commitment on the part of the governments.[9]

WILLINK'S RECOMMENDATIONS AND THE MINORITIES: THE NIGER DELTA REGION EXAMPLE

To understand minority agitations in the Niger Delta, it is necessary to first understand the complex geopolitical economy of the region. Geographically, Nigeria's Niger Delta covers an area of 70,000 square kilometers, making up 12% of Nigeria's landmass, half of which is wetland. The Niger Delta region (the Delta) officially comprises nine states: the three so-called core states are Delta, Rivers and Bayelsa States; and the other six are Cross River, Akwa Ibom, Edo, Imo, Abia and Ondo states.[10] The region has a population of approximately 30 million, settled in and around 13,000 small communities. As of 2012, there were about 600 oil fields producing with over 5000 wells. The Niger Delta holds all of Nigeria's crude oil reserve to the tune of 33 billion barrels and 160 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves. Although production is focused in limited areas, the region is crisscrossed by approximately 10,000 kilometers of pipelines.[11] The wetland area, often regarded as Africa's largest, is made up of 36,000 square kilometers of marshland, creeks and lagoons. The area is rich in fauna and fluvial resources with high biodiversity.

The Nigerian oil industry began with the discovery of oil deposits by the Anglo-Dutch group, Shell D'Archy, in commercial quantities near Oloibiri in 1956. By the 1980s and 1990s, oil production had grown to dominate Nigeria's economy and is the fiscal basis of the Nigerian state. The dominance of the oil sector in Nigerian economy was strengthened by global increases in the oil price during the 1970s. Thus, Nigerian foreign exchange earnings from oil increased from $250 million in 1970 to $11.2 billion in 1974.[12] It is estimated that from oil production alone, Nigeria

generated about $300 billion between 1970 and 2000. This amounts to 96% of the country's foreign earnings. While other sectors of the economy have withered away to 'comparative irrelevance,' Nigeria's net oil revenues stood at $45.1 billion in 2005 and were predicted to rise to $52.7 billion in 2006.[13]

Marginalization of the Niger Delta Region: Reality or Imagination?

In spite of the abundant natural resources available in the Niger Delta region, the ethnic minorities who are the inhabitants of the area complain about their lack of access to these resources, which in their view is controlled by the federal government. The minorities in the Niger Delta region are of the view that the resources found in their area have been used to develop different parts of the country with little or nothing left to develop the Niger Delta territory. They argue that from 1958, when the country first produced 5100 barrel per day, there has been a steady increase and rise in the production of oil from the area, such that as of 2001, the country was not only producing more than 2.5 million barrels per day, but could also boast of 606 oil fields, of which 360 were onshore and 246 offshore. The area also house over 3000 kilometers of pipeline across the landscape, linking 275 flow stations to various export facilities. Consequently, more than $300 billion has been generated from oil in the past 40 years. This oil wealth has largely sustained the Nigerian economy, yet the producing area has not recorded any significant infrastructural development.[14] The infrastructural neglect of the area was amply captured in the Presidential Committee on Development Option for the Niger Delta, inaugurated by Nigerian government in 1999, which reported:

> In spite of the contribution of the area to the nation's wealth, the Federal Government has ignored the infrastructural needs and political aspiration of the area … the geographical terrain of the Niger Delta makes the provision of infrastructure difficult and expensive; … the area has the greatest need for infrastructure for rapid and meaningful socio-economic development; … except for a few congested urban locations, most of the communities in the Niger Delta lack basic amenities like potable water, electricity and transportation infrastructure … the people of the Niger Delta live in abject poverty, exacerbated in relative terms by the affluent living condition of the employees of the oil companies living side by side with them.[15]

Analyzing the poverty situation in the Niger Delta area, the NDDC disclosed that 70% of the population lives below the poverty line with a high disease burden, very high mortality rate, very low level of sound business enterprise and industrial development. It also showed that environmental degradation by oil-prospecting companies in the region was severe and educational facilities were almost non-existent.[16] Thus, it has been established that the causes of the unrest in the Niger Delta area revolves around widespread poverty in the area, which gave birth to other crises such as the collapse of the local economy, a lack of social amenities, exploitation, marginalization and the agitation for resource control.[17]

Okorobia argued that in terms of infrastructure, the government has long abandoned the Niger Delta area.[18] He posited that an evaluation of the road network shows that the government has relegated the Willink's report to the background. Available statistics show that out of a total of 19,635 kilometers of roads available then in the region, 6081 kilometers (31%) were federal and 13,553 kilometers (69%) were state owned. Around 4503 kilometers of the federal roads (22.9%) were high-standard asphaltic concrete and 283 kilometers were dual carriageway. However, a probe into the conditions of these roads, as of 2000, shows that about 19% were in poor conditions, 12% in fair condition and 69% in good condition. In 2011, less than 25% of them were in good condition, largely due to poor construction and maintenance (Tables 8.1 and 8.2). Similarly in the area of water transportation, the Niger Delta area did not fare well. Despite the fact that the area depended on water as a means of transportation, less than 20% of waterways in the region are in good, navigable condition. In terms of railway transportation, the only existing lines are the narrow-gauge line used for transporting goods from the Port Harcourt

Table 8.1   Reported road accidents cases, 1999

State	Fatal	Serious	Minor	Total
Abia	50	39	8	97
Akwa-lbom	105	147	60	312
Cross River	110	184	80	374
Delta	133	391	149	673
Edo	290	506	438	1103
Imo	66	135	56	257
Ondo	137	251	125	513
Rivers	106	274	171	551
Total	**997**	**1927**	**1087**	**3880**

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, *Digest of Statistics*, December 1999, p. 159

Table 8.2   Reported road accident casualties

State	No. of persons injured	No. of persons killed
Abia	103	58
Akwa-lbom	283	124
Cross River	386	181
Delta	610	285
Edo	615	69
Imo	220	165
Ondo	533	144
Rivers	408	140
Total	**3158**	**1166**

Source: Federal Office of Statistics, *Digest of Statistics*, December 1999, p. 162

seaport through Aba to Northern Nigeria and the standard-gauge line currently under construction which will link Warri to Ajaokuta Steel Plant in Kogi State. The statistics provided in Table 8.1 show the relationship between the deplorable situation of the roads and the casualty recorded on a daily basis on the highways in the Niger Delta region (this excludes Bayelsa State).

The number of casualty as presented in Table 8.2 would have been reduced to the barest minimum if the government had, since 1957–1958, been making conscious efforts at implementing the recommendations of the Commission's report.

In the area of power supply, it was observed that about 72% of the households in the Niger Delta area were not connected to the national electric grid despite the fact that the region is the electricity-generating hub of the country. Analysis of the nation's power situation in what has been described as one of the core Niger Delta states, Bayelsa, has been embarrassing, as the state, up until 2006, remained the only part of the country that was not connected to the national grid. In his argument, Emordi posited that, although the government, as of 2007, injected $10 billion into the national integrated power project (NIPP), the intervention failed to fix the sector.[19] There are indications that besides the lack of access to gas to power the plant and frequent unrest leading to vandalization of gas supply infrastructure in the Niger Delta region, only about $5 billion were released to the sector during the period. The rest of the money found its way into private pockets. More embarrassing is the fact that by 2010, Nigeria was barely generating 4000 mw, of which 1100 mw was generated by the private sector. This output of 4000 mw for a population of over 140 million is low compared with Thailand with a population of 70 million people enjoying installed capacity of 40,000 mw.

There is also the lack of provision for social amenities, despite the region's contribution to the national revenue. This has been the source of major friction between the locals, on the one hand, and the government and multinationals, on the other. For example, up until the social movements of the 1990s and the growth of militancy thereafter, companies did not regard community matters as their responsibility. In the early years of oil exploration in the Delta, which began in the mid-1960s, companies' engagement with local communities was characterized by what scholars described as 'pay-as-you-go' approach to community relations, providing communities what they thought communities needed, such as school or hospital buildings, but without providing teachers or doctors.[20] The failure of many of these projects led initially to peaceful community protests and calls for negotiations with the companies. Conflict and militancy in the Niger Delta triggered change. By the late 1990s, violence in the Delta had increased sharply. In response, companies began to embrace the principles of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and pursue community development models. However, communities continued to lack any meaningful ownership of these projects, which were therefore unsustainable. Companies' choices of target communities for CSR programs also fueled intercommunity disputes between those that benefited from such programs and those that did not.

The neglect of the region is also manifested in the lack of consideration of its peculiar environment. Available evidence indicates that there has been loss of land over the years in the Niger Delta area as oil drilling has turned it into one of the most oil-polluted places on earth, with more than 6800 recorded oil spills. In a 2009 report, the Amnesty International cited independent environmental and oil experts who had estimated that between 9 million and 13 million of barrels had leaked in the five decades of oil operations in the Delta.[21] For example, the Bodo fishing community sued Shell in Britain, alleging that oil spills in 2008 and 2009 had destroyed the environment and ruined the livelihoods of 69,000 people. Due to long years of neglect in the area, a landmark report from the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) concluded that pollution from more than 50 years of oil operations in Nigeria's Ogoniland region is more far reaching than thought. According to the report of the Commission, restoration of Nigeria's environmentally devastated oil-producing Niger Delta region could take up to 30 years, at a cost of $1 billion, and would be the largest clean-up operation in history.[22]

The environmental pollution and quality of life are further worsened by the fact that more gas is flared on a daily basis in the region than any other part of the world, which is injurious to both humans and the environment. Also due to the low efficiency of many of the flares, much of the gas is released as methane (which has high warming potential), rather than carbon dioxide. At the same time, the low-lying Niger Delta is particularly vulnerable to the potential effects of sea level rising. Other problems associated with gas flaring in the area are that air, leaf and soil temperatures increase up to over 800 meters from the stack, and the species composition of vegetation is also affected. There is also the massive destruction of crops, artificial fishponds used for fish farming, economically valuable trees (including those growing wild but owned by particular families) and other income-generating assets.[23] The consequences of such problems range from loss of livelihood and lack of income to provide education and healthcare for children to virtual destitution.

The high density of population does not help the debilitating situation. The lack of infrastructure and social services makes it difficult to care for the needs of the urban communities as well. Garbage-heaped slums stretching for miles as well as choking black smoke from open-air slaughterhouses and streets cratered with potholes and rots are characteristic features of the urban communities. Other features include a lack of electricity, clean water, hospitals and schools. Decades of oil spills, acid rain from gas flares, and the stripping away of mangroves for pipelines have destroyed both flora and fauna resources.[24]

The situation can be appreciated better through Table 8.3, which gives a graphic and analytical picture of what the region has to show for her wealth.

Generally, the people and their land are both feeling the effects of neglect; therefore, they see their survival as what they should individually fight for. This has led to the emergence of small groups that are ready to confront the government either through peaceful means or by invoking the spirits of the land to make sure they 'liberate their people' as well as get what is due to them.[25] Prominent among these groups are Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Ijaw National Congress (INC), National Youth Council for the Survival of Ogoni People (NYCOP), Southern Minorities Movement (SMM), Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (MORETO) and Movement for the Survival of Izon Ethnic Nationality in Niger Delta (MOSIEND), among others.[26]

Table 8.3   The Niger Delta human poverty index as of 2005

State	Probability birth of not surviving to age 40	Adult literacy rate	Unweighed average	HP1-I
Abia	26	26	34	29.169
Akwa Ibom	27	28	35.5	30.649
Bayelsa	30	31	39	33.826
Cross River	26	28	33	29.3
Delta	20	18	27	22.355
Edo	22	18	28	23.399
Imo	25	29	32	28.949
Ondo	30	31	42.5	35.442
Rivers	24	24	30.5	26.53
ND	25.556	25.889	33.4	28.847

"Grinding Poverty and Deprivation in the Niger Delta." *Vanguard* (August 26, 2007); Ben Agah and Francis Ikenga, "Youth Restiveness And The Politics Of Resource Control" (Paper Presented at the 7th Annual Conference Of Nigerian Sociological Society, Sharon Ultimate Hotel, Area 3, Garki, Abuja on 27–28 November 2007), 22

Although the government is often blamed for the woes of the people, it has however been established that some local leaders in the area have acted as collaborators in perpetuating the evil of denying the people of their basic needs over the years. The issue of dissatisfaction is not limited to the people of the Niger Delta area alone, as the same concerns have been expressed by various constituent communities within the Nigerian state. This has largely been a result of high-level corruption among government officials, their political collaborators, local chiefs and supporters, who masquerade as militants fighting for the liberation of their people. These groups have benefited from the patronage of both the government and foreign firms by receiving funds in the name of the people. This point has been made by Niger Delta militants, who accuse powerful elders and politicians in the area of paying millions of naira to militants to make sure the area is perpetually under their grip.[27]

CONCLUSION

The politics of exclusion and continuing tension between historically dominant majority groups and minorities are at the root of the Nigerian national crisis. The dynamic transition from majority to minority status and vice versa, on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, language and

politics, explains the perennial, almost eternal suspicion among Nigerian nationalities and peoples. This reality is as old as Nigerian history. In 1957, British colonial authorities in Nigeria tried to confront the truth by setting up the Willink Commission. The recommendations of that Commission and its recognition of minority rights have not been fully addressed even more than 50 years later. Every other measure that has been taken by the Nigerian power elite and the historically dominant majorities in the shape of the so-called federal character principle, the creation of states and the principle of derivation has been cosmetic and controversial in its implementation and results. Indeed, the key subject in Nigeria is about the need for general participation in the national decision-making process and national politics based on equity and justice. It is rather unfortunate that the recommendations made by the Willink's Commission in 1957–1958 were to be re-echoed almost 50 years after they were made. This time it was under the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) in 2008, when the Committee published that the area has the greatest need for infrastructure for rapid and meaningful socioeconomic development, and that except for a few congested urban locations, most of the communities in the Niger Delta lack basic social amenities such as potable water, electricity and transportation infrastructure. The position of the Committee is that the people of the Niger Delta are living in abject poverty, exacerbated in relative terms by the affluent living condition of the employees of the oil companies living side by side with them. It is therefore clear that if the government must give the people and the region a sense of belonging as well as stop the agitation for secession, which is now manifesting in the form of violent protests, kidnapping of expatriates and vandalization of oil installations, there is an urgent need to take another look at the Willink's recommendations as well as implement them, especially as they relate to infrastructural development and other forms of investment in the area and the lives of the people. In line with the analysis proffered in this chapter, the following policy recommendations are suggested as the way forward.

There is a need to adequately tackle corruption in the various bodies set up by the government to take care of matters relating to the Niger Delta area. This is because instead of investing back whatever they received on behalf of the people for their betterment, these bodies have, at various times, become a conduit pipe for siphoning and sucking the people dry. Analysis shows that the traditional development plans in nigeria have become ends in themselves that often end up not being implemented. For

example, despite the fact that between 1992 and 1997, the OMPADEC was allocated about N17.42 billion, the Commission did not make any meaningful impact on the lives and environment of the Niger Delta people. The NDDC, which replaced it, does not seem to be on the right path to offering lasting solutions to the socioeconomic difficulties of the Niger Delta area.

The government must embark on massive infrastructural development, with a genuine focus on providing basic infrastructure and social services (roads, electricity, water, bridges, jetties, sand-filling/land reclamation, shore protection, health, school construction, housing) while local government councils and oil companies can focus on agriculture, sanitation, environmental management and scholarships. The rate of poverty, social inequality and political marginalization has exposed the people to all forms of social misbehavior.

The government must take, as a matter of urgency, the stoppage of gas flaring into its hands. Unfortunately, it has become a political issue that the government seems to be postponing on a yearly basis. In Nigeria, efforts to address gas flaring are hampered by a lack of political will and disagreements about who should cover the costs. The gas flare-out deadline has been repeatedly delayed, and was set for December 2012, which uptill date(2016), is yet to be realised. Statistics show that in sub-Saharan Africa, Nigeria holds the record in gas flaring. As Clarke notes, many flares run 24 hours a day, and some have been active for 40 years, with over 8 MCFD (million cubic feet per day) of gas burnt.[28] Emissions from gas flaring include carbon dioxide, methane, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carcinogenic substances such as benz[a]pyrene and dioxin, and unburned fuel components, including benzene, toluene, xylene and hydrogen sulfide.[29] The Nigerian Department of Petroleum Resources argued that the estimate of gas flared in Nigeria yearly ranges from 20% to 76% of produced associated gas, compared with a worldwide average of 4.8%.[30] Annual figures tend to vary owing to changing policies and the intensity of militancy, which have an impact on oil production levels. The NNPC, for instance, estimated that from 2001 to 2003, 47.37% of gas was flared. The figure gradually declined to 30.81% in 2007 and 27.06% in 2008, but in 2009, the official figure increased again to 27.72%. Shell Petroleum Development Company states that its total flaring dropped by around 65% between 2002 and 2009.[31]

The government and other relevant agencies must take seriously the issue of the cleaning-up of polluted areas in the Niger Delta area. It is

important to note that this must been done under strict monitoring. Research has shown that the impact that oil production in Nigeria has had includes flooding and coastal erosion, sedimentation and siltation, degradation and depletion of water and coastal resources, land degradation, oil pollution, health problems and low agricultural production, as well as socioeconomic problems and a lack of community participation. The situation in most of the core Niger Delta area is such that once crude oil touches the leaf of a yam or cassava, or any economic trees, the leaf dries immediately.

It is important that the Nigerian government realizes that the militancy in the Niger Delta area stems from the fact that the people are dissatisfied with the situation they find themselves in. The minority question or agitations by these groups are centered on the continued dissatisfaction of the ethnic minorities with the distribution of power and resources in the nation. This can be linked to economic development in the sense that a lack of equitable distribution of resources has affected the development of their respective regions, such as the question of even and balanced development. Although there appears to be similarities in the demands of these ethnic groups, in the North or South, these agitations seem to be in agreement on the point that the minorities want a sense of fairness in the way their vast resources are distributed, and that state power should not be the monopoly of any group, no matter its size. Thus, any meaningful attempt by any government to genuinely change the lives of the people and the area must start with the provision of the basic necessities of life through massive infrastructural development of the area.

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National Integration, Citizenship, Political Participation and Democratic Stability in Nigeria

Enaruna Edosa

Nigeria is a greatly divided country. This division is accompanied with serious suspicion, distrust, discrimination and antagonism among its diverse people. These problems have had grave consequences for the orderly growth, development, governmental stability and unity of the country. The different measures and approaches designed and employed by successive Nigerian governments to unite and preserve and generally keep the country afloat have not been effective as the country continues to face crises of insecurity, sectarian violence, ethnic strife, political instability and threats of disintegration. National unity and governance by consensus are key to addressing the crises of development, nationhood and stability.

This chapter examines the issues, problems and contexts of national integration or the national question in Nigeria. It examines the mechanisms for achieving national integration while critically evaluating extant

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constitutional provisions for citizenship in the country. The chapter posits that the promotion of national integration requires component states within the Nigerian federation to specify minimum requirements for citizenship or acceptance of non-indigenes from other states. These minimum requirements should be centrally harmonized on the basis of mutual respect, equality and coexistence among the nation's diverse ethnic groups and constituents. There should also be a fair and equal treatment of all Nigerians as well as deliberate development of a feeling of oneness among Nigerians towards the attainment of a successful democratization process and national stability. First, we will define and contextualize the relevant concepts discussed in this chapter.

Conceptualizing Citizenship and National Integration

National integration, otherwise termed nation-building, national unity, national cohesion, national loyalty or the national question, involves consensus on the limits of the political community and on the nature of the political regime. This simply means the forging of agreement among the members of a state on the extent of unity they wish to have as well as the type of political structure and institutions they desire. It is also a "process of unifying a society which tends to make it a harmonious city, based on an order its members regard as equitably harmonious."[1] This implies that integration promotes unity, which encourages smooth interaction among the members of the given society based on certain established principles of fairness.

Jacob and Tenue define national integration as "a relationship of community among people within the same political entity … a state of mind or disposition to be cohesive, to act together, to be committed to mutual programmes."[2] This refers to a society whose members are willing to live and work together harmoniously and share the same destiny. National integration has also been viewed as a process where members of a community form a deep relationship within themselves, which makes the difference in behaviour become less important, thus leading to a deeper relationship, cooperation, understanding and unanimity within the community.[3] This relates to a situation where territorial divisions within a polity gradually yield ground to cordial interactions of its members owing to the integrative mechanisms established.

Similarly, Coleman and Rosberg view national integration as the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in

the process of creating a homogeneous political community.[4] Put differently, this is the increasing promotion or emergence of peace through the breaking down of cultural and regional divides in the process of evolving a united state. It has been argued that a society is integrated when "(a) it has effective control over the use of the means of violence; (b) it has a centre of decision making capable of effecting the allocation of resources and rewards; and (c) it is a dominant focus of political identification for a large majority of politically aware citizens."[5]

Karl Deutsch et al. seem to have considered these issues when they defined integration as "the attainment, within a territory of a 'sense of community' and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community."[6] In other words, a sense of community is an integrated group of people. According to them, a sense of community is a belief on the part of individuals in a group that they have come to agreement on at least one point: that common social problems must and can be resolved through processes of peaceful change. This means the resolution of social problems without recourse to large-scale physical force.[7] There is no doubt that agreement on peaceful resolution of disputes is an important element of integration that can ensure lasting peace in a society. It also implies that the members of the community in question are ready to compromise and treat each other fairly and equally.

This line of thinking is therefore similar to the view that integration is a situation in which diverse groups in a political system have been successful in developing common institutions and norms by which to settle conflicts peacefully or pursue collective goals cooperatively, depending on the situation.[8] It is asserted that "integration is built on the fact of diversity, the need for mutual accommodation and the desire of the parties in the system to maintain the integrity of the competing groups."[9]

Also, Lewis Ogunjenite believes that national integration relates to the building of nation-states out of disparate socio-economic, religious, ethnic and geographical elements. According to him, this entails the translation of diffuse and unorganized sentiments of nationalism into the spirit of citizenship through the creation of state institutions that can translate into policy and programmes in line with the aspirations of the citizenry.[10] Stated in another way, national integration means efforts to weld together a plural society to enhance development but without necessarily jeopardizing ethnic identity.

Thus, national integration is a serious and purposeful endeavour, the failure of which has grave consequences. It is no wonder, therefore, that Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the leader of the secessionist state of Biafra, saw it also as "active nation-building," which means "forging out a nation out of our diverse ethnic groups." He also contended that the failure to achieve this in respect of Nigeria is that: "Today, the result is that tribalism and ethnicity has become a potent source of friction, rather than diminish in the face of an emergent, virile and modern nation."[11]

From these conceptualizations by different scholars, it is obvious that there are many meanings of the term even though some of them have some elements of similarity. Evidently, the concept of national integration expresses a situation where the members of a state see themselves as one, treat one another fairly, work together cooperatively and freely agree to resolve their differences peacefully in the overall interest of the nation. In this way, unity, fair treatment, cooperation, consensus and peaceful conflict resolution become essential components of loyalty to the nation.

Related to the notion of national integration is the concept of citizenship. Citizenship relates to the status of being a citizen, which is usually determined by law.[12] It denotes the link between a person and a state or an association of states. Citizenship is normally synonymous with the term "nationality," although the latter term is sometimes understood to have ethnic connotations. Possession of citizenship is normally associated with the right to work and live in a country and to participate in political life. A person who does not have citizenship in any state is said to be stateless. Citizenship is determined by parental affiliation, birth within a country, marriage to a citizen and naturalization.[13]

In Nigeria a person is deemed to be a citizen of the country if he/she was born in Nigeria to Nigerian parents or grandparents, if he/she was born outside Nigeria to Nigerian parents or grandparents and registers to that effect, and if he/she naturalizes in the absence of prior parental affiliation.[14] Citizenship is more or less synonymous with indigeneship at the state level in virtually all the states of the Nigerian federation. Thus, in many states or communities in the country, a Nigerian citizen (officially so-called—from other component states of the federation) may be seen as a non-citizen or non-indigene and, therefore, may not enjoy (all) the rights and privileges available to those regarded as bona fide citizens or indigenes of the state or community in question.

Other concepts relevant to this discussion include the concept of political participation, which simply means taking part in politics and the

notion of democratic stability, which broadly implies the persistence of the state, adaptiveness and integration, congruence between autochthonous-derived structural and institutional rules, on the one hand, and congruence between these rules and social realities of the given society, on the other. Democratic stability also implies a widespread commitment to democratic principles and peaceful coexistence, leadership succession and economic decentralization cum the poor and unattractive state.

Issues, Problems and Contexts of National Integration

The crisis of Nigerian citizenship has been well explored with a view to address its impacts on national integration and social and political stability. There is apparently a consensus that the spate of insecurity, inter-communal or ethnic hostility and marginalization derive from the failure to address the question of who belongs and who does not; they are also connected to the apparent lack of a sense of belonging or patriotism.[15] Kola Olufemi has argued that the lingering problems between the North and the South (geopolitical and mutual suspicion) have escalated especially during the period of the Fourth Republic since 1999. These challenges are shown in the emergence and popularity of ethnic militias and organizations such as the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Egbesu Boys, Ijaw Youths Congress, Arewa People's Congress, Bakassi Boys and sundry militant organizations "canvassing competing ethnic claims." It is thus obvious that the incidence of ethnic militias is clearly indicative of the level of dissatisfaction with the nature of governance that not a few see as working against them.[16] Olufemi further states that it is in this context that the agitation for "true federalism" and political restructuring must be understood. Even though there are those who believe slightly differently about the polity such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), which craves for self-determination, a considerable number of these sectarian formations believe like the others in the critical importance of reordering the political system for the emergence of a fair and long-lasting federal structure. Beyond this general agreement, nonetheless, is the fact that there are wide differences keeping apart the formations, among which are what a federal system is and how it can be achieved.[17]

Fred Onyeoziri attributes the crisis that engulfed the country soon after independence to a lack of national integration. According to him: "Both the events that built-up to the civil war and the handling of that political crisis were strong testimonies of the lack of the broad national consensus and nationalist identities that should form the constituent elements of an all-Nigerian culture."[18] It is because of this critical lack of national integration that the erstwhile Biafran leader, author and polemicist, Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, declared: that "The true problem with Nigeria is that she is fully embroiled in an identity crisis. The Nigerian of today is a sociopath in search of a national programme. We live in a country in search of a common character."[19]

Given these assessments of the Nigerian situation, the pertinent question to ask is "What are the impediments to national integration in Nigeria?" According to Ojo: "The most obvious of these conditions include ethnic cleavages, economic underdevelopment or dependence, a weak sense of nationhood arising from a short period of independent statehood."[20] The adoption of a federal system of government was supposed to address these serious conditions such as ethnic cleavages, but it does not seem to have worked well. A federal system is even a difficult system to manage. Although several explanations have been proffered for federal failure—domination by one or a few constituent units, authoritarianism, economic underdevelopment, lack of constitutionalism and so on—the point cannot be denied that, by its very nature of delicate balancing and competing claims, federalism is an inherently difficult system to manage.[21]

To compound the problem, a federal arrangement can be rendered unworkable if the elements of diversity are very strong, or if they predominate over those of unity. As has been put, "integrative elements of a federal system must, if that system is to function at an optimum level of harmony, predominate over existing elements of diversity."[22] Charles Tarlton's grave scepticism is acknowledged by other scholars such as Donald Rothchild, who analyses how the application of the federal principle is made difficult in Africa by the lack of crucial support for the principle from the key leaders, by the centralizing imperative of the modernization process and by the threat that the forces of ethnic intransigence and separation have posed to the continuance of the federal ties.[23]

As Rotimi Suberu has argued, the federal experiments in the Third World are endangered not only by deep sectional loyalties and largely unavoidable but politically explosive inter-segmental inequalities, but also

by the intensely conflictual nature of Third World politics.[24] This conflictual nature of the politics of developing countries is squarely caused by maladministration. Richard Joseph has also stressed that the most obvious problem of Nigeria's federalism or national integration is what has been described as "misgovernance." A key expression of this misgovernance is in the critical lack of fairness in administration. As has been rightly observed:

> In Nigeria, competition for control of state power is as much a source as is a consequence of the failure of equitable government. At the root of the democratization, is not merely ethnic plurality but inequity. Inequity becomes a necessary feature of the relations among mobilized ethnic groups, and hence a multi-ethnic state is susceptible to democratic instability.[25]

Misgovernance in the Nigerian context has also been analysed in terms of "absence of a self-sufficient political commitment to the primary concept or value of federalism"[26] and the inability to resolve the problem of finding an acceptable revenue allocation formula.[27] For example, the failure of the federal government to transfer funds due to the Niger Delta region has led to widespread insurgency in the area, which even led to major youth unrests in the region. The view of the ethnic nationality groups is that federalism has not worked in Nigeria, as evidenced in the complaints of overcentralization of power, ethnic domination, marginalization and repression.[28]

The present cause of the dissatisfaction has been the transformation of the Nigerian government from a federal to a unitary administration. This change of the system of government has been consolidated with the creation of states, which has become unending, from the original regions of the First Republic—the North, the West, the East and the Mid-West.[29] Failure to restore the balance of power to the regions symbolized by their control of the economy forcibly taken away from them by the acquisitive central government has resulted in the trenchant complaints of those in a frenzy campaigning for the restructuring of the government, governance and society in Nigeria. This is why it has been reiterated that the political problems of Nigeria since independence have been caused by abuses of power leading to military intervention rather than ethno-sectional competition.[30] Having looked at the nature, problems and dimensions of national integration in Nigeria, the next issue to consider is how to promote the latter in the country.

STRATEGIES FOR ENSURING NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Various integrative mechanisms have been adopted in Nigeria since 1914, and they include the amalgamation of northern and southern Nigeria by the British colonists, post-colonial Nigerianization policy, the setting up of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) scheme, the establishment of unity schools, the introduction of national language policy, the adoption of a federal system of government, the formation of political parties along national lines and the creation of a new capital territory, states and local governments.[31] Other integrative mechanisms adopted include the National Festivals of Arts and Culture, National Sports Festival, National Football League, as well as other sports competitions, the policy of "federal character,"[32] which was to ensure that public appointments and positions are spread across members of all the geopolitical zones, states, local governments, wards and communities such that all ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups are represented in government institutions and agencies as much as possible.

Partly owing to the resilience of ethnic groups, it has been strongly suggested that one important way of tackling ethnic tension and conflict is to acknowledge the reality of Nigeria's ethnic diversity. Ethnicity can then be seriously considered as a powerful tool and an element of societal evolution.[33] Given that individuals have multiple identities, ethnicity alone cannot constitute an insurmountable obstacle to a process of nation-building.[34] Integrative measures must therefore go beyond the ethnic question. As noted in the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development's (UNRISD's) background paper for the World Summit in 1994: "The policy-relevant question for those who look at social integration… is not how to increase integration per se, but how to promote a kind of integration which favours the creation of a more just and equitable society."[35] In the United States, for example, there is the Equal Opportunity Act, which provides for equality of every American citizen before the law. There is also the practice of bureaucratic federalism, in which there is the inclusion of all in the US bureaucracy. Further, there is a tradition of freedom of speech and of the press, freedom of religion and judicial independence. These attributes foster loyalty to the state and promote national integration.

In the Nigerian case, scholars have argued that national integration and a sense of engaged citizenship must be premised on democratic management of ethnic groups in terms of respect, justice and fairness, equal ben-

efits of "the valued things of society" and even development. It has also been suggested that ethnically defined groups should also be treated by the state just as sociocultural groups rather than as political groups.[36] Fred Onyeoziri has argued that the existence of multiple nationalities within the same nation-state creates divided loyalty among the citizenry. The citizens would tend to shift their loyalty to the state if they are treated well and fairly in the scheme of things. But when state authorities treat the nationality groups with disrespect, the groups feel marginalized and would not contribute to the stability of the state.[37] Moreover, Onyeoziri points out that there is a need to democratize the relationship between the nationalities and the state. Such a democratization project requires that the integrity of each nationality group be recognized, respected and defended. This policy of mutual respect would remove from the system the fear of domination, oppression and discrimination from both the minority and the dominant group alike. The idea here is to create a multinational state in which there is a healthy respect for all nationality groups.[38] In this sense, national integration "requires that opportunities be provided within the system for individuals and groups to find some meaningful place and role relevant to the survival of their locality and the nation."[39]

These integrative strategies of recognition, respect and provision of opportunities for all nationality groups have apparently led to the postulation for "a new political theory of the state which should not only seek to cure traditional theory of its suspicion of nationalities as potential threat to the stability of the state but should also free the state to see that its future stability requires it to treat its nationalities as partners in progress with fairness, equity and equal respect."[40] There is a need for a strong state that is able to both win citizen loyalty and attachment to it, and prevail on the otherwise warring nationalities from tearing one another apart and, ultimately, the state. In this sense then, the national question is this: "how do we achieve a harmonious relationship between the different nationalities within a state frame that is strong enough to win loyalty and commitment from all its citizens and nationalities?"[41]

One more way to achieve this is to recognize that managing a federal system is a delicate balancing act requiring flexibility and rigidity, particularly rigidity on matters in which the operating principles are unambiguous. "Therefore, the distribution of power, privileges and liabilities must follow commonly agreed principles both in form and in content. Indeed, no federal system can survive on an ad hoc basis neither can one function effectively where the spirit of its operating principles are constantly

abused."[42] Crucially, too, Nigeria needs to find a solution to the crisis of unity in fiscal federalism, political restructuring, derivative revenue sharing and the extensive decentralization, where there is too much power and resources concentrated in the centre.[43] In essence, "Nigeria needs a different approach to governance based on a philosophy that guarantees groups' rights by recognizing the heterogeneity of the polity rather than denying it."[44]

As other scholars have stressed, for a federal system to be acceptable to its constituent entities, it must guarantee the minimum conditions of self-determination or ethno-regional autonomy, resource ownership and equitable access to resources and opportunities for development.[45] In the Nigerian case, true federalism requires a power-sharing arrangement that promotes unity in diversity. This requires modifying the centrist arrangement reflected in the 1999 Constitution through a measure of decentralization that increases the powers of the federating units in terms of political and development responsibilities, and "provides a guarantee of appropriate fiscal autonomy to carry these responsibilities. Ultimately, federalism is about collective bargaining, "dialogue, trade-off and compromise, all of which are at the heart of the federal culture and the domain of the political elite."[46]

The pertinent and urgent issues of democratic consolidation, good governance and legitimate constitution and development are critically important to the question of how ordinary Nigerians can enjoy the same feeling of Nigerianness on the basis of which the country's political leaders demand their political loyalty. According to Ebere Onwudiwe, this question assumes a nationalized citizenship, which presently only exists in theory for millions of ordinary Nigerians. To him, the reality is that ordinary Nigerians have two citizenships, the citizenship of their states, which they share in common with only fellow natives of their states, and the larger, more nebulous Nigerian citizenship, which they share with every other Nigerian. As he contends:

> Until there is in practice one Nigerian citizenship for all Nigerians, and until the individual Nigerian feels this citizenship relatively equally with other Nigerians from other states, through, for example, the enjoyment of standardized civil liberties and equal opportunities in any part of Nigeria irrespective of state of origin, prospects for a united Nigerian state will remain hollow.[47]

Onwudiwe has also observed that: "States and local governments still discriminate against Nigerians who do not hail from within their boundaries. This government sponsored discrimination is a clear statement against national unity even as it represents an official case of government sanctioned human rights abuse."[48] In the north of Nigeria, as is well known in the country, Southerners are employed in the civil service only on a non-pensionable contract basis. This is clear discrimination on citizenship criteria. Also, no Southerner can become Principal or Headmaster in any state government secondary or primary school in Northern Nigeria.[49] What then is the essence of national integration? Similarly, a woman married to a man from another state may not be accepted as an indigene of the husband's state. Thus, President Muhammadu Buhari's listing of Mrs Amina Mohammed in 2015 as a ministerial nominee from Kaduna State caused quite a stir in that state's polity as many leading politicians from the state vehemently opposed her appointment. She was simply described as a non-indigene of Kaduna State. Mrs Amina Mohammed was said to be from Gombe State by birth but her husband is from Kaduna State.

The Governor of Kaduna State, Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, had equally been seriously castigated for including Jimi Lawal, who is from Ogun state as his aide on Investment. The Governor was also criticized over the appointment of his Chief of Staff, who was said to come from another state. Also, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala's appointment as Minister in 2013 was rejected by many prominent indigenes of Abia State. She was said to be a non-indigene of Abia State, and so was not qualified to represent that state. Okonjo-Iweala hails from Delta State but is married to a man from Abia State.

This problem of discrimination is a fallout of the equally lingering fear of ethnic domination and scarcity of resources as well as of poor governance. One approach to addressing these fears and concerns is to mandate states within the federation to specify the requirements and conditions for citizenship which non-indigenes from other states would be expected to meet. These different requirements and conditions could then be harmonized at a national round-table, where a common minimum set of conditions and requirements could be arrived at and generally agreed upon. The current omnibus provision of the 1999 Constitution for attaining citizenship has obviously not been effectively working, and its implementation in practical terms has been haphazard and ineffective. Providing

constitutional clarity on matters of citizenship is key to addressing minority fears and laying the groundwork for national integration.

Essentially, a common position has to be agreed upon by Nigerians on the citizenship question. The logic behind this is simple: If you do not want me to discriminate against you, then you should not discriminate against me. Or if you do not want me to reject your people, then you should not reject my people. There is much that Nigeria can learn from Western and developing countries in this regard. In Malaysia, for example, a communal bargain was reached on the question of citizenship and the special position of the Malays.[50] In Germany, as in most European Union countries, residency determines citizenship. There are legal and policy provisions that allow citizens to reside wherever they choose and enjoy all social and political rights after registration.[51]

A first step in creating the legal and policy frameworks for inclusive citizenship is to recognize the factors that promote sociopolitical disharmony. Policies such as those which promote one culture over others, disrespect, inequality, domination in any guise, uneven development, majoritarian democracy (instead of consociational democracy and proportional representation) and discrimination impede national integration.[52] Along these lines, Larry Diamond has opined that there are four principal mechanisms for managing ethnicity politically within a democratic framework: federalism, proportionality in the distribution of resources and power, minority rights to cultural integrity and non-discrimination, and sharing and rotation of power, particularly through coalition arrangements at the centre.[53] Similarly, Crawford Young outlines "four major policy spheres" for the management of ethnic diversity. These are:

1. Constitutional formulas, particularly federal decentralized alternatives to the centralized unitary state;
2. Cultural policies, especially in the fields of education and language;
3. Remedies for marginalized population categories (indigenous peoples, immigrants, peripheral minorities); and
4. Resources distribution issues (including "affirmative action questions").[54]

Other management strategies for plural societies that scholars have identified include democratic devolution and power sharing, which are important for accommodation and management of segmented societies. Within this spectrum of solutions are human rights, including minorities'

and groups' rights, local political autonomy, affirmative action or quota system and other elements of consociationalism and secularism.[55]

The experience with Nigeria has been how to effectively implement these principles. An agreed starting point on the road to fostering national unity is avoiding the exclusion of any group in a heterogeneous society. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, the leader of the secessionist Biafra, articulated this aspiration quite well many years after the Nigerian civil war. He stated:

> We should, as a people, beware of any policy founded upon an exclusion: the exclusion of person, and of an area. Policies founded on an exclusion look very much like AIDS. They invariably begin with self-indulgence, certain distortion and self-abuse. Once the disease has set in, there is no cure.[56]

It is clear that in the course of Nigeria's history, several methods of ensuring national integration earlier enumerated that have been adopted have had mixed results. However, there are other measures of national integration that require more attention and the commitment of political leaders. These include instituting poverty eradication measures, providing socioeconomic opportunities, establishing a fair and equitable judicial system, effective and democratic management of inter-ethnic group relations in terms of equal access to justice, and even development programmes. Yet others include adopting fiscal federalism, ensuring derivative revenue sharing, decentralizing political authority, guaranteeing group rights and ethno-regional autonomy.

Conclusion

From the foregoing it is evident that the quest for national integration is an important, serious and demanding task.[57] Onyeoziri has advised that a more deliberate effort must be made to develop a feeling of oneness among Nigerians. According to him, the literature on nation-building is emphatic on the relationship between the creation of a national culture and the legitimacy of political rule. In order to provide a basis of legitimacy for the centralized rule they seek to consolidate, state modernizers have to "break down the segments of the traditional order to create a common culture capable of integrating all citizens."[58] In pluralistic societies such as Nigeria, rulers have to construct a common national culture in order to redirect citizen loyalty from the traditional forms of local authority

towards the state, thereby legitimizing the new form of centralized rule. In order words, the "creation of a national culture is required to direct citizen loyalty to the central state."[59]

Citizen loyalty to the nation-state means that the citizens see themselves as one and thus are able to work together for the overall good, peace, harmony and stability of the state. It is an environment like this that promotes stable democracy since everybody sees it as a collective goal to be pursued by both the big and the small in society. Building a consensus is therefore crucial for a successful democratization process and national stability. As Ayo Akinbobola argues, a symbol of shared values between the political elite and individual citizens brought about by an accepted pact depicting a concluded negotiation, bargaining and consensus in appreciating the imperatives of democracy is indispensable to democratization.[60]

In empirical terms, the majority of Nigerians believe strongly in the need to promote national unity in order to ensure stable democracy in Nigeria. The tremendous endorsement of this view symbolizes the desirability of ensuring even distribution of national resources in Nigeria. This implies a commitment to social justice. The practice of social justice ensures collective ownership and equity whether in terms of possession of national power and resources or access to them. The adverse side of this is domination which does not promote national unity or social harmony. The strident and widespread cry of marginalization among the different ethnic and regional groups in Nigeria is therefore inimical to democracy and national stability. The promotion of national unity will have to contend with even distribution of national resources as well as the promotion of social justice in the country. In an ethnically diverse country such as Nigeria, leadership should be broadly composed to truly and fairly reflect "federal character," not just in form but also in substance. There cannot be unity where ordinary people do not feel a sense of belonging to the state.

Furthermore, the promotion of national unity would be boosted with the realization that unity means agreement on goals. This agreement should necessarily begin with a serious and honest consideration of the terms of unity or basis of coexistence and then the goals and objectives to pursue. These considerations would entail wide-ranging political and representational dialogue, perhaps in the form of a Sovereign National Conference, a Sovereign Constitutional Conference or a Constituent Assembly. This would provide a forum to discuss and agree on the terms of unity or basis of coexistence as well as the goals to pursue and enshrine in the Constitution. Ultimately, a consensus has to be reached on the citi-

zenship question in Nigeria by Nigerians across the component states of the entire federation. The premise behind this would be simple: If you do not want my people to discriminate against your people, then your people must not discriminate against my people.

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Federalism, Ethnic Minorities and National Integration in Nigeria

Festus O. Imuetinyan

Federalism has attracted considerable academic attention from political observers and analysts of Nigerian polity. The literature on the practice of federalism in Nigeria is indeed very vast and illuminating. This chapter seeks to add to the literature by evaluating the effectiveness of federalism in the quest for national integration in Nigeria. The question addressed is whether federalism has been helpful to Nigeria's ethnic minorities in their quest for self-determination and equality in the power equations in the country. The objective is to show that federalism has been an effective instrument for national integration and the protection of ethnic minorities in Nigeria in spite of the continued challenges and limitations of nation-building in the country. The history of federalism in Nigeria reveals its effectiveness as a device for national integration and the protection of ethnic minorities. Nigeria's progress towards national integration

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may have been slow and tortuous, but without the federal compromise, Nigeria might have already entered the graveyard of history. Federalism has come to encapsulate many of the contradictions and conflicts associated with the political management of ethnic plurality in Nigeria.

Apart from economic growth and development, the other major challenge in Nigeria remains national integration and the elimination of, or at least a reduction in intergovernmental tensions. The challenge of national integration, though common to all political systems, is particularly acute in a multi-ethnic polity such as Nigeria, which is remarkable for her heterogeneity. Nigeria has one of the most remarkable and complex ethnic configurations in the world. A major political challenge for the state in post-colonial Nigeria has generally been how to maintain national unity in the face of widespread ethnic diversities and competition for resources. Fear of inter-ethnic domination is a glaring political problem in Nigeria. Consequently, in analyses of Nigerian government and politics, problems of ethnicity and national integration are continuously significant and have received scholarly attention as well as public importance. Ethnic pluralism, understandably, gets reflected in the practices of governments and public policy in Nigeria.

The area known today as Nigeria was inhabited by independent ethnic groups before they were brought together and held together by various colonial agents: chartered companies, and, later, British colonial administration officials. Whatever was put together before 1914 was grouped into different units—Lagos Colony and Protectorate with headquarters in Lagos, the protectorate of Southern Nigeria with headquarters at Calabar and the protectorate of Northern Nigeria with headquarters at various times at Lokoja, Jebba and Zungeru. The Lagos and Southern protectorates were amalgamated to constitute the Southern Protectorate with headquarters in Lagos in 1906. Between 1906 and 1914, Nigeria was administered as two distinct administrative units—the North and the South. By 1914, these two parts were formally brought together to form the entity called Nigeria. Throughout these divisions and amalgamations, the people constituting the areas were never consulted. The overriding importance in the minds of the colonial officials was to find the minimum administrative cost for running the occupied territory.

British colonial policy failed to integrate the diverse Nigerian peoples. Instead, the country came into independence in 1960 as a centrifugal union of three multi-ethnic regions, with one large ethnic group dominant in each region. The regions were indeed not homogeneous ethnic enti-

ties. The Hausa–Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo numerically dominated the Northern, Western and Eastern Regions of the country, respectively. They are the ones that are usually referred to as the majority ethnic groups. Others such as the Edos, Urhobos, Ibibio/Efik, Ijaws and so on in the South and the Gwaris, Tiv, Idoma, Kanuri and so on in the North are lumped together as minority ethnic groups.[1]

CONCEPTUALIZING FEDERALISM, ETHNIC MINORITIES AND NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Federalism is that form of government where the component units participate in sharing powers and functions in a cooperative manner, though the combined forces of ethnic pluralism and cultural diversity, among others, tend to pull their people apart. Federalism has emerged as a kind of compromise between advocates for a strong central government and those who push for autonomy and respect for the rights of the subnational units. Federalism is, indeed, a halfway house between separate independent states and unification in multi-ethnic societies. It is a process of seeking unity without uniformity in the face of cultural and linguistic diversity.[2] As Sandeep Shastri rightly observed: "federal systems the world over, are today increasingly seen as political arrangements that afford an opportunity for the myriad diversities within a political system to find legitimate expression."[3] To be called federal, political systems should meet two criteria. First, within the state, there must exist some territorial political subunits which have areas of legal and policy-making autonomy and sovereignty that are constitutionally guaranteed. Second, there must be a statewide political unit which contains at least one chamber elected by the statewide population, and which has some law and policy-making areas that are constitutionally guaranteed to fall within the sovereignty of this statewide body. Ideally, therefore, citizens within a democratic federation should have dual but complementary political identities. This is so because, as citizens of a territorial subunit, if they do not feel that the centre provides some goods, security or identities that they consider valuable, and which are not available from the subunit alone, then their loyalty to the centre will be weak.[4]

Ethnic groups are typically social formations which are distinguished and delineated by the communal character of their boundaries. The relevant common factor may be language, culture or both, but language remains the most crucial variable. "As a social formation however, eth-

nic groups are not necessarily homogenous entities even linguistically and culturally. Minor linguistic and cultural differences often exist within the groups forming the basis for the delineation of its sub-ethnic systems."[5]

Ethnic groups are sociocultural entities which consider themselves culturally, linguistically or socially distinct from one another, and most often view their relations in actual or potentially antagonistic terms. The nature of ethnic groups in each society and the competitive short-term tactics and long-term strategies they employ are functions of history and of the resources they seek to control. Ethnic groups in new states and developing plural societies are in keen competition for the strategic resources of their respective societies. Ethnic minorities are, however, small groups of people or ethnic identities with low numerical strength when compared with other ethnic groups with whom they coexist in a state or in the federation as a whole.

Generally speaking, a minority is differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion and language, as well as by identifying itself as a differentiated group by its members. Minorities are often characterized by their lack of power and their subjection to certain exclusions, discriminations and other differential treatment. This definition captures the Nigerian conception of an ethnic minority as a small group of people who live in the midst of a larger ethnic group. For instance, the Etsako people of Edo state, Mid-Western Nigeria, with a population of 440,538, feel they are a minority group in the state when juxtaposed with numerically stronger neighbours such as the Benins or, even on a broader scale, when they compare themselves with the Yoruba, Igbo or the Hausa in the federation. Similarly, the Ijaw people of the Niger Delta, though numerically the fourth largest ethnic group in the country, are however perceived as a minority group because they are the majority ethnic group in only one state (Bayelsa) and are a minority community in the diasporas of the six states of Rivers, Delta, Ondo, Akwa-Ibom, Cross River and Edo.

What is evident from the above definitional discussion of the concept of minority is that it has a psychological import. Members of an ethnic group must feel that they share a common subordinate identity to be considered an ethnic minority, and the larger society should also perceive it to be so. The minority phenomenon may manifest itself in different forms. It can be economic, religious, occupational, linguistic and so on in nature. In the definition of minority ethnic status, it is not necessarily important that there is actual domination. What is important is that groups fear domination, for this influences their actions and reactions towards one another.

Given this fear, the political system tends to witness the manifestation of centrifugal tendencies, as each ethnic group seeks greater autonomy to protect its interests.

It is also necessary to conceptualize integration to give a clear indication of what the end product would look like and how one would recognize an integrated polity. How much cohesion and which commonly accepted norms denote an integrated political or social unit? How would an observer identify integration, or is it dependent on some other manifestations (such as conflict) to demonstrate a lack of integration? What institutional form will an integrated unit take? Would it be democratic or authoritarian? Would it be a centralized organizational entity with full sovereignty, or would it be a loose federal unit? Or are institutional forms irrelevant to integration?[6] The Nigerian political scientist Claude Ake defined integration by "the extent that the minimal units (individual political actors) develop in the course of political interaction a pool of commonly accepted norms regarding political behavior patterns legitimized by these norms."[7] Similarly, Karl Deutsch equated integration with the attainment, within a territory, of a sense of community and of institutions and practices strong enough and widely spread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of a peaceful community.[8] Integration involves not only the association of different cultures in a common arena, but also the forging of links that are conducive at a minimum to effective governance and communication between the political elite and mass society. Integration is not merely unification; it is more than simply bringing diverse groups of political units under central control. Integration implies some level of effective commitment to the commonality of all groups or political levels, but it does not require the obliteration of primary identifications of ethnicity, religion or culture. National integration therefore, presupposes the existence within society of structural and/or value conditions, which enable collective decisions to be made and applied on behalf of that society. The acceptability of the central political institutions and associations depends on the level of security that contending groups feel is provided them and their interests, and the cognition on the part of the contenders that the interests of other groups are legitimate.[9]

The process of integration involves the penetration of the primary groups by a broader national identification. Integration entails the acceptance on the part of primary, associational groups of the fact that other groups' interests are legitimate and must also be satisfied.[10] Scholars have come up with alternative set of policies that can, in addition to federalism,

encourage political integration in multi-ethnic societies while guaranteeing the right of minorities to organize and express cultural and national differences. In his well-known comparative study on majoritarian and consensus tendencies of various democratic structures, Arendt Lijphart pointed out that the consensus model is characterized by non-concentration of power which can take the two basic forms of sharing of power and division of power. This division of power ensures the central government's dependence on the component states, preserves component states' control over their "internal" legal sphere, and thus further pushes for consensus among the different levels of governance before any policy is ultimately implemented. In cultural areas such as schools, and access to radio or the media, some politically crafted power-sharing institutional formats and practices that Arend Lijphart calls "consociational" are now called for in multi-ethnic democracies. Electoral systems are also being studied for their impact on minority representation. Proportional representation systems are better at representing minorities than are strong majoritarian formulas such as "first past the post" in large, single-member districts.[11]

Federalism and Integration in Multi-Ethnic Societies

As pointed out by Rogers Brubaker, nation-state building and democracy building are mutually reinforcing political logics if there is only one culturally conscious demo in the polity. But, if there are two or more culturally conscious demos in the polity, nation-building policies of and for the dominant nation would imply restricted citizenship, or at least unequal citizenship, for many of the long-standing minority residents in the state. "Formally, and prudently therefore, in multinational or multicultural polities nation-state building policies and democracy building policies are conflicting political logics."[12]

Federalism is indeed one of the several worthy devices that have been explored as part of the process of national integration in plural societies. Scholars of federal studies have little difficulty in appreciating the significance of the federal idea in dealing with ethno-politics in Africa and several other regions of the world. Federalism is one of the most appropriate frameworks for governing multi-ethnic societies, especially when forms of territorial representation are particularly important to groups that are spatially concentrated.

Federal systems are political arrangements that afford an opportunity for the myriad diversities within a political system to find legitimate expression. Expectedly, the global picture appears increasingly to be one in which the international community is turning to the federal prescription in order to regulate the management of ethnic differences and diversity, especially in those states where such conflicts have degenerated into violence. The federal form of government offers multi-ethnic societies the potential opportunity to channel ethnic conflicts into peaceful competition by dividing power and by distributing it between centre and subnational units.

Federalism is, however, not a recent innovation in constitutional design. Indeed, over 40% of the world's population lives under federal systems today.[13] Building upon the long experience of nations such as the United States, Canada, Australia Switzerland and Mexico with federal systems of government, countries as disparate as Germany, Austria, India, Nigeria and Malaysia opted for federal arrangements in the post–Second World War wave of constitutional engineering. Federalism has emerged as the defining constitutional arrangement of the twenty-first century. As Will Kymlicka correctly observed, a "federalist revolution" is sweeping the world.[14] Federalism is lauded for the values it promotes within multi-ethnic nations: the accommodation of territorially concentrated ethnocultural minorities, democratic self-governments, policy experimentation and the facilitation of a closer fit between people's preferences and public policies.[15] Well-established liberal democracies hitherto organized as unitary states—notably Belgium, Spain and so on—refashioned themselves along federal lines to ensure their survival into the twenty-first century.

The case for federalism in Africa's multi-ethnic states is that it will diffuse the intensity of policy competition for the top spots at the national level, relegating it to arenas where the stakes are not so high. In some instances, federalism can even transfer competition to levels of greater ethnic homogeneity. Federalism, through the process of creating subnational units (states), as is the case in Nigeria, also offers territorial minorities a chance to govern in their home areas, although it may, in the process, fragment nationalities into hostile clans–families–tribes. In countries where ethnic groups and regions remain closely tied, forms of federalism multiply the arenas of politics and, therefore, possibilities for cross-ethnic cooperation. In all cases, federalism multiplies rewards in politics and therefore reduces the pressure to capture the central government.

Far from being an unqualified success, federalism has had its failures; witness the return of New Zealand from a federal system to a unitary system in 1879, and the dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. Federalism was unable to prevent the tragedy of Yugoslavia. Clearly, federal systems must be crafted carefully, or instead of attenuating the problems of multi-nationality, they can aggravate them. One of the major causes of the failure of the above-mentioned three European communist federal systems was that none of them was designed to operate in a context where competitive democratic elections were decisive. They only worked as long as the centralized party-state played the major coordinating role.[16]

There is no reason to suppose that federalism inherently guarantees integration in a deeply divided society. Federalism may fail to perform an integrative function or may even contribute to disintegration for any of several reasons. The politics of building and maintaining dual and complementary identities needs more thought and research. The ability of federalism to contribute significantly to integration in multi-ethnic societies depends on a number of factors, including the nature of power given to the units, provision for the representation of the units in the national government, nature of the party system and the measures to protect minorities within the relevant units.

Federalism and Ethnic Minorities' Integration in Nigeria

National integration in Nigeria is undermined by the lack of meaningful universal symbols, such as common heritage and historical past, that could have bound the Nigerian polity together. Integration and negotiations with the colonial authority varied from locality to locality. Negotiation for independence, notwithstanding the long period of amalgamation, did not take place in unison. Inter-ethnic competitions and conflicts are regular features of Nigerian politics.

Conflicts involving the rights of ethnic minorities in particular, represent one of the greatest challenges to the Nigerian state and its strategy of nation-building and national integration. The high frequency of such conflicts and their potentially disintegrative effects give some observers the impression that Nigeria may never be firmly integrated and, therefore, may continuously find development elusive. Interestingly however, most of the rebellions by ethnic minorities in Nigeria, as in several other Africa

countries, are expressions of rightful claims and demands of an economic, political and security nature. The problem of ethnic minorities is perceived in Nigeria mainly in the delivery of social justice, equity and equality. Through demands and advocacy for justice, ethnic minorities in Nigeria have been able to force certain social and political measures towards addressing their fears while dealing with the challenges of national integration.

Federalism is one of the legacies of British colonialism in Nigeria. The choice of federalism by Britain in 1954 was in response to the political pressure for devolution because of the country's multiple languages, ethnicities and, indeed, economic differences among the regions. Nigeria has since endured as a federal system, although the absence of genuine democracy has affected federal constitutional arrangements and practices. Nigeria is Africa's most well-known federal system. There is a robust civilian political consensus in support of federalism in Nigeria. Nigeria stands out among other African federations by the sheer scope, creativity and ingenuity of the effort made to adapt the federal model to the country's ethno-political peculiarities.[17]

Nigerians, in general, finds in federalism "the magic formula" for solving the governmental problems of multi-ethnic societies. As pointed out by Ali Mazrui, federalism is "an institutionalization of comprise relationship, complete with the institutionalization of most essential ingredients; it is creative and flexible enough to incorporate several accommodation formulas."[18] This, in fact, is what has made federalism the magic formula for integration.

Nigerians, especially those from ethnic minority groups, have never hidden their support for federalism. The one attempt made in the history of Nigeria since independence to scrap the country's federal constitutional structure and establish Nigeria as a unitary state through the unification Decree no. 34 promulgated in May 1966 by General Ironsi, who came to power following a military coup, resulted in a serious problem in the country.[19] This was the outbreak of rioting in several Northern cities, leading to a countercoup in July 1966 by a group of officers (predominantly Northern), as a result of which Ironsi was killed and his regime toppled, bringing General Gowon to power and eventually leading to the civil war. Expectedly, on August 31, 1966, General Gowon abolished Decree no. 34 and restored the federal system, thereby confirming that federalism was not a luxury in Nigeria but a necessity.

For the ethnic minorities, the federal solution provides a cocoon of security on the horizontal plane as they interact with one another in a larger network. Thus, while the majority ethnic groups have contemplated secession at one time or the other, leaders of ethnic minorities all over the country have often stressed the unity of Nigeria. The majority ethnic groups actually, at various times, threatened to secede from the country. In 1953, the Northern Region issued the famous eight-point agenda that would have brought about a virtual secession of the region if it had been implemented. Similarly, in 1953, the Western Region threatened to secede over the issue of revenue allocation and the separation of Lagos from the West as a Federal Capital. In 1964, following the census and election crises, Michael Okpara, who was premier of the Eastern Region, also threatened that the East could secede.[20] In short, the regions used the potentiality of secession as a political capital in their relations with the federal government. The Eastern Region moved from this situation of potentiality to actuality by the declaration of "Biafra" in 1967, thus challenging the process of state building in Nigeria.

One notable aspect of federal practice in Nigeria that has helped the cause of the ethnic minorities in their quest for autonomy is state creation. As pointed out earlier, federalism allows for forms of territorial representation, which are particularly important if groups are spatially concentrated in a multinational polity. Nigeria emerged from colonial rule as an independent nation with a federal constitution and made up of three regions. As rightly observed by Rotimi Suberu,

> the palpable casualties and predictable critics of the colonially bequeathed trilateral federal system which promoted the hegemony of the three major ethnic groups in general and the oversized northern region in particular, where the country's estimated 250 minority communities which constituted approximately one third of the regional and national population.[21]

The artificial nature of the regions was opposed by several nationalists who urged the dismantling of the regions and the creation of provinces based on ethnic communities. They argued that provinces should be created along ethnic lines and, indeed, advocated the right of ethnic communities to states or regions of their own as the only basis for a federal system of government in Nigeria.[22] As Ola Balogun points out, "as far back as 1945, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe had advocated the creation of eight states, while chief Awolowo went as far as recommending the creation of 40 states in

1947."[23] The Mid West State Movement came into being in 1951 under the direction of the Oba of Benin in the Western Region. The people of the Middle Belt area also agitated for new regions to be carved out of the Northern Region and quickly formed a party, the United Middle Belt Congress (UMBC), to this end. In the Eastern Region, there was the Calabar–Ogoja–Rivers (COR) Movement. The Kanuri people, under the leadership of the Bornu Youth Movement (BYM), also sought to equally have their own regional status in the north-eastern part of the Northern Region for the same objective as the others mentioned above. The principal motivating factor behind the claims of these minorities was the fear that they would be incorporated into their more populous regional ethnic groups and eventually cease to exist as distinct ethnic groups if they do not have regions or states of their own. All these agitations led to the establishment of the Henry Willink's Commission in 1957 by the British colonial administration, with the aim of investigating the problems of the minorities and recommending solutions. Though the Commission found the fears of the minority ethnic groups to be genuine, it however, did not recommend the creation of new states for them.

The Willink's Commission justified its unwillingness to recommend the creation of states for the minorities on two grounds: (a) the new states will be lacking experienced trained staff and a proper framework of administration, and all these deficiencies may not be properly checked by the British colonial government since the agreed date for the transfer of power to Nigerians in 1960 was fast approaching; and (b) the case for new states was weakest in the Northern Region alone, thus it would bring about a still greater imbalance in the federation, with an overwhelming powerful North and four or five smaller states in the South. In addressing the issue of domination, the Commission recommended the insertion of safeguards into the new Constitution that was to be promulgated at independence, which was a short while away.[24] The pre-independence agitators for state creation decided to downplay their demands when they realized that it was going to jeopardize the country's march to independence, since the British colonial administration had decided to tie the creation of more states to an extension of the tenure of colonial administration in Nigeria.

The opportunity to create states before independence, in 1960, was ignored by the colonial administration. The emergent political class immediately following the country's attainment of independence found it difficult to create new states or regions except for the carving out of the Mid-West Region from the Western Region in 1963. It took

the aborted secession of the Eastern Region in 1967, before the military government in a panic measure split the country into 12 States in place of four in 1967. Minority ethnic groups were given their "homes" in Rivers and South-Eastern States in the South, and Benue-Plateau, Kwara and North-Eastern States in the North. The splitting of the country into 12 states arrested the agitations of the ethnic minorities for more states, but only temporarily, as many other ethnic groups pressed ahead with their own agitations. The demand for additional states in the federation reached another peak in 1976 when the regime of General Murtala Mohammed created seven additional states. Even with 19 states in the Federation, more ethnic nationalities campaigned vigorously for their own states. The regime of General Babangida in 1987 added yet 2 more states, thus increasing the number of states in the country to 21. On August 27, 1991, the Babangida administration increased the number of states in the Nigerian federation to 30. By 1996, the number had increased to 36 states. Yet, the demand for new states is still very much with us as several ethnic minorities are still struggling to have their own states. Expectedly, successive Nigerian constitutions since independence have included elaborate provisions regulating the formation of new states and related boundary changes. This state creation exercise, though often implicated by several observers[25] in the crisis of unity and federalism in Nigeria, with respect to its arbitrariness regarding geopolitical distribution, has however resulted in the empowerment of Nigeria's previously disenfranchised smaller ethnic communities as well as in the vitiation of ethno-regional challenges to the authority of the central state.

The ethno-regional hostilities over the 1962 and 1963 census exercises, the federal election of 1964, and the iron and steel industry's location tussle and the crisis over revenue allocation (especially after the Binns Commission Report of 1964) demonstrated the relative inability of the federal government to effectively control the regions within the Nigerian federal structure, before the creation of 12 states in 1967.[26] Before 1967, the regions were too large and powerful as to consider themselves self-sufficient and almost entirely independent. The federal government, which ought to give lead to the whole country, was relegated to the background. Most people did not even realize that the federal government was the central political authority in Nigeria. The creation of 12 states in 1967 provided a conducive medium for the federal government to assert its authority over the whole country. The politics and geography

of state creation contributed to the strength of the federal centre. For example, the former Eastern Region accounted for 65.4% of the output of oil by 1967, and the Mid-West Region, 34.6%. The creation of new states altered the situation. Individually, the states are most unlikely to challenge the authority of the federal government. They are more likely to combine in order to put more pressure on the federal government to allocate funds to them, than to challenge its authority. It is most unlikely that any of the federating units in their present state can relegate the federal government to the background, anymore. They are neither geographically and demographically large enough nor financially strong enough to challenge the process of state building by seceding, or threatening to secede, from the country.

The authority and legitimacy of the federal or central government is not in question in any part of the country anymore. However, the legitimacy of political incumbents at the federal centre is usually challenged. For example, the victory of Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, a Southern minority from Bayelsa, in the 2011 presidential election was challenged in several states in the North. The situation resulted in political debates, especially as it relates to the accusation that the Hausa–Fulanis used Boko Haram (Islamist terrorist group) to destabilize the federal government under Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's leadership,[27] thus reviving the ubiquitous minority question. The ethnic nationalities in the South objected to any action that portrayed their states as unequal partners in the federation. It is in the light of this perception of ethnic minorities that one can appreciate the current increased clamour for the redefinition of the structure of the country's federal system.

CONCLUSION

Federalism has been very effective as a device for integration and the protection of minorities in Nigeria. The federal system has assisted Nigeria to achieve high degree of national integration, with its diverse ethnic nationalities working together for political and security survival since 1960. By maintaining a strong central government so that regionally weak ethnic groupings can find coalition partners at the level of central government, the Nigerian federation has largely achieved inter-ethnic moderation. Federalism provides Nigeria the opportunity to channel ethnic conflicts into peaceful competition by dividing and distributing power between the centre and component units (states) in a manner that has diffused the

intensity of political competition for the top spots at the national level by relegating it to the subnational arenas, where the stakes are not so high. Federalism has counteracted ethnicity in Nigeria by prescribing state boundaries in sufficient numbers to cut across previously strong expressions of ethno-regionalism. The federal practice in Nigeria has been synonymous with the devolution of responsibility for welfare from the subunits to the central government and a corresponding drop in inequality among their citizens.

State creation has not only contributed to the increased strength of the federal centre, but, as anticipated by several observers and analysts, also gone a long way to solve the problem of ethnic minorities who complained of domination by providing them with greater autonomy through their own autonomous states, thereby freeing them from internal colonialism. To the ethnic minorities, operating as separate entities (states) in the wider Nigeria is more reassuring than to be subsumed and locked up in the regions of which they had been a part.

Before the state creation exercises, the institutions of federalism, rather than simply recognizing and accommodating pre-existing diversity in Nigeria, actually nurtured a sense of provincialism that threatened to break up the country. The 1967 and 1976 state creation exercises were designed primarily to secure self-governance for politically vulnerable ethnic communities, and they went a long way to assuage the fears of ethnic minorities. Later state creation exercises were more or less designed to gratify the economic interests of the majority ethnic groups.

Federalism has, however, been an expensive and politically cumbersome and complex system for Nigeria. The cost of maintaining federal and state executives, legislatures and bureaucracies, as well as local government councils and their bureaucracies, is prohibitive. With the problems of welfare services, economic growth and other demands on public treasury, the federal solution is, no doubt, an economically expensive venture. New states and local governments have become more of a conduit for federal economic and political patronage. In addition to the political economy of federalism, the need for bureaucratic outfits for the subnational units calls for the training of skilled workers to do the job in order to save the system from suffering from problems related to intergovernmental relations. The impact of federalism on integration depends on the roles and behaviour of political actors at the different units, especially as it relates to respecting the tenets of true federalism.

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Religious Referent Power and Ethnic Militias in Nigeria: The Imperative for Pax Nigeriana

Benson O. Igboin

Issues of ethnicity in Nigeria have generally been viewed with much fear. It is either the fear of marginalization or possible disintegration of the country.[1] This raises the possibility that Nigeria might disintegrate into independent ethnic nationalities, each managing its own affairs. But will the disintegration be in line with the number of ethnic groups? Supposing Nigeria has about 374 ethnic groups, will it divide into 374 independent nations in order to be free from marginalization and other factors responsible for ethnic militias and separatist movements? Will the divide be along religious lines? This is significant because if the number of eventual nations is less than the number of ethnic nationalities amalgamated to form Nigeria, the initial factors accentuated for agitation will reverberate.

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227

For some, disintegration may just be the solution to the perennial ethnic and political wrangling that has characterized the relationship of the sub-nationalities.[2] Many believe that the Boko Haram[3] militant Islamist sect is a foretaste of the risk of disintegration. The main reason for this position rests on the seeming incapability of the federal government to effectively deal with the sect, despite the declaration of a state of emergency in the areas in which it operates.[4] Moreover, the sect has not hidden its avouched purpose to Islamize the whole of Northern Nigeria, irrespective of its plural nature, an agenda that stems from the political Islam movement that it represents. For some others, the threat of disintegration does not offer details of what it really entails. They suggest that it might not be referring to physical disintegration but rather more tortuous moments for the country. So they hold that disintegration might not be the panacea to/of Nigeria's ethnic diversity and political disequilibrium.[5]

While it may be plausible to hold that the ethnic and political fault lines have perennially led to conflict, it may not also be out of reason to think that the diversity that defines Nigeria is the basis of its strength. In another sense, the ethnic divides and their agitations in one way or another have strengthened Pan-Nigeriana. It is also from this perspective that one can assume that the activities of Boko Haram may not eventuate Nigeria's disintegration. This does not however suggest that the sect should not be given the "attention" it deserves.

Boko Haram may not be categorized as an ethnic militia. While it shares stark resemblance with other ethnic militias, it has fallen more or less into international terrorist labeling, a characterization that none of the previous militias have attained. Apart from its "new terrorism status,"[6] more sociological and historical investigations are required in order to properly situate it in the context of ethnic militia, more especially as it relates to the conflicted hegemonic relationship between the various ethnic groups in Northern Nigeria. Perhaps, the historical hegemonic problems may have been responsible for the different factions within the sect.[7] It may also be for this reason that Boko Haram strives to build its structure outwardly more on religious referent than ethnic and political consideration, even though its activities have betrayed this position. But the question as to why the Boko Haram sect also attacks fellow Muslims can only be answered in terms of politics, and perhaps also in terms of internal divisions. The argument here is that although religious referent is important in ethnic militia discourse, there is an obvious sense in which even the major ethnic groups view themselves as marginalized minorities. This, therefore, is the basis

for the call for a dialogue of various nationalities and religions to at least unlearn their misinformation/misconceptions.

Conceptualizing Religious Referent Power

Power has often been defined from its output—the ability to influence others. Whether or not power is exercised rightly or wrongly, one cannot deny the fact that it works in every social structure. Even though "power depends ultimately on its bases," it does not always derive from some "intrinsic quality of those who are in power."[8] Political scientists have often argued that power derives from the subjects, and also relies on their obedience to those in power. Thus, if the subjects disobey, leaders are bereft of power. As Eskor Toyo argues in respect of the history and true practice of democracy, "democracy was not a gift from the kings, dictators and their governments. It was imposed on them by the people."[9]

According to David Wain Coon, referent power only exists when subjects respect their leaders, identify with them and willingly follow them. In other words, "referent power comes into play when the essence and character of the leader are attractive to those who would follow."[10] He adds that the leader must reciprocate by respecting the subjects, mentoring and caring for them in order to maintain the bond of the relationship. Charles Handy notes that such leadership skills and charisma are not enough to gain referent power. It therefore becomes necessary to think that nationalism and patriotism should be added to the sources of referent power, which he refers to as "an intangible sort of referent power."[11] He further maintains that integrity and honesty are needed to forestall the possibility of abusing referent power, since there is the chance of people who lack these virtues ascending to power. In his words, "relying on referent power alone is not a good strategy for a leader who wants longevity and respect. When combined with other sources of power, however, it can help you achieve great success."[12] In fact, this is why the ethnic militias have resorted to spiritual referent power as the basis of their activities and loyalty. The covenant or oath taken by leaders and followers bonds them together.

It is in this vein that we define religious referent power as that form of power which individual holds on trust, on the basis of strong spiritual commitment of the leader and the group to some form of deity rather than on the personal charisma of the leaders to attract followership and loyalty. James MacGregor Burns points out that "not everyone with power

demonstrates leadership, but all leaders possess power."[13] It is from this perspective that we can understand the type of leadership and leaders the ethnic militias have produced in comparison with other bases of power. It is also in this sense that we can appreciate why state power either finds it difficult to checkmate their activities or encourage them above the state agencies. This also helps to understand why power is "a complex strategic situation in a given society social setting."[14] All the ethnic militias in Nigeria, more or less, have recourse to spiritual referent power in their structure (hierarchy) and activities.

Conceptualizing Ethnic Militias

Two broad spectrums of the origin of ethnicity have been canvassed. The first tends to view it as a natural phenomenon with universal appeal. This position even goes to the extent to posit that it has a genetic factor, which makes all humanity related and thus belonging to the same ethnic group. It dissolves the strict boundaries that separate stocks of humanity in its physical or cultural characterizations. "Racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it believes to be hereditary and unalterable."[15] This theory also posits that geographical limitation does not vitiate the genetic relationship. J.M. Yinger points out that "all humans today are 99.9% genetically identical, and most of the variations do not occur as in the differences between males and females and are more unique personal traits."[16] Anatomical traits supposedly identifying a particular race are often found extensively in other populations as well, which is due to the fact that similar natural factors in different parts of the world often result in the evolution of similar adaptations.[17] The second school argues that almost all political states are defined by elements of ethnic identity. Thus, ethnicity is a human creation, and as such, the genetic factor should be downplayed. In this sense, ethnic relations means relating to people, whose unity rests on racial, linguistic, religious or cultural ties of a people or country.[18]

Ethnicity is also conceived as how groups of people think about themselves in relation to others. It is this that provides the basis for their social relations within and between other groups. The interface is viewed in "specific power relations at the same time as it refers to cultural relations."[19] Here, each ethnic group strives to demand, struggle for and protect its vital interests in relation to others. This, of course, is the cause of conflict.

The inveterate ethnic conflicts in Nigeria have been caused mainly by mutually suspicious interethnic relationship, which can be blamed on the inability of the government to work out acceptable strategies and modalities for equitable distribution of the country's resources.[20] The struggle for the "soul" of the country underlies the formation of ethnic militias. The failure or incapability of the country's security agencies to curb these militias has encouraged their proliferation. Julius Ihonvbere clearly states it thus:

> In spite of the military strength of the state and the expansion of its security services, it remains completely incapable of providing leadership and direction towards creation and nurturing of values, interests, aspirations, institutions, and processes, which would support the cause of nationhood. People just dissolve directly and/or indirectly into their respective particular organisations, which begin to compete with the state for the loyalty, support, emotions and patriotism of the citizens.[21]

A discussion of the ethnic militia also requires a contextual definition of what constitutes a militia. Militia has been defined as "a reserve body of citizens, enrolled for military duties, called upon only in an emergency" or "a reserve force of men, conscripted within a country."[22] This definition obviously has some legal implications. It means that militia must be recognized by law, or must be established by an act of parliament so that it does not operate as a guerrilla movement against the state. This partly accounts for the perennial military confrontation with the ethnic militias in Nigeria. For one, extant ethnic and religious militias in Nigeria are not registered or established by law. In order to address questions about legality, some state governments have sought to legislate on particular ethnic militias or provide policy frameworks for their activities. For instance, the Governor of Anambra State in South-East Nigeria, Chinwoke Mbadinuju, declared himself "the commander-in-chief" of the Bakassi Boys, an ethnic vigilante militia operating in Eastern Nigeria. He invited the militia group from the neighboring Abia State to help fight the menace of armed robbery in Anambra State. He further justified his act by arguing that "the explosion in the number of militant organisations across the country … is a clear manifestation of overbearing pressure on the resources of the federal police and a big question mark on its ability to effectively police the entire country in the face of its limited resources and apparent shortage of manpower."[23]

Mbadinuju's justification of his position and subsequent passage of a law to legalize the militia's activities did not only put the federal police in a negative light, but also ignited the call for the establishment of police forces controlled by state governments. Some other states provided legal backing to ethnic militias in their domain because it was felt that such ethnic militias were more "familiar with the terrain to fight criminals rather than conventional security outfits of the state."[24] Even states that did not offer outright legal backing to ethnic militias gave them some recognition or engaged them for some personal political interest. This form of state approval apparently encouraged some unemployed youths and street vagrants, known locally as "Area Boys," to reposition themselves as members of organized ethnic militia groups. Hoodlums and political thugs as well as street-corner gangs thus constituted the core of these ethnic militias.[25] In some cases, these militias effectively became state police forces. This position was confirmed by the involvement of the militias in politics as directed by their "commanders-in-chief," who were the state governors. The cases of Anambra and Abia States were so contentious in their use against political opponents of the governors that the general public became apprehensive about the formation of state police.[26]

In 2012, the Nigerian Senate President David Mark stated that the image and performance of the federal police had not changed and therefore he had changed his mind about his former views on the establishment of state police. Mark further opined that eight years of a governor's supposed misuse of state police against his political opponents would not be persuasive enough to completely jettison the idea.[27] The public has not been swayed by such argument because of the activities of the militias under their civilian governors. The arguments for a state police force to complement the current federal police force have not been convincing. The formation of state police does not answer the question of what went wrong with the federal police. There is also the concern that the inefficiencies of the federal police will simply be reproducible in a state police force. It is for this reason, among others, that the federal government made moves to outlaw ethnic militias.[28]

The Nigerian lawyer and social critic Femi Falana brings a legal perspective to the definition of ethnic militias when he defines a militia as "a group of people who are not professional soldiers but who have military training and act as an army."[29] To him, ethnic militias are militant organizations set up to protect the interests of a particular nationality within the Nigerian federation.[30] As such, ethnic militias are distinguished by their aims. Those preoccupied with the liberation of their ethnic nationalities

may be referred to as guerrilla movements. Falana posits that even if the federal government succeeds in legislating against militias, such law might not be effective unless the underlying fundamental issues that gave rise to them *ab initio* were resolved.

The Rise of Ethnic Militias in Nigeria

From the review of debates on the rise of ethnic militias in Nigeria, one can distinguish between two historical interpretations. The first holds that the rise of ethnic militias predated the colonial rule while the second believes that the British colonial establishment, especially the forceful amalgamation in 1914, should be held responsible for the rise of ethnic conflicts and subsequent militarism. According to this school, ethnic militias could be found among the various kingdoms and nationalities prior to the amalgamation. In a historical survey of the precolonial kingdoms and empires, it is revealed that traditional rulers and kings resorted to the principle of "might is right" in expanding and protecting their territories. The practice of "might is right" was not exclusive to the powerful kings or emirs alone. There were instances where subjugated subnationalities would test their might in order to assert themselves, which resulted in the multiplicity of autonomous empires,[31] which in turn exacerbated interethnic conflicts. The introduction of slave trade inexorably encouraged further multiplicity of militias because of the involvement of local compradors who were "producing human commodity" for the slave buyers. In actual fact, the precolonial kingdoms, as well-organized state, had their standing army, which cannot be described strictly as militias.[32] Prior to the slave trade, there were intra- and interethnic revolts and conflicts, which were prosecuted by armies, who were spiritually fortified against lethal weapons. Such conquest brought together unrelated ethnic groups under one political system. "The natural instinct of self-preservation and the rightness of might naturally super ordinate with the desire for conquest, domination and subordination of one ethnic group by the other by the oilier [sic] remaining a permanent feature."[33] Thus, long before British intervention in 1900s, there were armies of particular kingdoms or empires.

But the second historical interpretation of the origins of ethnic militias in Nigeria suggests that the amalgamation of 1914, which brought the Northern and Southern Protectorates together under a single political administration, is primarily responsible for ethnic rivalries and rise of militias. Bolaji Akinyemi argues that different ethnic groups were autonomous and independent nations with some form of relationships. British

conquest and incursion complicated these relationships, and for much of the colonial period, British authorities were preoccupied with defining what the relationship among these different nationalities should be.[34] The ethnic rivalries arising from British amalgamation of the different nationalities is therefore seen as the root cause of nationality question in Nigeria. Jide Osuntokun thinks otherwise. According to him, "without the coming of the British, the people of Nigeria would somehow or the other have evolved into some form of associations because the ties of history and geography leave no alternative."[35] Whether the ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria would have come together to form a state with or without British colonial intervention remains debatable.

It is useful, however, to examine how ethnic militias evolved in the colonial era. As several scholars have noted, colonial authorities had the machinery of violence to suppress and repress armed resistance or opposition. The examples of Oba Ovonramwen of Benin, Etsu Nupe Abubakar dan Masaba of Bida and Nanna of Itsekiri, among others, are relevant here. With superior firearms, indigenous kingdoms and their armies were crushed. Today's ethnic militias seek to draw connection with the indigenous armies of old. The present ethnic militias now disguise as cultural troops invited to government functions to display the ancient war dance. One scholar has noted that "ethnic militias in contemporary Nigeria, irrespective of the amount of modern weapons at their disposal and western influence, still significantly replicate the tendencies inherent in traditional patterns of ethnic armies."[36] This also suggests that religious referent has always been the "base" of traditional soldiers.

RELIGION AND ETHNIC MILITIAS IN NIGERIA

Religion plays a critical role in human life. It also plays key roles in ethnic discussion in Nigeria. The recourse to religious and spiritual resources by ethnic militias in Nigeria is an ample evidence to the important role religion, particularly African Traditional Religion, plays in advancing human course. The permeability of African Traditional Religion is captured by John Mbiti thus:

> Religion permeates into all the department of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it. A study of these religious systems is therefore ultimately a study of the people themselves in all complexities of both traditional and modern life ... Religion is the strongest element in traditional background, and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned.[37]

Understandably, religion as a human phenomenon builds a nexus between human beings and the supernatural, and the utilization of the resources of the cosmos for human development. The African cosmos is animated by supernatural forces, which enables Africans to order their community life in tandem with such forces, be they spirits, ancestors, divinities and so on. This will be shown below. In essence, the structure of traditional Nigerian/African communities was built on a strong religious foundation. In spite of the fact that many Christian and Muslim converts publicly disparage traditional religious beliefs and practices, studies have revealed that some of them, in addition to the indigenous people, patronize them when faced with the labyrinth of life.[38] According to Lucky Akaruese, "ethnic groups in African states are intensely religious even in contemporary times."[39] Therefore, the issue of religious or spiritual referent power for ethnic militias is not exclusively a Nigerian phenomenon.[40] In specific reference to ethnic militias and religious referent power, Akaruese observes that one basic characteristic of these ethnic militias is the degree to which they are rooted in the religious practices and customs of the ethnic groups from which they evolved. Memberships are ethnically determined and guided by customary mores. Consequently, members must espouse the religious beliefs of the particular ethnic groups from which the particular militia evolved, and these include the use of charms and other prescribed paraphernalia, among others.[41]

In a study of the science and spirituality of African "bullet-proofing," which has become associated with ethnic militancy, Don Akhilomen observes that there are several forms of traditional bullet-proofing but that all of them express the belief in invincibility, which gives great confidence to the militias to confront state security agencies.[42] Daniel Shishima gives details of how some of the mystical powers are produced and utilized. The choice of a militia's commander is based not simply on election or physical ability but on spiritual and supernatural considerations. Militia heads have to be chosen through consultations with deities.[43] Mbanusi elucidates: "Before proclaiming Marduk as their chief, the gods in assembly put him to test in order to discover whether he possessed the magical know-how, without which, no god (mystical power) could rule supreme … at the word of his mouth the images vanished, when the god of his fathers saw the fruit of his word, joyfully they did homage: Marduk is king."[44] Even though the efficacy of these supernatural powers remains unproven, members of militias groups and their political allies see it as a mean of conferring protection and legitimacy.[45] This is evident from the activities of the ethnic militias, some of which are discussed below.

SUPREME EGBESU ASSEMBLY

Werinipere Noel Digifa, the Chairman of the Ijaw militant group, the Supreme Egbesu Assembly (SEA), claims that whatever he says is the dictate of the supreme deity. According to him, Egbesu represents Jehovah, who is "the greatest Force in this physical earth."[46] In Izon language, Egbesu means "truth and stand for truth."[47] He argues that Egbesu, the source of the power of the operation of the Assembly, especially its militant arm, the Egbesu Boys, is a recognized religion, contrary to the popular belief that it is a secret cult. In his words, "Egbesu is not a secret cult: it's a God accepted religion, even if the Nigeria state does not accept it."[48] He further states that nobody fights against God and prevails, insofar as the struggle of the Assembly is based on the truth of God, in whose name the Egbesu fights for liberation of its people, victory is sure to come. As Vaaseh agrees, "it is also the god of war to be consulted to assist and fortify warriors in turbulent times. The Egbesu determines when the cause of war is justified, dictates instruments of war and, it is believed, makes those initiated … the common fighting arm of all the militant Ijaw youths."[49]

THE BAKASSI BOYS

The Bakassi Boys was initially an antirobbery vigilante group formed in Abia State. Because it is believed that armed robbers fortify themselves with charms, it is also believed that it is only those who use more powerful "counter-charms" can combat armed robbers. Studies have revealed that the Bakassi Boys consulted a traditional ritual practitioner in Ogoniland who gave them mystical power to detect and arrest robbers. Such mysterious power displayed by the militia and their vigilante activities significantly reduced the incidents of armed robbery in Abia State. Even though its leaders would not discuss about its spiritual referent power,[50] Akinsole and Ozekhome argue that the Bakassi Boys' reference to general Igbo traditional religion and the dismembering and burning of their victims are clear indications of religious/spiritual referent power.[51] The organization is believed to have been established and used for political reasons of ruling politicians in Anambra State against their opponents. One member of the state's House of Assembly affirmed this when the group's activities began to attract public condemnation, stating that "the formation of the outfit was a product of

this House. I am surprised and embarrassed. The reason for establishing it has been defeated."[52]

Like the Bakassi Boys, the Bush Boys, which was a core component of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), wreaked havoc on Rivers State. Believed to have been formed in Bayelsa State, the Bush Boys attacked many towns and villages in Rivers State, to the extent that the Governor Peter Odili had to dissolve the cabinet because he believed that some members had secret links with the militia group.[53] Condemning the activities of the group, Governor Odili stated: "It is time to confront the agents of darkness. We have to say in clear terms that this is the last warning. They either surrender in 24 hours or face the wrath of law and government."[54] Such warning did not deter the group. It was reported that members of the group had proceeded from Yenagoa to Ondo State to be "fortified against the vagaries of battles by a traditional medicine man."[55] This is suggestive of their spiritual belief in invincibility. Instead of surrendering, the group's leaders gave conditions to the government, demanding that government functionaries must dismantle their own cult gang, and that leaders of cults and sponsors in the government must be brought to justice to serve as deterrent to others.[56]

Oodua People's Congress (OPC)

The Oodua People's Congress (OPC) is factionalized into two groups—the mainstream led by the founder of the OPC, Fredrick Fasheun, and the militant arm led by Ganiyu Adams. Fasheun claims that his faction does not believe in the use of charms or other spiritual elements, which he regards as "darkness and spiritism."[57] Fasheun reveals that it was Adams that introduced spiritual practices into the OPC. According to him, in Adams' faction, "you need to pay an oath-taking fee, you had to comply with various superstitious practices, and you had to submit to black magic orgies."[58] Adams believes that in order "to fish out the criminals" and "not to be afraid of any attack," members have to be under spiritual "insurance cover" by "making incisions on their bodies with charms."[59] Akinsole identifies the charm to be *ayeta*, which is believed to possess the power to make people disappear when faced with danger or render bullets and machetes impenetrable.[60] Raymond Ogunode supports that the OPC possesses "African spiritual powers to cause stability" in the Nigerian political system.[61]

Appraising the Nationality Question in Nigeria

Tam David-West has argued that the problem of Nigeria's subnationalism may not be necessarily religious. Religion is just a scapegoat or smoke-screen.[62] The essential question is how the various ethnic groups can relate peaceably and equitably. Furthermore, the question of which specific ethnic groups are minorities needs to be addressed. For example, despite the fact that the Kanuri have a long history in the North and constitute the third largest ethnic nationality in the region, they have been subsumed under the Fulani–Hausa group. Consequently, the Kanuri identity seems to be lost within the framework of WAZOBIA, which refers to the three dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria—Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo. "WA" in Yoruba, "ZO" in Hausa and "BIA" in Igbo mean "come." This is what Michael Vickers refers to as Nigeria's "Big-3."[63]

The question, which ethnic groups constitute minorities, is significant because even members of the dominant WAZOBIA ethnic groups believe that they are marginalized. For instance, one of the factors that precipitated the Nigerian Civil War of 1967–1970 was the belief by the Igbo that they were being marginalized by a federal government dominated by the Muslim Hausa in North. After the military government annulled the 1993 presidential elections won by a Yoruba candidate, the OPC was formed, as a militia to defend the rights of the Yoruba people.[64] Similarly, the Arewa People's Congress was founded to counter what was believed to be the insurrection of the Yoruba political elite against another head of state from the Hausa–Fulani group, who was the beneficiary of the annulment. This suggests that even members of Nigerian majority ethnic groups have felt threatened and marginalized at different moments in the history of the country. This might explain why more ethnic militias have emerged among the majority ethnic groups. Consequently, David-West argues that the fault line created by the colonial amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria in 1914 can no longer be an excuse for the failure to resolve the ethnic question. He believes that 100 years is enough time forge a Pan-Nigeriana. Nigerian political elites have often used the colonial policies as an excuse for their own political failings. If anything, Nigerian political elites have been more interested in manipulating the ethnic question as a way of holding on to power.[65] One example of this is the claim by the Igbo politician Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1947 that the Igbo were endowed by God to lead Africa. According to him,

It would appear that the God of Africa has specially created the Ibo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of the ages … The martial prowess of the Ibo nation at all stages of human history has enabled them not only to conquer others but also to adapt themselves to the role of pre-server …. The Ibo nation cannot shirk its responsibility.[66]

At other moments, however, Nigerian political elites have sought to forge a sense of national unity. In 1980, the same Azikiwe advocated toleration, compromise and coexistence among various ethnic groups in Nigeria.[67] Even Odumegwu Ojukwu, who led the Biafrans in a secessionist civil war in 1967, stated in 1995: "nobody can split Nigeria. I tried it and it didn't work."[68] Ojukwu further stated:

I do not believe that the East and West cannot find common ground … this need is so urgent that I do not believe it affords us the luxury of apportion-ing blame—what the situation demands is courage: courage to chart new course: courage to speak new truths and the will to install a new understand-ing. What I propose is that an East-West understanding is a prerequisite for a North-South understanding without which cannot be installed the Pax-Nigeriana of our dreams and aspirations.[69]

In 1947, the Yoruba political leader Obafemi Awolowo described Nigeria as a mere geographical expression, which, in other words, was not a nation.[70] As Awolowo put it, "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. The word 'Nigerian' is merely a distinctive appellation to distin-guish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not."[71] One commentator has suggested that rather than a rejection of the idea of a Nigerian nation, what Awolowo tried to underscore was that there was urgent work to be done in order to translate the geographical expres-sion into a great nation.[72] In fact, Awolowo's commitment to the idea of the Nigerian nation was demonstrated by his role in managing the country's finances as the Minister of Finance during the Civil War.

Awolowo was not alone in questioning the vitality of the Nigerian nation at independence. The Northern Hausa political leader Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, who later became Nigeria's first Prime Minister, had in 1953 thought that the consequence of the 1914 amalgamation was that Nigeria "existed as one country only on paper."[73] According to him, the so-called unity in Nigeria was intended to serve British interests rather than the disparate ethnic interests of the peoples and kingdoms amalgam-

ated in 1914. He added that if the British should quit at that time, the North would resume its military campaign to the sea. However, Balewa was also a proponent of federalism. His evolving faith in the Nigerian federation is expressed in one of his speeches in 1954, where he urged his followers to "recognize our diversity and the peculiar conditions under which the different tribal communities live in this country" and to "forget our political differences and petty tribal jealousies and work together to create strong and united country."[74]

The foregoing discussion suggests that multiple forces have been at work in shaping the national question in Nigeria. These forces act on the impetus of prevailing political exigencies and, sometimes, the interests of political elites at different historical moments. When the political equation favors a particular ethnic group, political leaders from other ethnic groups have tended to push back against their marginalization. In some cases, such pushback has resulted in the emergence of ethnic militia groups. The driving factors in the emergence of these groups have not only been political. They have also been religious or sociocultural. Apart from the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and perhaps Boko Haram, other ethnic militias seem to be focused more on sociocultural activities. While MASSOB[75] wants the creation of a Biafran state, Boko Haram wants political power established on the basis of Islam in the North. In both cases, however, religious and ethnic affinities play a crucial role. The activities of these groups demonstrate the disruptive manipulation of religion, culture and ethnic identities in contemporary Nigerian politics. In these contexts, religious referent power has not simply been a smokescreen to achieve group solidarity but also serves as an effective tool for political expression and a means of attainting political power.

Notes

1. The United States Intelligence reports in 2005 said that Nigeria might disintegrate in or before 2015, partly because of ethnicity. However, it is important to state that despite the tension that characterized the 2015 general elections, which reinvigorated the fear of disintegration, the country was able to overcome it. See, for instance, John Odey, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Path to Disintegration," in *Boko Haram and Terrorism: Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, vol. 2, eds. S. O. Anyanwu and I. U. Nwanju (Enugu: SNAAP 2012), 47–49; "Nigeria Exists

on Paper Only: Nigeria Is Neither a Country Nor a Nation," www.africafederation.net

2. Odey, "Boko Haram: Nigeria's Path to Disintegration," 49; Kayode Idowu, "Playing Games with Nigeria's Destiny," *The Punch*, September 26, 2005, 15.

3. This sect believes that western education or civilization is anti-Islam, and consequently, it is bad and should be destroyed and replaced with Islamic education and sharia.

4. Boko Haram operates mainly in Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Adamawa, Yobe and Plateau States.

5. Jerome Yaovi, "Is It Nigeria That Will Disintegrate or Nigerians" JeromeIsTalkingcaptivated/79-how-useful-is-a-nigerian-without-money-to-other-nations.

6. Benson O. Igboin, "Fundamentalisms, Security Crisis and Tolerance in Global Context: The Nigerian Experience," *Politics and Religion* 6/1 (April 2012): 89–111.

7. For details, see, for instance, the November 2013 START Background Report, "FTO Designation: Boko Haram and Ansaru," http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd; Benson O. Igboin, "Boko Haram Sharia Reasoning and Democratic Vision in Pluralist Nigeria," *International Studies: Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal* 14/1 (November 2012): 75–93. For possible historical hegemonic contest within the Northern ethnic groups that might adduce for the emergence of Boko Haram from the North-East, see Dauda Abubakar, "The Kanuri, Ethnic Minorities and the National Question: Implications for Nigeria's Federalism," in *The Management of the National Question in Nigeria*, eds. E. E. Osaghae and E. Onwudiwe (Okada: Igbinedion University, Press, 2007), 215–217.

8. Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework* (London: The Albert Einstein Institution, 2003).

9. Eskor Toyo, "Boko Haram and Western Education: A Comment," *The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development* 11/4 (December 2011): 52.

10. David W. Coon, "Creating Referent Power in your Own Life," accessed on July 26, 2012, from http://www.cwu.edu/~cel/cms/uploads/CreatingReferentPower.pdf

11. Charles Handy, *Understanding Organizations* (London: Penguin Books, 1976).

12. Visit www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_56.htm

13. James M. Burns, *Leadership* (NY: Harper and Row, 1978).

14. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge* (Pantheon Books: New York, 1980).

15. Thomas Schirrmacher, *Racism: With an Essay by Richard Howell on Caste in India* (Canada: World Evangelical Alliance, 2011), 12.

16. Cited in C. A. Ogah, "Ethnic and Religious Crises: Africentric Philosophico-theological Approach," in *Human and Religious Development in Nigeria: Theoretical and Methodological Issues*, ed. J. A. Onimhawo (Ibadan: Safnos Publishers, 2011), 37.

17. Ogah, "Ethnic and Religious Crises," 35.

18. Mike, A. A. Ozekhome, "Ethnic Militias and the Nigerian State: The Challenges before Civil Society," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 188.

19. R. T. Akinyele, "Ethnicity and Religion in Election 2003: Potential Conflicts and Resolution," *The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development* 3/1 (September 2002): 24.

20. Tunde Babawale, "13 Years On: The Travails and Triumphs of Democracy in Nigeria" A Public Lecture delivered under the auspices of the AAUA Leadership Institute in collaboration with Ondo State Government, May 29, 2012, 9.

21. Julius Ihonvbere, "The Irrelevant State, Ethnicity and the Quest for Nationhood in Africa," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 1 (January 1994): 49.

22. Ozekhome, "Ethnic Militias and the Nigerian State," 189.

23. Godwin A. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends: Images of Ethnic Militia Groups in Nigeria Since 1990s," *Benue Valley Journal of Humanities* 9, no. 1&2 (January–December 2010): 103–104.

24. See Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 104.

25. Emorc C. Emordi, "Emergence of the 'Area Boys' Phenomenon in Lagos, Nigeria," *The Constitution: A Journal of Constitutional Development* 5, no. 1 (March 2005): 61–88.

26. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 104.

27. The Nigerian Senate President David Mark made this position public during the retreat organized by the Senate Committee on Constitution Review on 20 July 2012 via Africa Independent Television. As of 2016, the debate is still raging. However, it is assuming ethnic coloration as usual. While the Northern governors who initially wanted it are now reluctant to pursue it, the Southern governors are showing some sort of aggression toward its

establishment. The general public is divided into unequal proportions, with the larger percentage refusing to endorse it for the fear of misuse by the "commanders-in-chief," who do not hide their readiness to deploy it against their perceived enemies as resonating in political thuggery. The President holds that the country, on the basis of this perennial fear, is not ripe enough for state police.

28. Mike Ehidiamen, "Activities of Ethnic Militias and their Implications for National Security," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 162.

29. Femi Falana, "Democracy, Constitutionalism and the Phenomenon of Ethnic Militias," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 184.

30. Falana, "Democracy, Constitutionalism," 185.

31. Lucky Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias: Re-constructing the Nigerian State," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 212.

32. Benson, O. Igboin, "Treatment of African Slaves: A Critical Reflection of an Unhealed Wound," *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies* XLIII, no. 1 (June 2011): 131–151.

33. Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias," 213.

34. Bolaji C. Akinyemi, "Ethnic Militias and the National Question in Nigeria," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 19.

35. Asume I. Osuoka, "Politics and the Agenda of Nationality Resistance: The Case of the Ijo of the Niger Delta," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 115.

36. Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias," 216.

37. John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 1.

38. Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (Nairobi: Paulines, 1997); Ade P. Dopamu, "Scientific Basis of African Magic and Medicine: The Yoruba Experience," in *African Culture, Modern Science and Religious*

Thought, eds. P. A. Dopamu, et al. (Ilorin: African Centre for Religions and the Sciences, 2003).

39. Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias," 215.

40. Benson O. Igboin, "A Critical Exploration of African Spirituality and Democracy in Africa" *Journal of Africana Religions* 2/4 (October 2014): 435–456.

41. Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias," 219.

42. Don Akhilomen, "The Science and Spirituality in African Bullet-proofing: The Esan Experience," in *Science in the Perspective of African Religion, Islam and Christianity*, eds. S. O. Oyewole, et al. (Ilorin: LSI and NASTRENS, 2010), 461–474.

43. Daniel S. Shishima, "The Use of Mystical Power in the 2001 Tiv-Jukun Crisis in Taraba State," in *Boko Haram and Terrorism: Religious Conflicts and Dialogue Initiatives in Nigeria*, eds. S. O. Anyanwu and I. U. Nwanaju (Enugu: SNAAP, 2012), 134.

44. Cited in Shishima, "The Use of Mystical Power," 134.

45. Dare Odufowokan, "Forget Police, Use Juju!—Lam Adesina tells Politicians" in *Weekly Spectator*, August 27, 2006, 30.

46. Werinipere, N. Digifa, "Voice of Izon," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 121.

47. Digifa, "Voice of Izon," 122.

48. Digifa, "Voice of Izon," 123.

49. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 106.

50. For details, see Obot Williams, "Ensuring Peace by any Means Necessary: Politics, Agenda and *modus operandi* of the Bakassi Boys" in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 109–112; Ukoha Ukiwo, "Political Anxiety and Violence in Nigeria: The Politicisation of Bakassi Boys in Eastern Nigeria" in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 130–151.

51. Johnson, O. Akinsole, "The Roles of Religion in Ethnic Militias in Nigeria" a Long Essay submitted to the Adekunle Ajasin University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, 2008, 43; Ozekhome, "Ethnic Militias and the Nigerian State," 190.

52. See *Tell*, no. 5, February 4, 2002, 37.

53. See "Again, bandits attack Port Harcourt, kill 18," *The Punch*, September 2, 2004, 1, 4; Kelvin Ebiri, "Odili sacks cabinet as 18 die in Rivers violence," *The Guardian*, September 2, 2004, 1&2; "Rivers of Blood, tears and Terror, " *The Guardian*, September 4, 2004, B2-B7.

54. See Anayochukwu Agbo, "Odili's Decisive Battle," *Tell*, no. 38, September 20, 2004, 48.

55. Agbo, "Odili's Decisive Battle," 48–49.

56. Agbo, "Odili's Decisive Battle," 49.

57. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 110.

58. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 109.

59. Vaaseh, "Friends or Fiends," 110–111.

60. Akinsole, "The Roles of Religion in Ethnic Militias in Nigeria," 55.

61. Raymond O. Ogunode, "African Religion and Democracy" in *Human Views on God: Variety Not Monotony—Essays in Honour of Ade P. Dopamu*, eds. Adam K. Chepkwony and Peter M. J. Hess (Kenya: Moi University Press, 2010), 63–70.

62. Tam David-West, "Ethnic Nationalism: Challenges and Prospects of a Pan Nigeriana" lecture delivered at the 17th Bi-Annual National Delegates Conference of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, Abuja, 1, June, 2012, 15.

63. Michael Vickers, "'Caging' Nigerian Minorities: The British Government and the 1957 Minorities Commission" in *Beyond the Boundaries: Toyin Falola and the Art of Genre-bending*, ed. Nana A. Amposah (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2014), 453.

64. For details, see Fredrick I. Fasheun, "The Failure of the Nigerian State and the Necessity for Identity Politics," in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 102–108; Gani Adams, "Politics and Agenda of Ethnic Militias: The Case of OPC" in *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria*, ed. T. Babawale (Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd., 2003), 96–101.

65. David-West, "Ethnic Nationalism: Challenges and Prospects of a Pan Nigeriana," 10.

66. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria: Background to Nationalism* (Berkeley: Broburg&Wistrom, 1958), 347.

67. David-West, "Ethnic Nationalism: Challenges and Prospects of a Pan Nigeriana," 11.

68. David-West, "Ethnic Nationalism: Challenges and Prospects of a Pan Nigeriana," 11.

69. Isaac O. Albert, "The Yoruba and the National Question" in *The Management of the National Question in Nigeria*, eds. E. E. Osaghae and E. Onwudiwe (Okada: Igbinedion University, Press, 2007), 263.

70. Victor Egwemi, "From Minority and Oil Rights Agitation to Militancy: Some Thoughts on the Niger Delta Crisis," *National Development Review* 1 (April 2009): 9–25.

71. Coleman, *Nigeria*, 320.

72. Matthew Kukah, "Nation Space and Nationhood in Soyinka's Thesis," *The Guardian*, April 5, 2009, 18–19.

73. Akaruese, "Beyond Ethnic Militias," 216.

74. Quoted in David-West, "Ethnic Nationalism: Challenges and Prospects of a Pan Nigeriana," 15.

75. Ojukwu's support for the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was a huge boost, which caused a lot of tension in the polity, as he accused the federal government under Olusegun Obasanjo of a plot to eliminate him. According to him, "What I am saying is not new. This is what we talked about in a round table conference at Aburi some years ago during our meeting in the Ghanaian City. God did not make a mistake in creating Ndigbo and creating the Hausa and Yoruba beside them." *The Guardian*, September 19, 2004, 1&2. In solidarity with Ojukwu when he was to be supposedly arrested, the MASSOB members stated vehemently thus: "We also want to show that irrespective of the Nigeria Police harassment, arrest, killing and detention of non-violent MASSOB members and easterners in general, MASSOB is the last hope for the survival of Ndibo and easterners in general; we want to prove that we are in control of the eastern region." Lawrence Njoku, "They said I support Biafra. How can't I," The *Guardian*, September 18, 2004, B2-B5.

Index

Note: Page numbers with "n" denote endnotes.