

# **CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THE PRESENT NIGERIAN SECURITY CHALLENGES: THE ETHNOCENTRIC OPTION**

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## **Abstract**

Insecurity in Nigeria has since reached a crisis point. For more than three decades, the country has been mired in various forms of security challenges –militancy, kidnapping, insurgence, mass murder, religious intolerance and so on. This situation has claimed hundreds of thousands of lives within this period and the dangers of losing more are far from being abated. In as much as the volatility of the situation hit climax at different times and in different parts of the country, there is no region that has not had its fair share of the crisis. This work is founded on the idea that the various efforts made to contain or deal with insecurity in the country failed. It identifies this failure with the chimerical nature of the Nigerian arrangement. In other words, the work builds on the hypothesis that the denial of the naturalness of the ethnic formations in the country by a phantasmal Nigeria with which citizens hardly identify constitutes the fundamental reason why every Nigerian project is bound to fail. The work went ahead to construct the ‘Ethnocentric Option’ by re-examining the efforts made by various individual ethnicity in combatting insecurity in the country and proffering that option as the most effective in dealing with the situation of insecurity in Nigeria. The work contributes to the wide-range of discussions about insecurity both in Nigeria and the globe; presenting a model out of an arrangement which ordinarily will be termed retrogressive. The work will review the ethnic composition of the country together with the advancement into geo-political zoning, the Nigerian security architecture together with regional security arrangement, evaluation of the effectiveness of regional security arrangement and the endorsement of the ethnocentric option. To get the best out of the data for this research, the work combines the methods of ethnography and case study with analysis of written data and focus on groups.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, Crisis, Security, Ethnocentric, Management, Nigeria

## **Introduction**

If democracy will survive in Nigeria, then the issue of insecurity must be taken seriously. From the time of the return of democracy in 1999 till the present, the country has been faced with various kinds of security threats. Barely two decades after a thirty-month Civil War which was described as the bloodiest, going by the unprecedented civilian casualties recorded (and over one million children), Nigeria relapsed into a spate of insecurity that both threatens its unity and hurts the economy. There has been for much of three decades cases of insurgency, mass killings, secession, kidnapping and so on. It is ironical but a painful reality that the Nigerian military

which had proudly successfully engaged in peace keeping missions in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan and so on, has been out of the barracks to fight the various strands of insecurity without much success. As in war times, it is the Nigerian military that are much seen on the streets as once was done the police and other law enforcement agents. There is no part of the country that has not experienced military actions in the name of fighting insecurity. In very many cases, it takes the joint efforts of the military, police and other paramilitary agencies to contain criminal elements and the escalation of violence and insecurity concerns. Any visitor to the country, seeing the police road blocks and military check points can tell that the country presents like a war zone. Gradually, the scenario it is narrowing into in recent times presents that it is one ethnic group against the rest of the country.

It is not just that the country is mired in such precarious and perilous times, but that it is also living in denial of same. The question of how a group in the country gets supplies of more sophisticated weapons and assault equipment than Nigerian military lingers. The curiosity of why the Nigerian military, the police and countless security agencies cum paramilitary organizations combined are notable to fight and defeat a negligible group of people in the country abound. A lot of theories have been bandied in a bid to provide answers to these mindboggling inquiries. The most disturbing of them all being that prominent individuals and even public office holders partner with and sponsor these barbaric activities. Obviously those who do, if they do, do not do so in the interest of Nigeria's corporate existence, but for some personal or regional interest. This work adopts the hypothesis that the regions of the country which is categorized by ethnic components are more cohesive and formidable entities than the federation itself.

Ethnic groups in Nigeria occupy specific regions of the country from ancestry and regard wherever they occupy as their homeland. It is ethnicity which defines the individual whose national consciousness is but of a secondary nature. Therefore, individuals who reside outside their homelands are not primarily regarded as citizens, but as strangers who have as much stake as allows them to do their businesses and sojourn as much as they are allowed to do so by their ethnic hosts. However, it is only the Fulani ethnic group who seek to defy this default state of affairs. Wherever they go, they seek to settle in clusters; establish their own communities, kinship and administrative systems. The work identifies the Fulani ethnic group as the constant data of the security threats in Nigeria and the other ethnic groups as the variables in the dialectics of positioning the ethnocentric option for security in Nigeria.

This work traces the insecurity situation in Nigeria from early 90's, without prejudice to thirty years of turbulent history before then. It builds the narrative that establishes the ethnic groups as the fundamental/constituent block of the Nigerian nation formation; making a case for Nigerians identifying more with their ethnic groups than with the nation. Evidently, the fight against insecurity was fast slipping out of the hands of the Nigerian army and other state law enforcement agents and allied outfits. Cases of *ShegekaFasa* security outfit for northern Nigeria

and *Amotekun* security network for southwestern Nigeria were cited along other of such arrangements and evaluated as either successful or as potent to succeed.

The work aims at achieving a secure environment for the Nigerian nation where there is respect for human life and rights; sustenance of property and ease of doing business. It brings together existing strategies for battling insecurity which it identified in the independent strategies of individual ethnic groups. This agrees with the opinion of Idoko Cletus Usman and DasumaArida Mathew, who remarked that one of the reasons why insecurity persist in Nigeria is because of the centralization of governance.<sup>1</sup> In as much as the referred work was particular with centralization as regards the three tiers of government, the same judgment may be applied to national identity in reference to ethnic character.

The work leans weight to the importance of restructuring the system of governance in Nigeria which had clamoured for strengthening the regions and generating governance from bottom, thereby involving the people of the polity in the politics. It will be of benefit to public office holders in generating policies and implementing existing ones. The work will equip academics and students of political and strategic studies about the peculiar nature of the Nigerian state and workable solutions to its insecurity situation. To do justice to this topic, data will be collected from previous studies of same and related issue in journals, newspapers, books and other credible online sources. Ethnography and case studies, together with analysis of written data and focus on groups prove to be the multidimensional approach most effective in such research as this.

## **Insecurity Situations in various Regions of the Country**

### *Niger Delta Insurgency, Militancy and Terrorism*

By the mid 90's, the restive youths of the Niger-Delta had begun active engagements with foreign oil companies in the area especially the Ogoni and Ijaw ethnic minorities. Frustrations in getting any favourable deal for their people deteriorated into violence which led to the murder of some native chiefs in 1995. This turn of events culminated into the gruesome execution by hanging of Ken Saro-Wiwa. Ken Saro-Wiwa was a civil rights non-violent environmental activist of Ogoni extraction. He was tried through a military tribunal during the military dictatorship of Gen SaniAbacha. His execution caused a global outrage which saw Nigeria's membership to the Commonwealth suspended for two years. Locally, it emboldened the Niger Delta youths who launched a complex militant network making various demands on government and foreign oil companies. One of the daunting tasks of Nigeria's newly revived democracy in 1999 was to deal with Niger Delta militancy and the alarming insecurity in the region. Even after the first four years of that administration, its re-election still faced the daunting task of resolving the insecurity crisis in the area. According to Oronta Douglaset al:

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<sup>1</sup>Idoko Cletus Usman, DasumaArida Mathew (2014), "*Security Challenges in Nigeria and National Transformation*", International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research (IJMSR) Volume 2, Issue 8, September 2014, PP 8-16.

Certainly, the Niger Delta stands at the crossroads of contemporary Nigerian politics. Even with the growth of oil-revenues to the delta states – now standing at 13% - the region remains desperately poor, and it is the deepening material and political grievances that stem from the region’s exclusion that place the Niger delta at the confluence of the four most pressing political issues in the federation in the wake of the April 2003 elections.<sup>2</sup>

The militants were declared enemies of the nation and a full scale war declared on them to subdue and conquer them. The Nigerian military was engaged with fighting the Niger Delta militant insurgency for close to a decade without any major solution brought to the insecurity of lives and properties which ravaged the region. The insurgency gained a place in global terrorist map, but by 2007 when that democratic dispensation was set to hand over to its successors, the war against the terrorists of Niger Delta still raged.

Following series of negotiations and interventions, even from international organizations and foreign nations, on June 25, 2009, Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, who was the president of Nigeria, announced the amnesty programme to rest stick and present carrot. He gave a 60-day grace for the Niger Delta militants to cease hostilities and surrender their weapons.

The terms of the Amnesty include the willingness and readiness of militants to surrender their arms, unconditionally renounce militancy and sign an undertaking to this effect. In return, the government pledged its commitment to institute programmes to assist their disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and provision of reintegration assistance to the militants. These are major preconditions to address wider development challenges in the Niger Delta.<sup>3</sup>

This program yielded good result in restoring peace to the area from the point of view of the cessation of full military engagements. However, the security concerns in the Niger Delta have undergone some metastasis. Kidnapping for ransom, hostage taking, extra-judicial killings and other related crimes, which were the initial security concerns before the terrible escalation of violence, simply resumed and have become the order of the day. It must be noted that the Niger Delta insurgency and militancy was largely fired by ethnic sentiments championed by the Ijaw and Ogoni whose ancestral homelands seats on Nigerian oil. However smaller ethnic groups like the Kalabari, Okirika, Opobo, Andoni, Bonny etc. were also part of the struggle.

### *Boko Haram Insurgency, Terrorism and Secession*

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<sup>2</sup>Oronta Douglas, Ike Okonta, Dimieari Von Kemedi and Michael Watts (2004), “Oil and Militancy in the Niger Delta: Terrorist Threat or another Colombia?” Retrieved May 5, 2020, from <http://geog.berkeley.edu/ProjectsResources/ND%20Website/NigerDelta/WP/4-DouglasVonOkonta.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Mission Statement of the Amnesty program, The Office of the Special Adviser to the President on Niger Delta, retrieved April 28, 2020, from <https://www.osapnd.gov.ng/>

By 2002, a group known as *Jamā'atAhl al-Sunnah li-l-Da'awahwa al-Jihād*(People Committed to the Prophet's Teachings for Propagation and Jihad) was founded by Yusuf Muhammed to both fight corruption and injustice in Nigeria by destroying the vestiges ofwesternization especially western education and impose the Sharia legal system on the country. He was a former Shi'ite who began his journey to radicalization in 2001.The group was founded in Maiduguri and to achieve its aim, it adopted a violent method; unleashing mayhem of various scales and intensity especially in the northeastern part of the country. In 2009, Yusuf Muhammed published his terrorist manifesto - *HadhihiAqidatunawaMinhajuDa'awatuna* ("This is our creed and the methodology of our propagation") which called for the return to the pristine age of Islam in which the Quran, Sunna and Hadith are the only guiding principle of society. It has become clear they were waging war on the country which was the only way of achieving this tall feat and to contain or combat them was beyond police activities. The military was deployed in what presented as a full scale war. They were hounded by the Nigerian military and Yusuf Muhammed was killed in the process in July 2009.

A little is known about AbubakarShakau who took over the leadership of Boko Haram after YusufMuhammed. It was Shakau who launched the ideology couched in the concept *Takfirism* which passed an immediate and violent death sentence on all non-Muslims and Muslims who had betrayed Islam by as much as dialoguing with Christians.<sup>4</sup>Shekau understood civil society as the number one enemy of Islam and went into full scale war with agents of the Nigerian society. Barely three months after Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi declared the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Shekau replicated same in Northeastern Nigeria on August 24, 2014. This became an unprecedented move in the Boko Haram insurgency which accounted for more than 75% of deaths credited to Boko Haram by 2014 in twelve months. Most of the victims were Christians stuck or held captive within the territories it annexed. Its purported link with international terrorist organizations like Al Shabab, Al Qaeda and ISIS may have accounted for the formidability of the group whose sponsors remain unknown to common folks. The fight against Boko Haram kept raging without any clear victory recorded or declared by the Nigerian military until the whole narrative shifted to Fulani Herdsmen. In as much as Boko Haram insurgency was located in the north eastern part of the country, it was not known as inspired or sustained by any ethnic sentiments. Rather it was the religion of Islam which gave it its ideological framework. However in Nigeria, anything Islam or northern Nigeria possess an undercurrent of Hausa-Fulani ethnic sentiments.

#### *Fulani Herdsmen Insurgency, Mass Killings and Terrorism*

The story of the violent activities of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria is complicated both by the obscure origins of the Fulani ethno-tribe and the narratives/analysis of the security threats they

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<sup>4</sup> Caleb Weiss, Islamic State continues its rampage in northeastern Nigeria, in *Threat Matrix*, December 3rd, 2018, retrieved May 5, 2020, from <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/12/islamic-state-continues-its-rampage-in-northeastern-nigeria.php>

constitute both as farmers-herders clash and acts of terrorism/ethno-cleansing. However, whichever way we look at it does not eliminate the fact that this ethnic group has involved in mass murder, evacuation of villages, massive destruction of property, illegal occupation of other people's territories and so on. Ultimately, the activities of this group constitute the singular security threat that the whole of the country faces at the same time unlike other security threats that are confined to regions. It is further complicated by its northern and Islamic background which has led many to believe that it is a metastasis of Boko Haram.

TarigAnter is of the opinion that the Berber people who migrated from North Africa in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> Century AD mingled with the West African people in Senegal to beget the Fulani ethnic group.<sup>5</sup> A millennium later, they began to migrate to other West, East and Central African Regions. They are the first group in West Africa to convert to Islam through Jihad and they get absorbed into other ethnic groups who welcome them as herders and pastoralists. They create plurality in the polity, dominate and institute their kingdoms as parallel government in lieu of eliminating the ancient systems of their host communities or ethnic group. Nneka Perpetua Oli, Christopher Chimaobi Ibekwe and Ignatius Uche Nwankwo opines that by 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, they were already settled in Macina (upstream of Niger bend) and in Hausa lands especially in the plains of Adamawa.<sup>6</sup> According to Chuka Udeze<sup>7</sup>, their forebear Uthman Dan Fodio made in road into the area today known as Nigeria through the Sahara Desert by the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Though recounting the history and origins of the Fulani especially in Nigeria agrees with the normal style of presenting them as security threat, the most important thing is to point out their activities that qualify them to be that threat.

In Tegina Kabata village in Niger state's Shiroro County, twelve Christians were killed and a couple kidnapped on their wedding day on April 22, 2020.<sup>8</sup> Five villages fled to safety in Ogun State following the invasion of heavily armed Fulani herdsmen on April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020.<sup>9</sup> Information Nigeria, news and social analysis platform, reports that fifty villagers were killed and many ran away as about five hundred heavily armed Fulani herdsmen attacked the community made up of seven villages on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016.<sup>10</sup> This work does not pretend to have the capacity to chronicle

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<sup>5</sup>TarigAnter, Who are the Fulani People and their Origins? In *Modern Ghana*, retrieved April 8, 2020, from <https://www.modernghana.com/news/349849/who-are-the-fulani-people-their-origins.html>

<sup>6</sup>Nneka Perpetua Oli, Christopher Chimaobi Ibekwe and Ignatius Uche Nwankwo "Prevalence of Herdsmen and Farmers Conflict in Nigeria", *International Journal of Innovative Studies in Sociology and Humanities*, 3, 1, January 2018, pp. 30-39.

<sup>7</sup>Chuka Udeze, "Fulani Herdsmen attack Enugu, Benue and Lagos Nigeria – Here's all you need to know", in *Buzz Nigeria*, retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://buzznigeria.com/fulani-herdsmen-attack/>

<sup>8</sup>Christian Today, 12 Christians killed, couple kidnapped from church during wedding in Nigeria, in *The Christian Post*, retrieved April 8, 2020, from <https://www.christianpost.com/news/12-christians-killed-couple-kidnapped-from-church-during-wedding-in-nigeria.html>

<sup>9</sup>Osagie Otabor, "Villagers flee over Herdsmen Attack", in *The Nation*, retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://thenationonlineng.net/villagers-flee-over-herdsmen-attack/>

<sup>10</sup>Emeka Mamah, Clifford Ndujihe, Chidi Nkwopara and Chinenyeh Ozor, "Nigeria: Bloodbath in Enugu as Fulani Herdsmen Kill 40", in *Vanguard*, April 26, 2016, retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://allafrica.com/stories/201604260735.html>

the numberless cases of the menace of Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria. Global Terrorism Index had placed the Fulani Herdsmen as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world, preceded by Boko Haram, Isis and Al-Shabab<sup>11</sup> since 2015. Paradoxically, The Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), a socio-cultural group representing the socio-economic interest of about one hundred thousand Fulani cattle breeders, identify themselves with and approve of a lot of the herdsmen killing spree, but does not admit being branded terrorist. They always go by the narrative of ‘farmers-herders conflict’. Whatever the case, whether the group is embattled given the fact of not being tolerated or welcomed in the territories of their sojourn or trespass, attacked by farmers whose industries are hurt by cattle or the group is actually engaging in pre-programmed forceful occupation of other people’s ancestral lands, it is clear that the herdsmen attack on the rest of the citizenry is criminality beyond telling. Surprisingly, it is not as if the government is doing anything to contain or combat it.

### *Movements and Organizations agitating for the Independence of Biafra*

From the declaration of the sovereign states of Biafra on May 30, 1967, by its defunct leader, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu, to the present day, the agitation for the sovereignty/self-determination of the southeastern region of the country under the name ‘Biafra’ has been a recurring decimal in the perennial solutions sought in the prevailing situation of the politics of marginalization and exclusion schemed against that part of the country. Barely three decades after the Nigeria-Biafra war, Ralph Uwazuruike brought the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra once again to the public domain. In 1999, he launched the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). The group adopted non-violent means of civil disobedience and struggle. They engaged in many forms of independent characterizations, including bringing back Biafran currency and printing Biafran passports. Their leader, Ralph Uwazuruike was accused of treason and arrested in 2005. Since after his release in 2007, law enforcement agents in Nigeria has continued to arrest, detain and kill its members without recourse to any legal process. The government of Goodluck Jonathan identified it as one of the extremist groups threatening the security of the country alongside Boko Haram and Oodua Peoples’ Congress.<sup>12</sup>

In 2012, Nnamdi Kanu came to limelight through the agitations of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group he may have co-founded. He had previously established Radio Biafra which broadcasts from London in 2009 and has been calling for freedom of Biafrans from the marginalization of the Nigerian government in Abuja and it was his activities in Radio Biafra

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<sup>11</sup> Rose Troup Buchanan, Global Terrorism Index: Nigerian Fulani militants named as fourth deadliest terror group in world, in *The Independent*, retrieved May 8, 2020, from <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/global-terrorism-index-nigerian-fulani-militants-named-as-fourth-deadliest-terror-group-in-world-a6739851.html>

<sup>12</sup> Emmanuel Obe, Olalekan Adetayo and Ade Adesomoju, “FG may clamp down on MASSOB, OPC”. *Punch*, May 31, 2013, retrieved May, 9 2020, from <https://web.archive.org/web/20150925103933/http://www.punchng.com/news/fg-may-clamp-down-on-massob-opc/>

which brought him to limelight. On October 19, 2015, Nnamdi Kanu was arrested and remanded in prison for two years, charged with treasonable felony, ethnic incitement and sedition.<sup>13</sup> He was eventually released on bail in April, 2017. But by September of same year his homestead was besieged by the Nigerian military where they were alleged to have been detailed to kill him in a brutal military exercise branded “Operation Python Dance II”. Amnesty International and other Human Rights organizations have opined that countless numbers of members of IPOB have been arrested, incarcerated in jail without trial and murdered extra judicially. Up till now, no investigation has been commenced by the Nigeria government to unravel or even deny these allegations.

On September 20, 2017, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared IPOB a terrorist organization and proscribed all its activities especially in the southeast and southsouth. This move were countered by the US and EU. The spokesperson of the US embassy in Nigeria sometime in September, 2017 was captured as saying: “Within the context of unity, we encourage all Nigerians to support a de-escalation of tensions and peaceful resolution of grievances. The Indigenous People of Biafra is not a terrorist organisation under US law.”<sup>14</sup> Even before the Federal government formerly declared it a terrorist organization, the EU through, Mr. Jean-Claude Juncker, the president of the EU commission had warned the Federal government on the brutality with which it handles IPOB, stating that every people of the world have right in every democracy to agitate for self-determination through democratic and legal means. On September 17, 2017, the president was also captured as saying:

The entire EU, hereby, condemns the brutal attack on IPOB members and leadership under the pretentious disguise of a military exercise (Operation Python Dance II). The Nigerian military is warned to adopt democratic tenets in handling citizens. The EU will not sit and watch things go undemocratic in the largest economy of the West African region.<sup>15</sup>

Clearly, the Federal Government of Nigeria did not follow and did not care about international best practices in the treatment of the above matter which caused national and international outrage, but which fell on deaf ears.

However, there are other pro-Biafra groups pursuing legal, political and non-violent causes for the self-determination of the region. Though unconnected with the agitation for the sovereign state of Biafra, there have been a spate of kidnapping, armed robbery and Fulani herdsmen attacks which has left the state security apparatus incapacitated. In the cities, suburbs and rural

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<sup>13</sup>Okechukwu, Nwachukwu Orji and Chijioko K. Iwuamadi (2016), *Biafra Separatism: Causes, Consequences and Remedies*, Enugu: Institute for Innovation and Development

<sup>14</sup> Clifford Ndujihe, “FG explains why it labelled IPOB a terrorist group”, *Vanguard*, September 29, 2017, retrieved May 11, 2020, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/fg-explains-labelled-ipob-terrorist-group/>

<sup>15</sup> Clifford Ndujihe, “FG explains why it labelled IPOB a terrorist group”, *Vanguard*, September 29, 2017, retrieved May 11, 2020, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/fg-explains-labelled-ipob-terrorist-group/>

communities these criminalities go on unabated in spite of the heavy military and law enforcement agents' presence in the area. These states of affairs have negatively impacted on the economic activities and social life of the people. Any visitor to the southeast or southsouth will easily mistake the area as a war zone, going by numbers of road blocks and checking points. Although this practice had always been there since after the civil war, the Nigerian military mounting road blocks even in the rural communities is a new phenomenon. This has also led to a lot of conspiracy theories, from APC (All Progressives Congress) one party system scheme, Islamization program to Fulanization schemes. In this region of the country, people practically sleep with one eye open.

### *Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) Agitations for Democracy and Secession*

After the annulment of the June 12, 1993 elections, the Yoruba ethnic consciousness was tripped. May 14, 1994, a number of its elites championed the formation of National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) which was a national movement agitating against the military dictatorship and for the restoration of democracy in Nigeria. Most of its activities took place in Lagos and Abuja. The failure of this group to bring about a speedy turnaround of things, together with the brutality with which the military government handled them, may have tested the patience of the Yoruba youths and cajoled them into forming the Oodua People's Congress. The group was formed in 1997 as "a militant socio-cultural Yoruba nationalist organization."<sup>16</sup> In two special operations of a joint police and military anti-crime task force, at least twenty members of OPC were killed, according to official government report in 1998. Shortly before the final return of democratic administration in Nigeria, a splinter group was formed from OPC which called itself Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM) and could have also been Revolutionary Council of Nigeria (RCN). This group became more militarized and radicalized than the parent body, this time setting its agenda as opposition of the Nigerian federal system and the secession of Yoruba land to form its own sovereign nation. The activities of this group were largely welcomed by the global Yoruba community and they served as security outfit for the ethnic group. Things degenerated to some infighting and the organization split but later reconciled.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Fundamental Confederating Units of Nigeria**

The present writer is of the opinion that to get things working in Nigeria, there is need to get back to the drawing board to reconstitute the nation. Currently the country is divided into thirty-six states and these are understood as the federating units of the nation. Yet the states are non-functional in as much as they can do nothing on their own except the federal government empowers them to. According to Ugochukwu Amasike:

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<sup>16</sup>Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Oodua Liberation Movement (OLM), Revolutionary Council of Nigeria (RCN), in *GlobalSecurity.org*, retrieved May 11, 2020, from <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/yoruba.htm>

<sup>17</sup>Musliudeen Adebayo, "OPC collapses factions, as Frederick Fasehun, Gani Adams unite", in *Daily Post* July 3, 2017, retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://dailypost.ng/2017/07/03/opc-collapses-factions-frederick-fasehun-gani-adams-unite/>

One of the tragedies of the current unitary system of governance we practice; and the consequential mono-product economy it's foisted on the Nigerian federation, is the transformation of Nigeria's federating units into dependent and mere distribution centres. Today, Nigeria has states that are incapable of meeting the most elementary requirements of a government, even the payment of salaries is a herculean task, not to mention the provision of critical infrastructure and social services.<sup>18</sup>

In describing the Nigerian system as unitary, U. Anosike stated the underlying functional system of the Nigerian political economy despite the fact that it is not the official position of the Nigerian constitution. In other words, the states lack the fundamental capacity to functionally confederate and the only way to coordinate, foster and enforce its activities is by foisting a silent unitary system and making a mockery of federalism. This anomaly is further complicated by the politicization of the regions in what we call geo-political zones. In the present political arrangement the nation is subdivided into six geopolitical zones (Northeast, Northwest, North Central, Southeast, Southwest and Southsouth). The geopolitical zones are made up of states Northeast – 6 (Bauchi State, Borno State, Taraba State, Adamawa State, Gombe State and Yobe State), Northwest – 7 (Zamfara State, Sokoto State, Kaduna State, Kebbi State, Katsina State, Kano State and Jigawa State), North Central – 6 (Niger State, Kogi State, Benue State, Plateau State, Nassarawa State and Kwara State), Southeast – 5 (Enugu State, Imo State, Ebonyi State, Abia State and Anambra State), Southwest – 6 (Oyo State, Ekiti State, Osun State, Ondo State, Lagos State and Ogun State) and Southsouth – 6 (Bayelsa State, AkwaIbom State, Edo State, Rivers State, Cross River State and Delta State), making thirty-six states with the Federal Capital Territory. These states are further divided into local governments and we have seven hundred and seventy-four of them. Unfortunately these states were created in the mannerism of the Berlin Conference (1885) division of Africa not minding ethnic and cultural affiliations.

On the contrary, from the evidence above, agitations for self-determination, domination, secession and the likes are ethnocentric. Each ethnic group or a cluster of ethnic groupings had expressed lack of confidence in the Nigerian state to rise to the challenges of its peculiar problems and has attempted, demanded or threatened secession. One way or another, individual ethnic groups had reposed confidence on these agitators for security even when they are labeled enemies of the state by the conspiracy of other ethnic groups. Therefore if the northern states initiate a regional security apparatus in the name of *ShegekaFasa*, it is those courageous young people who had demonstrated resilience to the constraining forces of the state that will be recruited. Therefore it is likely that former members of Boko Haram or Fulani Herdsmen will be recruited. So also in the populating of "*Operation Amotekun*", members of OPC or other Pro-Yoruba splinter groups are ready resource.

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<sup>18</sup>UgochukwuAmasike, "Nigeria's federating units: A case for the devolution of powers", *The Cable*, August 25, 2016, retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://www.thecable.ng/nigerias-federating-units-case-devolution-powers>

## **Ethnocentric Activism and forced Negotiation with the Nigerian Nation**

To stress the irrelevance of the states and its incapacitation to negotiate and fend for the populace, at various times, different regions of the country have demonstrated lack of confidence in the Nigerian security apparatus to secure lives and property in the country by launching regional security arrangements. In an unquestionable Yoruba ethnic front, the governors of the six states of the southwest (in spite of diverse political leanings) launched a regional security arrangement called “*Operation Amotekun*” on January 9, 2020. At the launch, the Governor of Ekiti State and the chairman Southwest Governors’ Forum, KayodeFayemi, was quoted as saying: “Amotekun is a complement that will give our people confidence that they are being looked after by those they elected into office.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, the Nigerian state security apparatus do not afford the people such confidence. It should be noted that “*Operation Amotekun*” was launched in the heat of incessant attacks suspected to be perpetrated by Fulani Herdsmen. It is not just that the Yoruba nation will with a strong faith repose confidence on “*Operation Amotekun*” to deliver, but that its formation sent a strong warning signal to the Northern Fulani Hegemony from where the main security threat emanates and they well understood that signal shown in their reaction to the development which was succinctly captured by LasisiOlagunju.<sup>20</sup>

On February 5, 2020, Northern governors and the Coalition of Northern Groups (CNG) unveiled “*Operation ShegekaFasa*” to tackle the kidnappings and banditry in the region. CNG is made up of thirty-six different ethnic interest groups in the region. In as much as the North seemed to be reacting to the launching of “*Operation Amotekun*” in the Yoruba-Southwest, it is true also that the feeling of unmitigated insecurity was real and that the incapacity of the state security agencies to bring about security of lives and property is glaring. It is important to recall that it is CNG which had issued a three months ultimatum to the Igbo to leave northern Nigeria in October 2017.<sup>21</sup> There could be fears of reprisal attacks on southern elements in the north consequent upon the operations of *Amotekun* in the southwest, but that does not undermine the fact that the people of the region would feel more secured by an outfit they own and operate.

The southeast had evolved the idea of local vigilante in all the communities and they have been working in the various southeastern states in collaboration with state security operatives. Before the initiative, the spate of crimes was alarming, but really got abated when the locals were involved in policing their environment. In as much as they are poorly funded and not well coordinated, their impact is visibly felt. In March, 2018, NyesomWike, the governor of Rivers State in the Southsouth geopolitical zone signed into law the establishment of Rivers State

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<sup>19</sup> Jude Egbas, “7 things to know about Amotekun, Southwest’s new security outfit”, in Pulse.ng, January 10, 2020, retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://www.pulse.ng/news/local/operation-amotekun-7-things-to-know-about-southwests-security-force/jpd0wz1>

<sup>20</sup> LasisiOlagunju, “Amotekun and the North’s fears”, in *The News*, January 13, 2020, retrieved May 12, 2020, from <https://www.thenewsnigeria.com.ng/2020/01/13/amotekun-and-the-norths-fears/>

<sup>21</sup> Godwin Isenyo, “ICYMI: Northern groups unveil Operation Shegekafasa, symbol in Kaduna”, in *Punch*, February 6, 2020, retrieved May 14, 2020, from <https://punchng.com/northern-groups-unveil-operation-shege-ka-fasa-symbol-in-kaduna/>

Neighbourhood Safety Corps. At the occasion of signing the bill, the governor was quoted as saying, “I will appoint the person that will head the Neighbourhood Watch Safety Corps. All criminals will face the full weight of the law. We will fight crime and ensure that the state is safe for investors.”<sup>22</sup> The statement, in the least underscores the fact that the state has been witnessing unabated crime and insecurity in spite of the heavy presence of the military and law enforcement agents in the state. There is no doubt every local community in Nigeria has developed its own security system. These are to establish the failure of the state to secure lives and property in Nigeria.

### **The Depletion and Destruction of the Ethnic Foundation of Nigeria is a Fundamental Error**

President Barack Obama during his 2008 presidential bid made this statement “The fundamentals of American economy is wrong”, not too long after and shortly before he won that election, Wall Street collapsed and he championed the subsequent bailout. This conviction informed his economic reforms during his tenure, derogatorily referred to as ‘Obamanomics’. At the height of frustration during his forty years reign and having observed the impunity and depravity of his people, King David lamented: “Foundations once destroyed, what can the just do”.

The foundation of the Nigerian nation is wrong. It is impossible to build a magnificent structure on a faulty foundation. The discourses often listened to or read up by Nigerians do not seem to take cognizance of this fact. In 1947, the former Nigerian statesman, Chief ObafemiAwolowo published his book, *Path to Nigeria Freedom*, and in that work, he wrote:

*Nigeria is not a nation, it is a mere geographical expression. There are no “Nigerians” in the same sense as there are “English” or “Welsh” or “French”. The word Nigeria is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria from those who do not.*<sup>23</sup>

Another statesman, ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu, published a book in 1989 titled: *Because I am Involved*, in it, he also remarked: “...Nigeria remains in essence an amorphous mass of individuals busy pretending to be a nation”.<sup>24</sup> These statements and sentiments neither undermine the unity of Nigeria nor do they paint a bleak picture of its future as a unit. They are mere truism to help drive the founding and building of a nation that would be strong and sustained.

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<sup>22</sup>Davies Iheamnachor&EgufeYafugborhi, “Wike signs Rivers Neighbourhood Watch Safety Corps Law”, in Vanguard, March 16, 2018, retrieved May 15, 2020, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/03/wike-signs-rivers-neighbourhood-watch-safety-corps-law/>

<sup>23</sup>ObafemiAwolowo (1947), *Path to Nigeria Freedom*, quoted in Ray Ekpu, “Geographical expression: So what?” In *The Guardian*, August 15, 2017, retrieved May 16, 2020, from <https://guardian.ng/opinion/geographical-expression-so-what/>

<sup>24</sup>EmekaOdumegwu-Ojukwu (1989), *Because I am Involved*, Ibadan: Spectrum Books Limited, p. xvi

Beyond political rhetoric, Nigeria of today is the creation by military coercion of a geographical area by defying all rules of geography, of a people denied the fundamental freedom of choice, of a culture flawed by the absence of basic moral code, thereby producing a pretentious nation whose life-line is the preservation of a lie. It could be argued that the first republic was peopled by well-trained, disciplined and cultured elite of a western style democracy who thought it best to replicate a kind of British isle in Africa. At the same time, their knowledge of geography and the fascination of a western better did not afford them the understanding of the socio-political essence of the ethnic nationalities that made up Nigeria. They went ahead to adopt the colonial broad division of Nigeria into two – North and South – and even went further and subdivided the South into East, West and Midwest. These four regions were set to develop politically and economically independent of each other in a nation that unites them, thereby playing down on the ethnocentricity of the social consciousness of the people.

In a twist of fate which today is represented in different narratives, sometimes ridiculous, this arrangement suffered a further devastating depletion with state creations seemingly primarily targeting to mutilate/mutate the last bastion of cohesion in inter/intra ethnic relationship. Suffice it to say that the agitation for self-determination which followed was a rich moment for dialogue but was squandered by a second generation which had become overtly and covertly militarized. This generation spent time and resources decimating ethnic ties especially in the south with the creation of states and propaganda of division. Today Sunday Okechukwu Oliseh from Delta State is not Igbo and Nyesom Wike and Rotimi Amaechi from Rivers State are not Igbo, but a coup led by Chukwuma Kaduna Nzeogwu from Okpanam in Delta State is an Igbo coup. Such inconsistency in logic can only be explained by a conscious pretence that shies away from facing the shame of the status quo in order to kick-start a sustainable and formidable national life.

By creating and fostering divisiveness and rancour, this generation killed the health of ethnic fundamentals of the nation. Ethnicity and tribe which should be the buzzword in a united diversity was corrupted and scary to mention. Consequently the politics of the third generation still dominated by the younger players of the second generation concentrated on patching and mending the broken and smashed foundation; doing so insincerely and hatefully. Gen Muhammadu Buhari belongs to this generation which ended with Abdulsalam Abubakar. It was this generation who lost the knowledge of geography and created the most laughable geographical area in human history – South south; the first and last time the world will hear of such. This creation was to seal the dichotomizing of the East which started with the creation of Rivers and Cross River States and to appellate some bonafide tribes as minority and reduce the numerical strength of the East formerly known as Igbo. It was this generation who wasted tax payers money to build a refinery in Kaduna, 815km away from the oil wells of Bayelsa, a fortune that will build three international airports, the like seen in Dubai. These are efforts to mend the broken foundation with anger and sadism.

Having seen the frustration in mending a broken foundation they called up one of the principal players of the second generation, Olusegun Obasanjo and handed him over the fourth generation

and he returned to the former old game. The fourth generation which could have taken off effectively with Umaru Musa Yar'adua was wrestled away from Goodluck Jonathan's hands by the very enemy of democracy who threw the barracks open to truncate Nigeria's second attempt at democratizing. Here we are squandering the fourth generation into the fifth.

### **Security in Nigeria requires Ethnocentric Restructuring**

Evidently, insecurity in Nigeria is a consequence of the dysfunctional nature of the country's political arrangement. This political arrangement is structured to exclude the people who should populate the polity in the pretest that the political arrangement effectively absorbs the ethnic/tribal nationalities into one national identity referred to as Nigeria. The political arrangement referred to here is the three-tier system – federal, state and local governments. Technically, the governance of the nation (whether it is a trickle down or bottom up dynamics) is a transaction/communication at these three levels. Curiously, the local communities which are the fundamental building block of the local governments are off the political radar and government schemes. Yet the real people are members of the local communities. At this local level, it is felt that government is non-existent and politics is a seasonal bargain in which power of negotiation is measured by the magnanimity of the politician. The organization and governance at this level is informed by ethnic/tribal arrangements. The Eze, Oba, Emir/Sariki, Obong, King and so on are the real rulers of the people, they are in their own turn held captives by the dysfunctional political arrangement. They operate a different legal/judicial system and maintain a complex relationship with the government wherein the latter is lord and master.

Whether intended or not, the consequence of this political arrangement is that the average Nigerian identifies self as a member of an ethnic nationality more than being a citizen of the state. The day to day life of citizens as affected by government is measured by the distance between the place of domicile and the federal/state capital or local government headquarters. Government in Nigeria has become theatrical where the people are mere spectators who connect to the entertainment heavily laden with emotion and sorrow. It is the ethnic consciousness and arrangement that offers the average Nigerian citizen the hope of surviving debilitating environmental challenges. Therefore whenever government strikes ethnic sentiments in any of its policies, it gets people actively involved.

It is not surprising, therefore, that “*Operation Amotekun*”, “*Operation ShegekaFasa*”, “*Community Vigilante*”, “*Neighbourhood Safety Corps*” and the likes will offer more effective policing and protection of lives and property than all Nigerian security agents put together. These outfits are populated by locals of same ethnic identity who have fair knowledge of the nook and crannies of the environment and people, their culture and lifestyle and who exercise an empathic social intelligence in carrying out duties. The ethnic nationalities evolve, own and foster these outfits because the people feel that they belong and involve themselves; exhibiting great sense of patriotism and responsibility.

## **Ethnocentric Models in Rebuilding the Nigerian Nation**

Long before the lumping together of an entity called Nigeria, the different peoples that make up this amalgam lived and thrived as ethnicities. Even within the ethnic groups there were differences in ancestral leanings which constituted for them platforms for negotiations, disputations, warring and alliances. Nigeria is the most populous nation in Africa with well over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and could be the most diverse in ethnic groupings in the world. These ethnic groups were not represented at any time in the negotiation of their fate and future in Nigeria. At this point in Nigerian history, ethnic consciousness has been renewed and is at the core of the identity for possible negotiation. Whatever had transpired in the past that has kept the illusion of a nation flourishing, is no longer working. In the service of Nigeria, every agent is primarily inclined to serving the interest of his/her own ethnic group. It should be so, where recruitment into any federal service or beneficiaries of any federal scheme are drawn from the bank of ethnic data. It is ethnicity which is at the basis of being Nigerian or becoming anything in Nigeria.

From the foregoing, the first ethnocentric model suggested by this work is *Reconstitution*. This involves the dissolution of the states and geopolitical zones as currently constituted and causing the over two hundred and fifty ethnic groups in Nigeria to be identified as a distinct nation state with the freedom to negotiate with their neighbours to form states as confederating units. These states in turn deliberately and freely negotiate their way into the Nigerian Federation. The second model is *Restructuring*. This will include regionalizing Nigeria on the basis of ethnic settlements. These regions are East, West, North and South. All ethnic groups negotiate themselves into alliances with their neighbours to form a semi-independent nations with a weak centre dedicated to foreign relations. The third model is *Remodeling*. In this model, the current arrangement should be expanded to a four tier arrangement in which the local communities is modeled after the other three tiers of government with government presence in the smallest areas of the federation. For instance the Eze, Igwe, Sariki, Emir, Oba are dissolved into one title of Mayor or Chief for local communities. They also engage in partisan politics and are elected into power together with a legislative and judicial arm. This will ensure harmony of the system from the grassroots and eliminate a counter ethnic culture in the governance of the people. In all these models, it is the ethnocentricity which forms the basis of the new nation and will guarantee security of lives and property.

## **Conclusion**

By the sixth decade of the Nigerian independence, at no point can it be said that the curve of crisis, violence and insecurity was flattened. Interestingly, it is ethnic factors which bring them about within the paradox of seeking better living conditions for the ethnic population. The Nigerian nation has inadvertently been viewed as the enemy by every individual ethnic group. Evidently, every ethnic group in Nigeria has either identified Nigeria as its worst enemy or has declared itself an enemy of Nigeria. Nigerian government is indeed a seamless replacement of

the former colonialists who employed a divide and rule/indirect rule system on the people who have no stake/negotiating power in whatever befalls them as a people. In this new colonial dispensation, it is black faces of self-seeking individuals or ethnocentric bigots which show through the deceptive agbada/babariga that appears African and homely.

Having gone through the various crisis and insecurity moments and episodes of the Nigerian turbulent history, it is important to reiterate at this point that it is one of the ethnic groups that constitute the biggest threat to security in Nigeria. In all intent and purposes, the Fulani tribe, for whatever reason or guise, schemes to rearrange the immemorial ethnic arrangement of the country by forcefully establishing itself in all nook and crannies of the nation as settlers. To say the least,

The herdsmen have become a serious menace in recent time and we have in the process lost thousands of precious lives in the hands of terrorists who use cattle as cover to inflict maximum harm on various communities in Nigeria. The fundamental essence of law and order has lost its meaning in the country as these marauders have somehow been elevated above the law. The quality of life has gone down drastically for millions of our citizens in the last four years to the point that we are now the global headquarters of poverty. Yet, there has not been any coordinated effort to resuscitate the economy, making it appear that poverty has become the new weapon of social engineering in the country.<sup>25</sup>

We recall the RUGA saga which died down following a national outrage but was surely not abated. In this period of COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, all manners of transportation are employed to move the Fulani elements into especially the southern states to roam the streets, occupy bushes and uncompleted buildings. It becomes curious how these transporters beat all the military checkpoints meant to implement and enforce the lockdown and what the mission of such an exercise could be. Yet it underscores the extent to which state agents are compromised in their service to the people. Local people in the south feel very insecure and it is only an ethnocentric security system that can renew their confidence in the society's ability to secure their lives and property.

Form the presentations above, there will be no end to the crisis and insecurity in Nigeria until the ethnic nationalities are given their rightful place to negotiate the co-existence of Nigeria. To possibly achieve this, this work has offered three different models captured as reconstitution, restructuring and remodeling. These were presented in the order of preference starting with the most preferred to the least preferred. The singular fact that the whole unrest experienced in the country is fired from the ethnic end suggests that solutions can only be sought from the ethnic point of view.

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<sup>25</sup> "The True Meaning of RUGA" in Vanguard, July 2, 2019, retrieved May 18, 2020, from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2019/07/the-true-meaning-of-ruga/>

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