



Conflict Studies Quarterly

Issue 37, October 2021

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ISSN 2285-7605

ISSN-L 2285-7605

Accent Publisher, 2021

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Nigeria: Religious Conflict and the Boko Haram Crisis

Michael Aondona CHIANGI

Abstract: Religious conflicts have increased interfaith suspicion between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria with each group being determined to outshine the other in the propagation of its religious beliefs. In fact, even Islamic sect Boko Haram was formed on the belief in the superiority of Islam as a monotheistic religion and with a divine mandate to purge Islam of Western influences. This paper examines the complex issues surrounding the advent of the Boko Haram sect in Nigeria. It argues that religious conflict in Nigeria results from the propagation of radicalized exegeses and the use of religious sentiments for gain political advantage. Government's failure to act decisively also accounts for religious conflict in Nigeria and the Boko Haram in particular.

Keywords: Boko Haram, conflict, religion, ideology, violence, Islam.

Introduction

Religion plays a vital and significant role in the socio-political development of Nigeria. In fact, hardly can the Nigerian state ever be discussed without reference to the formidable and remarkable impact of religion. However, religion has, in a similar vein,

largely exposed its negativities at various times in the history of Nigeria. For instance, the Usman Danfodio led Jihad, the civil war propaganda (in which it was alleged that the secession of Biafra was owing to ethnic and religious differences), the pandemonium occasioned by Nigeria's inclusion in membership of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1986, and the incessant religious crises that have shaken the foundation of Northern Nigeria for many years. Some indelible examples of such crises include the 1987 religious violence between Christian and Muslim students at

Michael Aondona CHIANGI

Barrister and Solicitor
of the Supreme Court of Nigeria

Researcher at Talking About Terrorism,
Washington DC, United States

E-mail: chiangimichael@gmail.com

Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 37, October 2021, pp. 3–20

DOI: 10.24193/cs.q.37.1
Published First Online: 05 October /2021

the College of Education Kafanchan, the religious crisis in Katsina in 1991, there was also another uprising in Kafanchan following the abduction of a Christian preacher by a Muslim group. In 2002, there was a religious riot in Kano as a protest against U.S. invasion of Afghanistan over Osama Bin Laden resulting in the death of 150 persons. Again, in 2007, some Muslim pupils killed their Christian teacher, Mrs. Oluwatoyin Olusesan, over the allegation that she had desecrated the Quran while attempting to stop a student from cheating in examination. All these demonstrate the extent to which religion could be easily deployed as a pliable tool for violent conflicts in Nigeria. These crises have consequently sown the seeds of bitter rivalry, suspicion and discord between Christians and Muslims everywhere in Nigeria. It is against the backdrop of these events that the Boko Haram sect was formed. The group was initially known for peaceful proselytization and non-violence but has now metamorphosed into a *Jihadi* faction fighting to establish an Islamic state in Nigeria.

Epistemic foundation

History has shown that religion has been used as a tool for social integration and unity in many societies. In the same vein, religion has also been used as an instrument of violence and conflict; hence it is a double-edged sword. At the turn of the 20th century, radical social scientist like Fredrick Engels, Karl Marx and Max Weber predicted the demise of religion and the imminence of secularism as an emerging paradigm. They contended that poverty, hardship and suffering makes religion a relevant social endeavour, thus, maintaining that religion should be completely eliminated because of its elusive relevance to genuine human happiness (Tucker, 1978).

These social scientists did not envisage the resurgence of religion in the era of modernization. The reason is that modernity promotes secularism and the complete emancipation of humanity from the shackles of the pervasive dominance of religion. However, the events that opened the 21st century, especially the spates of religious violence in many societies around the world, suggest the continued pre-eminence, perpetuity and persistence of religion as a formidable force directing human conduct to a great extent. This is further demonstrated by such religious based conflagrations as the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran, the altercation between Muslims and Buddhists in Sri Lanka, the festering war in Sudan, the long standing Israeli-Palestine conflict, the Sunni-Shi'a war in Iraq and the Arab Spring, among others. Religious claims have become highly relativized due to contentious exegeses or the abundance of conflicting doctrines, and the ever-increasing idiosyncrasy of peoples' religious beliefs and practices which are nonetheless represented as true routes to salvation and which often lead to religious uprisings especially in societies lacking in religious tolerance.

Consequently, the apologists of secularism have strongly advocated for the elimination of religion as a public affair. In fact, secularization seems to suggest that even Christianity

with its values centered on the promotion of Western education intrinsically promote intellectual anarchism which has spontaneously reduced the significance of religion in human affairs (Danjibo, 2012). For instance, Christians have been advised to give to Caesar what belongs to him and to God what is His. This explains why Christians are always careful not to mix secular matters with those of faith. As such, there is a clear chasm between the church and the secular state. It seems that Max Weber's "Protestant Ethic" has made significant impact on the rise of capitalism, especially in the 20th century which had inadvertently weakened the strength and efficacy of religion in the society amidst consumerism and hedonism (Weber, 1958). Karl Marx concluded that religion is the opium of the oppressed masses and that man must of necessity, be emancipated from this "estranged world of human objectification" (Tucker, 1978:111).

Samuel Huntington in his post-Cold War treatise, "Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order" predicted that the evolution of the Arab world and the communist China would pose insurmountable challenges to Western civilization. He argued that, in spite of the powerful significance of Western Civilization, the Non-western societies have continued to oppose vigorously, the power of the West. In fact, Confucian and Islamic societies have attempted to expand their economic and military power resisting the "balance" against the West (Huntington, 2003). The West has, on the other hand, integrated its Islamic and Persian heritage into a secular framework that eliminates religious ideologies. This feat has not been recorded by the Muslims hence their conducts and lifestyles are still overtly influenced and largely modeled on the *Sunnah* (teachings and practices) of Prophet Mohammed and the symbolic significance of the Qur'an.

Indeed, Islam itself is interpreted to mean the total submission to the will of Allah, so it becomes difficult to separate Islam from the secular world since religion itself determines to a large extent everything about the life of a Muslim. Given this inflexible representation of Islam as a holistic device for the regulation of the entire lifestyle of its faithful, there is consequently no room for demarcation between spiritual and secular matters for devout Muslims. This view of Islam is characteristically held by the adherents of the *Wahhabi* or *salafi* sect of Islam. To them fundamentalism is an instrument for the sanitization of Islam which is alleged to have been infiltrated and corrupted by unorthodox practices associated with modernization (Achunike, 2008). While mainstream *Salafis* believe that preaching nonviolently, offering advice to politicians, and conducting educational activities can bring about a moral reorientation over a period of time, some versions of *salafism* encourage violent Jihad as an instrument of religious proselytization and revivalism. Thurston (2018), in describing Mohammed Yusuf's *Salafi* ideologies observed quite extensively as follows:

Yusuf not only advocated a singular interpretation of what he considered true Islam; he also demanded that Muslims choose, immediately, between Islam and a set of allegedly anti-Islamic practices: democracy, constitutionalism, alliances

with non-Muslims, and Western-style education. Yusuf described his mission as one of purification, but, especially in the period leading up to the 2009 uprising, he added more militant language than other Nigerian *Salafis* used: "We call the Muslim community to correct its creed and its behaviors and its morals ... and to give children a correct Islamic education, then to undertake jihad in the way of Allah". Yusuf's stance had a rhetorical advantage over the positions adopted by other, non-jihadist *Salafis*: Yusuf's message was easier to understand, and the argumentation involved fewer steps (p. 96).

According to Yusuf, one simply had to choose between Islam and unbelief. Yusuf's rejection of democracy and Western-style schooling became Boko Haram's two most famous ideas. Yusuf preached against these two systems from the early 2000s. He grounded his stances in a set of interrelated doctrines that he took from *Salafi* scholarship. Yusuf's ultimate reference point, after the Qur'an and the hadith literature, was the Damascene theologian Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), a central figure in *Salafi* thought. Even within *Salafi* circles, Ibn Taymiyya's legacy can be read in different ways, but Yusuf viewed him as a moral authority that brooked no compromise in creed or in applying Islamic law.

The propagation of similar separatist religious ideologies explains why religious conflagrations occur frequently in Muslim dominated parts of northern Nigeria. Prudence is however required to avoid stigmatizing all Muslims; more so as the proponents of this radicalized ideology form a sub-sect seeking global recognition in all Muslim societies. Thus, in order to fully demonstrate their piousness, fanatics of the *wahabbi* or *salafi* extraction respond with violence to any act which they regard as a violation of Sharia irrespective of the fact that other religious groups are correspondingly entitled to similar acts under the law.

Consequently, insidious and violent groups have sprung up in Nigeria at different times using different violent methods, including, but not limited to, acts of open terrorism, killing and kidnapping, as well as destruction of properties for the purpose of eradicating the 'harmful influence' of Western civilization. It is for this reason that the focal point of post-Cold War political interactions has been centered on the reconciliation and unification of conflicts between Western cultures and non-Western civilizations.

The aftermath of 9/11 witnessed a flood gate articles and academic analyses and has resurrected the question regarding the correlation between religion and violence. Religion has assumed a complex and multifaceted dimension due to ultraconservative ideologies especially the jihadist as represented in the ideology of the Boko Haram.

The Boko Haram sectarian crisis

(A) Evolution

The origin of Boko Haram in Nigeria could be traced to as far back as 1945, when an Islamic scholar named Mohammed Marwa migrated from northern Cameroon and settled in Kano. While in Kano, Marwa became obsessed about the need to purify Islam. To him, Islam had been profaned by the influence of modernization and the evolution of the modern state structure (Danjibo, 2012). Marwa preached a millenarian, “Qur’an-only” doctrine that was far outside the northern Nigerian Muslim mainstream. His teachings were considered heretic and highly provocative especially his attitude towards the Emirate and other political institutions. This resulted in the expulsion of Marwa from Kano by the then Emir of Kano Alhaji Sanusi Lamido.

However, after the death of the Emir, Marwa returned to Kano and continued his abusive and provocative teachings in spite of resistance from security agencies. His preaching earned him the name “*Maitatsine*” which means “the one who curses others” and became the name of the sect. Maitatsine attracted a large number of followers mostly from the, “*tallakawas*” (the commoners) who could not afford the basic necessities of life. Maitatsine’s social base also included rural migrants to northern cities, such as migrants from Niger, and possibly also Qur’an teachers and their students (Hiskett, 1987, p. 209). The group preached a strong compulsion to kill. They believe that if they are able to kill the “*Arnas*” (infidels) who do not believe in Allah, they would go to heaven. It was the preaching of this group that orchestrated the Maitatsine riot of 1980. The riot was however successfully suppressed to a standstill. Thurston (2018) described quite graphically, the events that culminated in the riot as follows:

The religious field was becoming more complicated throughout northern Nigeria. In the 1970s and after, alongside *Salafi-Sufi* rivalries and intra-*Salafi* competitions for influence, there was a broader rise in the diversity of Islamic religiosity in the north. Sometimes, activism took the form of fringe, violent movements. One was led by the Cameroon born Muhammad Marwa, nicknamed “*Mai Tatsine*”, meaning “The One Who Curses”. Marwa, based on and off in Kano after 1945, preached a millenarian, “Qur’an-only” doctrine that was far outside the northern Nigerian Muslim mainstream. He exhorted his followers to abandon modern technology. His group clashed with authorities in Kano in December 1980. Between four thousand and six thousand people were killed, including Marwa himself (p. 59).

Years after the extinction of the Maitasine, the former leader of Boko Haram, Mohamed Yusuf emerged. Yusuf was a secondary school drop-out who was studying the Qur’an in Niger and Chad. He returned to Nigeria and settled in Maiduguri where he began to preach. He believed that Western education has corrupted the society and so it should

be moderated through Islamic scholarship. Thus, he began by establishing an Islamic school and a mosque. Meanwhile, Yusuf had developed the *Wahhabi* or *salafist* radical and fundamentalist Islamic ideologies while studying in Niger and Chad. He formed an Islamic sect known as "*Jama at Ahl as-Sunnah Lid-da'wa wal-Jihad*" meaning the "Congregation of the People committed to the propagation of Prophet's teachings and Jihad" which is known in Hausa language as "*Boko Haram*" Literally interpreted as "western education is forbidden".

In just a year, Yusuf had attracted more than 280.000 members across northern Nigeria and beyond. His followers drew their inspiration from the teachings of Maitatsine. Even though Maitatsine has been described as a direct forerunner of Boko Haram, it is more accurate to argue that Maitatsine is a movement merely having some demographic and structural similarities to Boko Haram. It is also important to stress the key theological differences between the two movements. Thus, unlike Boko Haram, Maitatsine lacked any connection to broader trends in Islamic thought such as *Salafism* or *Jihadism*. However, like Maitatsine, Yusuf preached provocatively and was highly dissident to constituted authority and the established teachings of other prominent Islamic scholars. Membership of this sect was initially drawn mostly from the "*almajeris*", the "*tallakawas*" (commoners), criminals and drug addicts. Boko Haram is argued to be an off-shoot of the defunct Maitatsine because it seeks to promote the same ideology of ultraconservative salafism as the Maitatsine did in the 1980s. The sect seeks to establish a "pure Islamic state" governed by Sharia and to put a stop to what it has described as 'westernization' (Newswatch 2009:6). Its modus operandi during the early years was the use of simply constructed weapons that required no advanced training against easily accessible targets (Valerie, 2012).

As a precursor to the large scale escalation of Boko Haram insurgency, some supporters of the group's leader had earlier orchestrated and coordinated attacks in Kannama village in Yobe state in 2003 (Thurston, 2011). A former leader of the Kanamma group, Aminu Tashen-Ilimi stated the objective of the uprisings quite unrepentantly:

Allah, the almighty Lord, has authorized every Muslim to fight to establish an Islamic government over the world. One day it will happen in Nigeria and everywhere.... I'm ready to take up arms. I don't know who gave us the name Taliban, I prefer '*mujahideen*'; the fighters. I only know the Taliban in Afghanistan, and I respect them and what they did very much... Those who fought in Kannama and Gwoza are only Muslims who performed their holy duty. (Quoted in Thurston, 2018, p. 90)

The above quoted statement clearly confirms the group's resolve to wreak havoc on Nigerians in order to establish an Islamic state and how difficult it would be to deal with this calamity that has befallen Nigeria to date.

In 2009, sectarian clashes erupted when an explosion occurred in Maiduguri in which one person was feared dead and several others wounded. While members of the sect attacked and burnt down police stations, churches, prisons and government institutions in the states of Borno, Bauchi, Yobe, Kano, and Adamawa; leaving hundreds of people dead and several others wounded, and more than 50 vehicles burnt. There were also reports that five primary schools were burnt and the headquarters of the Universal Basic Education also destroyed (Newswatch, 2009, p. 14). The headquarters of the Federal Road Safety Commission, the Police Command, and the National Population Commission including several vehicles were attacked and burnt down by the sect.

Meanwhile, more than 500 members of the Boko Haram sect were killed by security forces in Borno state. There were also reports from other parts of the North. In Bauchi state, it was reported that 41 persons were killed and several members of the sect wounded. In Kano, 300 members or sympathizers of the sect were restrained from wreaking havoc on a police station (BBC 2007). The police were said to have discovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition during a raid on the residence and mosque of one of their members. In Katsina state, Boko Haram attacked a police station but was sharply dislodged by the police and other members arrested. While in Sokoto, Kaduna, and Bauchi, the rate of havoc was quite moderate because security forces were alerted by events in Borno, Kano, and Adamawa States.

At the peak of the Maiduguri crisis, the leader of the sect, a 39-year old Mohammed Yusuf was arrested by security forces while trying to escape and later died (or as alleged, he was extrajudicially executed) in detention(BBC 2009). In the words of the then Governor of Bauchi state Isa Yuguda, their leader “rides exotic cars including expensive jeeps, has his children in choice private schools receiving sound and quality education, has private lawyers and doctors who treat and attend to him, yet he has the powers to indoctrinate people” (Newswatch, 2009, p. 19). This statement clearly shows that heretic religious teachings are capable of orchestrating violence in any society.

It is worthy of note that, in spite of the arrest of the sect’s leader, its members continued to launch attacks at strategic locations in Nigeria. On the night of September 7, 2010, the group attacked a prison in Bauchi in an attempt to free some of its members who were then in custody. The attack resulted in the death of five prison guards; many prisoners who tried to escape including the sect’s members were killed. Yet, an estimated 721 inmates were freed many of them suspected members of the sect who were arrested in connection with the 2009 uprising.

A month after the failed prison break, two attacks were launched in Maiduguri by members of the sect. On the 6th of October, 2010 the group shot and killed two security guards at the home of Awana Ngala, the then leader of the All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) and later that day he was also assassinated. Three days later, an Islamic cleric,

Bashir Kashara was killed along with one of his students in Maiduguri. During this period, the attacks were sporadic and occasional because the members did not know what the arrest of their leader would portend. On December 24, 2010, there was an attack in a church in Jos, Plateau state in which 38 people were killed and the group later claimed responsibility.

It is to be noted that members of the sect had links with other transnational fundamentalist groups especially the *Al-Qaeda*. The arrest of Yusuf and his father-in-law revealed that a large number of their members had been trained in the act of terrorism in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Iraq. In fact, rumours had it that when Osama Bin Laden was killed, some documents were recovered in his house one of which happened to be Abubakar Shekau's (Yusuf's successor) letter to Osama pledging his allegiance to him.

A few days after the uprising was repelled and the leader of Boko Haram was killed a member of the group was reported to have declared total war on Nigeria:

We have started a Jihad in Nigeria which no force on earth can stop. The aim is to Islamise Nigeria and ensure the rule of the majority Muslims in the country. We will teach Nigeria a lesson, a very bitter one... From the Month of August, we shall carry out series of bombing in Southern and Northern Nigerian cities, beginning with Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Port Harcourt... We shall make the country ungovernable, kill and eliminate irresponsible political leaders of all leanings, hunt and gun down those who oppose the rule of Sharia in Nigeria and ensure that the infidel does not go unpunished (Vanguard News, 2009).

The group went silent for some time and later resurfaced. This time Yusuf was succeeded by Abubakar Shekau, formerly his second-in-command. Under Shekau's leadership, the group continuously improved its operational capabilities and was thus heavily armed. Abubakar Shekau invoked Yusuf's ideas, adapting them to the group's new direction. There was strong rhetorical continuity between Yusuf and Shekau, especially given Yusuf's open embrace of jihadism in the final phase of his preaching. Shekau fit Yusuf's death neatly into the group's presentation of itself as the victim of state violence, rather than as the aggressor. Their first vehicle-borne explosive attack was carried out in June 2011, killing 6 persons at the Abuja police headquarters. In August the same year, Boko Haram bombed the United Nations office in Abuja, their first successful strike on a western target. In that attack, 11 UN staff and 12 visitors were killed and more than 100 injured (Ndahi, 2011).

Boko Haram has continued to launch steady attacks since 2011, striking a wide range of targets many times per week. Their attacks ranged from attacks on politicians, religious leaders, security forces and civilians. The effects of Boko Haram have been felt continuously in the whole of Northern Nigeria, Cameroun and have involved skirmishes

along the borders of Chad and Niger. In Niger, the authorities did not really take any proactive steps in stemming the tide of the group's activities. In fact, Boko Haram was essentially believed to be a Nigerian problem. The government of Niger was however compelled to change its attitude to Boko Haram by 2014 when its threat became more deadly. The territorial expansion of the group towards the Niger border was accompanied by a new push to recruit hundreds of young Nigeriens (International Crisis Group, 2017). Boko Haram's activities range from kidnapping, continued trail of massacres and destruction of properties. The subsequent campaign of violence by Boko Haram culminated in a string of bombings across Nigeria.

The group strikes at anyone considered to be an enemy of Islam or anyone unfortunate to be present whenever the insurgent group decided to send their message to the Nigerian government. The proliferation of attacks led to the declaration of a state of emergency by the then President Goodluck Jonathan in states where the menace was mostly felt during his tenure, when the crisis seemed to have reached a crescendo. However, in April 2014, the Boko Haram abducted 276 school girls from Government Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State. A few of them escaped, but majority of the remainder have not been released, instead Shekau, the leader of Boko Haram, announced his intention of selling them into sexual slavery (Ajao 2014). This was the incident that brought Boko Haram extended global attention. This abduction was in every sense a new and disturbing tactic in Boko Haram's operations which had generated contentious debates that are far reaching in global circles. Although in recent times the incumbent President Muhammadu Buhari had begun talks with members of the sect to secure the release of the abducted school girls. Some of the abducted students had been released but a majority of them are still in captivity.

In the same month of the abduction, a bomb was detonated in Abuja at a bus station in Nyanya claiming several lives. Elsewhere, Boko Haram continued to increase its presence in northern Cameroun. In May 2014, 10 Chinese workers were abducted. In July, the Cameroonian vice president's home village was attacked by about 200 militants; his wife was kidnapped along with the Sultan of Kolofata and his family. At least 15 people including soldiers and police officers were killed in the raid (BBC News, 2014b). Similar attacks continued till the dismissal of two senior military officers for incompetence by the Cameroonian president (BBC News 2014a).

(B) Factions within Boko Haram

Boko Haram has currently been divided into two factions — one led by Abubakar Shekau and the other led by Abu Masab al-Barnawi (Olojo, 2019). However, Zenn (2016) has identified a third faction which is headed by one Mamman Nur although Nur was assassinated in August 2018. These factions have caused more havoc and appear to be more complicated than when Boko Haram first began. Al-Barnawi is the son late

Muhammad Yusuf, the founder of Boko Haram. Like his father, his extremism is mild as compared to Shekau particularly with his liberal interpretation of who is liable to be killed. He supports attack on churches as a means of ending the “Christianization” of Muslim lands. But unlike Shekau, he is opposed to the killing of Muslims who do not actively oppose the *Jihad*. Al-Barnawi’s faction is also focused on asymmetric attacks on military targets other than civilians and has orchestrated raids on military facilities in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon and Chad. He is said to have more members than the other factions. In 2016 ISIL recognized al-Barnawi’s faction as Islamic State West of Africa Province (ISWAP), and Shekau’s faction was then referred to by its original name Boko Haram (McKenna n.d).

The leader of the third faction, Mamman Nur, before his death, did not belong to a defined group. Rather, he pulled together fighters from diverse factions to carry out complex operations. In 2011, it was reported that the attack on the UN office in Abuja was carried out by Mamman Nur’s faction which involved elements of Boko Haram, Ansaru, AQIM and fighters returning from Al-shabaab in Somalia. Nur preferred to launch his attacks on international targets and churches.

Be that as it may, these violent acts have continued to plague the Nigerian Government and its citizens. The common argument in Nigeria is that this mayhem has been encouraged by the alarming level of corruption and underdevelopment, poverty and human rights violations as well as the dysfunctional security architecture in Nigeria.

(C) Boko Haram and politics in Nigeria

The politicization of sensitive issues has been a culture in Nigeria for many years. This practice has helped to frustrate all efforts geared towards combating religious conflicts in Nigeria. It is no doubt that the Boko Haram insurgency or Islamic militancy in general is primarily based on the desire to establish a global Islamic order which is driven by the belief in the notion that the West is constantly at war with Islam (Neumann, 2013). This reinforced by such international events as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, the Palestinian Intifada of 1987, the U.S.-led Gulf War of 1991 and invasions of Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003, and media controversies such as the Danish caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad in 2006. These events were re-echoed in Nigeria, provoking protests by northern Muslims in some parts of the country. For some Muslims especially the *Salafis*, this global picture indicated that Islam was under severe attack by the West generally and Christianity in particular.

Yet, politics has also played a major role in the escalation of the Boko Haram sectarian violence and other religious crises in Nigeria. This is often linked to the long standing history of the socio-political imbalance between the north and the south. It could be recalled that before Nigeria’s independence in 1960, British colonial authorities ruled the north and south separately. Western schools started by Christian missionaries flourished

in the south but the northern leaders were ambivalent and even reluctant to allow the Christian missionaries to establish schools in the north for religious reasons. It could be recalled that not all Muslims were comfortable attending Western-style schools. Indeed, Boko Haram's hatred for Western education did not arise in a vacuum. Many Muslims in colonial northern Nigeria were afraid of sending their children to colonial schools because to them, it would convert their children into Christians or atheists, or would otherwise destroy their children's moral and intellectual foundations. Thus, the resultant effect was a massive economic and educational imbalance between the North and the South which persist to date.

At the peak of the Boko Haram crisis in 2014, it could be recalled that the Nigerian state was also preparing to conduct elections the following year. Consequently, Boko Haram became a tool in the hands of politicians either for propaganda or its eradication became a measure theme in most campaign promises. It is interesting to know that whereas those who used Boko Haram for propaganda were largely from the southern part of Nigeria, those who promised to eradicate Boko Haram were northerners. Indeed, even the main political parties during that period had sectional or ethnic/religious affiliation.

History has shown generally that politicians in Nigeria are known for using such militia groups for political and economic ends, only to discard them after they have served their purpose. It was reported that the former governor of Borno state, Amodu Sheriff in his bid to become the governor of the state in 2003, engaged youth support and support from figures who opposed the political status quo and were preaching the emergence of an Islamic state. The political atmosphere did not seem to favour him because his opponent appeared to be an anointed candidate of the Emir of Borno. Sheriff had to leverage on the Sharia debate to win his election. Sheriff approached Mohammad Yusuf seeking for support with the promise that Sharia would be fully introduced in Borno state. It was also reported that he employed a group of thugs named "ECOMOG" through the help of Yusuf to intimidate and scare voters away which enabled him manipulate and win the election. Thus in order to fulfill his side of the deal with Boko Haram, Amodu Sheriff established a Ministry of Religious Affairs and Special Education and appointed as Commissioner, one Buji Foi, who was widely identified as an associate and financier of Yusuf. Rumours had it that Foi siphoned funds from the state government and gave them to Yusuf, to enable him sponsor businesses for his followers and to accumulate weapons. When things got out of hand, Sheriff, in an Attempt to distance himself from Boko Haram years later, would tell reporters that his appointment of Foi into his government was because of Foi's prior experience in local government service, and not as part of a deal with Yusuf (Thurston, 2018, p. 109).

In the 2007 elections, Amodu Sheriff did not carry Boko Haram along because, apart from the power of incumbency which worked for him, he had close ties with the presidency in Abuja. Thus, for Yusuf and Boko Haram, the governor was regarded as a be-

trayer, and even a threat to their mission. Consequently, Buji Foi resigned from Sheriff's government in 2007, reportedly over Sheriff's "failure to abide by the deal" with Boko Haram. Thenceforth, Yusuf's relations with authorities deteriorated. Boko Haram decided that whenever its members were arrested, it would attempt to free them by force.

In 2009, when Yusuf, Buji Foi (the former commissioner for religious affairs in Borno state) and Yusuf's father — law were killed, the authorities thought that it would end Boko Haram but it was rather the last straw that broke the camel's back. The attacks that followed the death of its leader moved from settling scores in Borno State into a wider campaign of terrorism, as the sect spoke out more and more on issues of national politics.

In 2012, a senior member of Boko Haram, Kabiru Sokoto, was found in the Borno State Governor's lodge in Abuja after escaping from police custody. No one knows what he was doing there. This incident happened the year after Senator Ali Ndume was arrested for aiding the group on the allegation that he telephoned militants more than seventy times in a month. All these events go to show that politicians have played a role in the escalation of this violent conflict.

The strategy of politicizing sensitive issues in Nigeria or even political intervention in similar issues has made Boko Haram a deeply complicated phenomenon and difficult to distil whether it is politics of calumny and vilification as usual or Islamic radicalism.

(D) Ideology or failure of the government

Several works on Boko Haram sectarian violence in Nigeria generally tend to limit the scope of this phenomenon to issues of religious fundamentalism and ideological fanaticism. This is actually the major issue.

In his lecture on 12th June, 2009, Mohammad Yusuf, the founder of the Boko Haram sect counseled his members as follows:

Everything that you are asked to do, even if you will die, go and do it, do not come back and say: "When I went ...?" No! When you go, even if you will die, go and do it. Don't you see how they put bombs on people instructing them to leave, so they will go and explode? And yet they are happy. You should be like that. Whatever they forbid you from doing, even if you will die, do not do it (Kassim, 2017).

Historically, many Muslims have been brainwashed and made to believe that dying in the course of defending Islam would make them earn the status of a martyr. Therefore, they are ever willing and ready to sacrifice their lives through violent means as counseled by the leader of Boko Haram above. Thus, this "ethos of self-sacrifice and suicidal martyrdom" carried out in the name of God has grown exponentially in recent times with considerably higher levels of casualties (Hoffman 1998, p. 84).

Yusuf's conviction was undoubtedly inspired by the ideology being promoted by leading *Salafi* scholars which he popularized after the Kannama uprising. Thus, while it is true that religious extremism is the main cause of Boko Haram, other factors have also helped to amplify and accelerate the insurgency.

Another challenge is the ubiquity of *almajeri* mostly in northern Nigeria. The *almajeri* are children sent by their parents to study the Qur'an under a *malam* (teacher). They roam the streets in major cities in Northern Nigeria, begging for alms and scavenging for food. Such children, because of their exposure to different forms of pressure, are potential sources of organized aggression. Thus, given their vulnerabilities, *almajeri* children are easy preys to radicalized and distorted religious beliefs. Whenever there is a riot in the northern states, these children become the foot soldiers deployed to perpetrate violence in the name of religion or for a token.

On the other hand, the general view of every average Nigerian is that both religious and sectarian violence is a product of the failure of government at various levels. The conditions under which Boko Haram emerged are akin to the socioeconomic conditions that served as a fertile ground for the breed of similar movements elsewhere. Conditions of living in Nigeria have grown from bad to worse; mass poverty, inequality in educational, political and employment opportunities, pervasive illiteracy arising from unemployment and corruption in high places. The misuse of funds earmarked for development has become a trend, thus leaving infrastructures to decay to the stage that they become irreparable. Life has become so difficult for Nigerians especially the youths who have to deal with societal pressure and reproach.

Furthermore, corruption has been particularly destructive in Nigeria. The political elites have failed to utilize the nation's wealth to effect positive changes to the lives of Nigerian citizens. This has created a disenchantment and frustration among Nigerians. Surprisingly, Nigeria is one of highest producers of petroleum in the world but where ironically many Nigerians live below one dollar a day. Northern Nigeria is the worst part hit by this predicament. A report made available by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2010 showed that the National poverty rate was 60.9%, but it was 77.7% for north west and 76.3% for the north east compared with 59% for south west (Lai, 2014). The failure to balance this economic disconnects between the north and the south is a pressing challenge that the Nigerian government must strive to overcome.

In addition, the vast regiment of unemployed youths mostly resident in cities have become available instruments for the prosecution of sectarian crisis. An idle hand they say is the devil's workshop. There were reports of graduates who tore their certificates and joined Boko Haram just to demonstrate the frustration of young people who left the university and could not secure any job after graduation. For such people, Western education will ever remain valueless as replicated in the Boko Haram sectarian ideology.

A nation that allows its youth to be idle is said to be sitting on a time bomb because frustrated people seek relief from religion. When life becomes too miserable for a common man, the hope of redemption by religious men becomes an attractive alternative and any call to reform the society is ever keenly heeded, as many believe that the 'prophet who shall raise the nation to greater heights has come at last' (Adesoji, 2010).

Many Nigerians from the North thought that the proposed introduction of Sharia law was going to usher in a new and religious paradigm of public administration, allocation and distribution of resources. Unfortunately, the bad has become worse as some state governors (especially Amodu Sheriff of Borno state) who had keenly advocated and introduced Sharia as a state penal code were more interested in using religious sentiment to mobilize support for themselves and thus failed to deliver the services expected of them. Consequently, the North continues to deteriorate economically with the standard of living terribly plummeting. Thus the level of frustration and poverty among youths in the country becomes a fertile ground for the breed of violence of the kind perpetrated by Boko Haram.

Therefore, Boko Haram is partly associated with the failure of government at all levels to make the welfare of the citizenry a priority. The group might have seen this level of dilapidation and were bent on reversing the trend. To them, the protagonists of social, economic and economic dysfunction were leaders who had been trained in western-style schools. Western values and everything associated therewith was considered unconscionable and repugnant to the doctrines of Islam as it encouraged corruption, greed and laziness, thus Nigerians could not rely on it for the uplifting of the nation to greater heights.

The continued tension and the increasing suspicion between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria among other issues resulted in the declaration of the Sovereign National Conference in 2015 to discuss whether Nigeria should split or remain as a single entity.

(E) Trivialization of early warning signs

In spite of the virulent nature of religious-based conflicts, Nigerian governments have always treated issues of religion with flippancy and laxity. History has shown that security reports have always alerted the government on the degree of threats posed by religious extremism and radicalism, yet the government takes it for granted. It could be recalled that when the Maitatsine for instance emerged, the government did not immediately direct its attention to it. Rather the activities of the group were seen even by prominent politicians as a normal way of "spreading and defending the course of Islam". It was when the group leader Marwa began to arm his members with knives and deadly weapons that the government authorities became attentive to the belligerent modus operandi of the group. Reports indicated that members of the group were dissident to government authorities, ignored court orders and created "no-go areas"

in some parts of Kano state. These set of activities were events that later culminated in the Maitatsine riot of 1980. Had the government responded preemptively, the conflict would not have erupted. A report of the tribunal of enquiry set up in 1980 by the Kano state Government concluded that:

“if there had been good and effective liaison between Local Authorities, Traditional Authorities, and the Police Force... this country would have been properly rid of him [Marwa] once and for all. Authorities of all stripes had been intimidated by the strength of Marwa’s following” (Kano State Government Report, 1981).

The Boko Haram sect too, was initially repelled when the group was becoming a threat to Nigerians sometime in 2005 by security operatives in the states of Borno, Bauchi and Yobe. That was the famous “Operation Sawdust” which led to the arrest and detention of Mohamed Yusuf and Bello Maiduga under the regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo. They remained in detention until 2007 when the late President Yar’ Adua assumed power. According to Danjibo (2012), some Muslim scholars and elites approached the president and lobbied for the release of the arrested radicals by persuading him to believe that these were just Islamic evangelists. This made the president to believe that the arrest and detention of the group’s leader was not justifiable. Yar’ Adua, immediately ordered for their release. Shortly after that, the group continued their radicalization and proselytization. There were early warning signs pointing to the violent potential of this group. In fact, reports were submitted to the government in Borno State for instance, and the Federal government pointing to the potential threats posed by the group. These reports and the perceived threats were sharply ignored by the government.

It was when reports further alleged that the group was making bombs that the government began to pay a closer attention to their activities, when unfortunately, the saga had escalated. Immediately, security agents were ordered to invade their premises and dislodge them. During the raid, an explosion took place killing a member of the sect. This resulted in violence which sharply spread over to other parts of northern Nigeria. Thus, if the government had responded immediately to both the Maitatsine and Boko Haram sectarian violence as well as other religious conflagrations that had occurred in Nigeria in the past, the result would not have been catastrophic.

Concluding remarks

Religion will forever remain a formidable force to reckon with in Nigeria. However, sectarian movements will similarly continue to engage the mind of the Nigerian state. It is imperative to note, that the rise of extreme religious groups in Nigeria is associated with the preposterous politicization of identity based conflicts, which has resulted in the erosion of a sense of common citizenship fostered by state contraction and popular disillusionment with local politics. Other incidental factors include socioeconomic

grievances and widespread elite corruption clearly implicated in the ontology of the Boko Haram sectarian ideology.

Since its inception, Boko Haram has become an embodiment of insecurity, fear and suicide bombings. The group has emerged as the most violent religious sect in contemporary times. Boko Haram is not a novel phenomenon; rather, it is a microcosm of the broader range of political cum religious activism, revivalism and radicalization which has dotted the history of northern Nigeria since the Usman Danfodio-led jihad of the nineteenth century.

Thus, in order to effectively address the problem, the Nigerian Government has employed military strategy which is utterly undefined and may unlikely be able to achieve the aim which the present writer thinks, requires a deeper and sophisticated political engagement. Although this paper does not in any way, claim to have a grand strategy in combating religious conflict or Boko Haram in particular, a few important points will however suffice as a way forward.

First, elites in government at various levels should endeavour to deliver good and honest governance to the people. The evil effects of bad governance, corruption, total lack of security and welfare have all become attributed to those who govern. All leaders should demonstrate a commitment and desire to pursue the genuine ideals of democracy and accountable leadership. The group had rightly pointed out that the dysfunctional political system in Nigeria is a consequence of western values and orientation. Thus, Nigerians will continue to experience similar uprisings unless and until the government decides to show a strong commitment in reversing the contemporary paradigm or model of governance for the good of all.

Second, the clandestine elements that manipulate terrorist group for nefarious and selfish agenda should also be exposed without fear. In this regard, the media has a crucial role to play. Persons who have been arrested in connection with this saga should be thoroughly interrogated and prosecuted where necessary. On the other hand, Muslim intellectuals who are committed to the universal course of Islam should join hands to counter the narrow, bigoted, dogmatic and radicalized distortions of the purveyors of violence and terrorism.

A neo-religious educational praxis that would generate multi-religiosity in our youths should be the priority of relevant stakeholders, as well as a de-emphasis on faith-oriented curriculum which is overwhelmed by religious indoctrination and fanaticism. To this end, the curriculum of our religious instruction must necessarily be revisited in order to expunge those areas that are capable of triggering interfaith violence.

Conversely, persons who have been arrested in connection with religious violence should be made to go through a de-radicalization process to gradually eliminate the ideology of terror. There should also be an effective rehabilitation program for persons

who have not just been brainwashed, but who also take religious combat as a normal way of expressing their religious commitment. If an effective rehabilitation program was initiated the remnants of the Maitasine would not have resurfaced as Boko Haram to propagate the same ideology.

Also, the political parties in Nigeria should endeavour to moderate their ideologies along the paths of patriotism rather than being tribal or religious, as this will facilitate the construction of a national philosophy. Efforts should therefore, be made to achieve a more cohesive political class by making political parties largely integrative.

Finally, it must be borne in mind, that the war against Boko Haram is the responsibility of everyone - government, business unions, civil society organizations, media, professionals and academics etc. All should endeavour to work towards a just and equitable Nigeria where tolerance and mutual respect will be highly recognized.

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Uzbekistan: A Critical Analysis of the Official Discourse on Terrorism

Tribedi CHUTIA

Abstract: Since its independence, Uzbekistan has often portrayed terrorism as one of the gravest threats to its sovereignty, integrity, unity, and internal stability. Uzbekistan's authoritarian regime has been perceived endorsing and executing a series of counter-terrorism policies to exorcise this hazardous threat that includes all possible tactics for eliminating terrorism from the respective region. Unlike the state's proclamation about the increasing gravity of the terrorist threat, some international human right organizations and Central Asian experts depict an opposite picture of it. They are seen to be very critical of the state's exaggerated version of the terrorist threat and question the state's intention behind such projection. This paper makes a systematic effort to critically examine how Uzbekistan's authoritarian leaders have constructed official discourse on terrorism, taking into consideration the social, political and economic context of the region. The paper also examines the authenticity of the state's continuous projection of terrorism to be one of the gravest threats to the sovereignty and integrity of the region by incorporating and analyzing a detailed account of the terrorist acts that have taken place in Uzbekistan since 1991 to 2018. Finally, the paper also explains why the Uzbek authoritarian regime is keen to construct terrorism to be one of the most dangerous threats to the state.

Keywords: terrorism, Uzbekistan, Counterterrorism Act, security, non-state actor.

Tribedi CHUTIA

PhD Research Scholar,
Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies,
School of International Studies,
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi
Email: tribedichutia7@gmail.com

Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 37, October 2021, pp. 21–35

DOI: 10.24193/csq.37.2
Published First Online: 05 October /2021

Introduction

In today's global world, the term 'terrorism' has become so familiar that it can be compared with an ingredient like the potato in North Indian cuisines every day and everywhere in all North Indian dishes. The media, more particularly some of the electronic channels, by using graphical design and sound, display the news of terrorist attacks in a very excited but horrific way,

implying that the terrorists involved that attacks (if they escape alive) themselves feel exotic for their deeds. On the other hand, civilians get frightened to step outside their homes. Simultaneously, in such cases, the state machinery often leaves no stone unturned to prove the inference that terrorism is the principal threat to the sovereignty and integrity of the state and the whole world community.

However, the studies and statistics related to the past terrorist attacks' casualties reflect a different picture against the state's projection. The research shows that the terrorist attacks in the last two decades cost far fewer human lives than those killed by poverty, hunger, and climate change. For example, the Global Terrorism Index (2019) has figured the death of 15,952 persons (Afghanistan – 7,379, all other Countries 8,563) from terrorism in the year of 2018.

On the contrary, the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2019) has reported that in 2018, an estimated 6.2 million children and minors under the age of 15 years died, commonly from "preventable causes" such as pneumonia, birth asphyxia, congenital anomalies, diarrhea and malaria. These can be prevented or treated with "simple, affordable interventions" containing vaccination, sufficient nutrition, drinking water and foodstuff and proper care by a skilled health provider when required.

Similarly, according to Kofi Annan's think-tank, a well-known global humanitarian forum, "global warming costs 300,000 human lives a year" (Vidal, 2009). The World Health Organization's report on "Climate Change and Human Health" has noted that climate change is "expected to cause approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year between 2030 and 2050" (WHO, 2018). The above argument does not mean that terrorist activities should be justified. Nevertheless, at the same time, the intense and intention of the state's response to terrorism should also be critically reexamined, which is often trapped in power politics and the unfolded ambitions of the regime. However, before analysing in details about the official discourse on terrorism, it is pertinent to sketch a brief overview of Uzbekistan for understanding the social-political and economic dimension of the region.

The Republic of Uzbekistan: An overview

Uzbekistan is one of the largest countries in Central Asia. It emerged as an independent state on August 31, 1991, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Geographically, Uzbekistan is situated in "the heart of Central Asia" and on "the ancient Great Silk Road between Asia and Europe" (Country Watch, 2015). Being the third-largest country in Central Asia, it covers an area of 447,000 square kilometers. It is the only country in Turkestan that shares borders country in the region. Uzbekistan shares its boundary with Kazakhstan in the north and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in the north-east. The south-east shares a border with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in the southwest, and Afghanistan in the south. About 80% of Uzbekistan's landmass is surrounded by plane

desert or semi-desert, with the vast Kyzyl-Kum Desert filling its northern lowlands. “To the south-east are the foothills of the Tien Shan, which rise steadily to heights reaching 4,500 meters above sea level” (Asian Development Bank, 2010) . Uzbekistan also has a short border with Afghanistan, which is considered one of the world’s most unstable countries. Uzbekistan is a dry, landlocked country. Being entirely bordered by landlocked countries, Uzbekistan is also called a doubly landlocked country.

While looking at Uzbekistan’s economic prospects, it is observed that Uzbekistan is one of the largest cotton producer countries in the world. At present, it is the eighth-largest cotton producer and the eleventh-largest cotton exporter in the world. Moreover, Uzbekistan is also rich in natural resources like hydrocarbon, gold, copper, and uranium.

Demographically, Uzbekistan, being the most populous country in Central Asia, has a population of approximately 32 million. It is important to note that it is one of the poorest countries in Central Asia, and most of the people are still dwelling in rural areas which are heavily dependent on cotton farming for their livelihood. The United Nations Development Programme’s report on “Poverty, Inequality, and Vulnerability in the transition and developing economies of Europe and Central Asia” (2014) has indicated the pathetic conditions of the people of Uzbekistan. According to this report, if the “Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)\$4.30/ Day poverty line is treated as a regional income poverty threshold and if PPP\$ 2.15/Day is accepted as a regional threshold for extreme income poverty”, then, the people who live in extreme income poverty in Uzbekistan would be more than 10 million. Naturally, this data speaks a lot about the contemporary socio-political and economic situation in the region.

Ethnographically, Uzbekistan has numerous ethnic groups. However, the most dominant ethnic group in Uzbekistan is the ethnic Uzbeks. It comprises 80% of the total population. According to the statistics of the Government of Uzbekistan, over 129 ethnic groups are living in Uzbekistan. (Country Watch, 2015) Since independence, Uzbekistan has taken the membership of some regional and international organisations. At present, it is a member of United Nations, Eurasian Economic Community (Eurasec), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO). It also joined the Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUAM) alliance in 1997 but formally withdrew from it in 2005 (Sevim & Rozanov, 2014).

A brief accounts of terrorist attacks

Independence from the Soviet Union had never been a long waiting and precious dream for the Uzbek leaders and its citizens; neither had they fought the years-long struggle to accomplish it. Instead, some scholars like Ajay Patnaik, Mariya Omelicheva, and others argue that like other C.A. states, Uzbekistan was heavily dependent on the USSR’s economic aids had hardly had any preparation to be disintegrated from it. However, after

obtaining independence, protection and preservation of sovereignty and integrity of the state have become the first and foremost *raison d'état* of the C.A. states for which they have been consistently working since independence. The President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, proved himself as more aggressive in zealously preserving the states' *raison d'état* at any cost. The disintegration of the USSR which brought about unexpected sovereignty to the C.A. states ushered in some non-traditional security threats like arms smuggling, drug trafficking, environmental degradations, religious extremism, and terrorism. Hence, Uzbekistan's government has been steadily expressing concern on the alleged grave security threat posed by the religious extremism and terrorism since the early 1990s.

Contrary to the government's projection, Uzbekistan did not experience any severe terrorist attack until 1999. However, violence erupted in Namangan province in December 1997 where the Islamic insurgent groups murdered many police personnel and beheaded two others, a government official and a prominent community member. The government wasted little time in arresting several hundred people for alleged connections with the tragic incident in response. The response of the government was so massive and aggressive that within four months, more than one thousand people were arrested from the Ferghana strongholds of Namangan and Andijan provinces (Crosston, 2006).

Uzbekistan experienced the first major terrorist attack at the very beginning of 1999. On February 16 of that year, five bombs exploded near the government buildings in Tashkent, claiming the lives of 16 persons and wounding more than 100 others. It was an unprecedented attack in a former Soviet state U. S. Department of State, 2000).

Another severe terrorist incident took place in Uzbekistan in March 2004. It was the first reported suicide bombing in Central Asia. After a blast at a safe house in Bukhara, "suicide bombers attacked a popular bazaar and other locations in Tashkent, causing the deaths of more than a dozen police officers and innocent bystanders and tens of injuries" (U.S. Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2004 — Uzbekistan). An ambiguous Islamic Jihad group of Uzbekistan claimed responsibility for this attack. It is to be noted that Islamic Jihad group of Uzbekistan is reportedly an alias of the IMU or a splinter group of the IMU that has changed its name "to the Islamic Jihad Union(IJU) in 2005" (Nichol, 2010).

Suicide bombing again occurred in Tashkent on July 30, 2004. At 5 pm, on that day, three nearly simultaneous bomb blasts raged through Uzbekistan's capital outside the overwhelmingly guarded U.S. and Israeli embassies and the headquarters of the Uzbek chief prosecutor. According to news report of Washington Post (July 31, 2004) at least two security guards were killed and more than five individuals got wounded in this attack. Although the primary target of the terrorists was the diplomatic personnel of the embassies, no employees of embassies were killed or wounded in this incident.

The IMU and IJG took responsibility and clarified that the “bombings were aimed at the Uzbek and other apostate government” (Nichol, 2010).

Uzbekistan’s government has also been vigorously projecting the bloody Andijan massacre, (infamous for massive human rights violation) as a pre-planned terrorist act and blamed IMU members and Hizb ut Tahir for provoking violence to destabilise the government. The Andijan massacre took place on May 13, 2005, where the Uzbek military force indiscriminately fired on protesters resulting in the death of dozens or conceivably hundreds of noncombatants and countless injuries that arose severe human rights concerns all around the world.

On May 25-26, 2009 another minor attack erupted in the border town of Khanabad where the terrorists attacked a police checkpoint situated near the Uzbek Kyrgyz’s border that cost the life of at least one police personnel and injured several onlookers. Four bombs exploded in Andijan in the commercial district in which numerous deaths and injuries were alleged. The Uzbek Government blamed IMU for this attack, but, IJU allegedly claimed responsibility (START, 2016)

Another shoot-out incident in Tashkent in September 2009 between government authorities and alleged extremists caused three IMU associates’ lives. The Uzbek authority also claimed this group’s direct involvement in the 1999 blast and recent assassination in Tashkent.

In November 2011, another explosion incident was reported in the South of Uzbekistan that damaged a railway bridge that connected Termez and the town of Kurgan-Tyube in Tajikistan. Uzbek law enforcement authorities declared the bombing “a terrorist act”, but no one asserted responsibility. “No casualties were recorded as a result of the explosion” (START, 2016) (. Nonetheless, it is repeatedly alleged by the human rights organisations and political opposition that Uzbekistani authorities often overlaps any violence with the terrorist acts to portray the gravity of the terrorist threat and justify the draconian counter-terrorism measures of the government.

Examining official definitions of terrorism

The government of Uzbekistan often perceives as a severe victim of terrorism and is showing its uncompromising commitment to eliminate all the possible threats posed by terrorist groups to the security and sovereignty of the republic. It has enacted a series of counter-terrorism laws for efficiently dealing with the issue. The official documents from which the official definitions of Terrorism in Uzbekistan have been clustered are as follows.

- Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan 1994
- Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Combat of Terrorism 2000
- Act on combating the legalisation of income derived from criminal activity and financing of terrorism 2004.

The Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan enacted in 1994 has provided an inclusive definition of terrorism. The principal purpose of the code is to define grounds and principles of obligation, determine how the socially dangerous acts are to be recognised as crimes, and prescribe punishments and other actions of legal influence that may be used on persons who perpetrated socially dangerous acts. It has prescribed various legal actions for different terrorism-related crimes. The code has defined terrorism as a socially dangerous act. It has incorporated a series of articles that determine liability both directly for terrorism (article 155 "Terrorism") and for crimes that are instrumental to the grounding and enactment of terrorist acts, including "smuggling of various types of weapons and their ammunition" (article 246 "Smuggling").

Further, the code also includes deliberate acts related to the "illegal circulation of weapons" (Article 247), "Illegal procurement of firearms, ammunition, explosive substances or explosive devices" as a terrorist offence. Eventually, the code incorporates the activities such as the "negligent storage of firearms and ammunition within the boundaries of terrorist crimes" within the sphere of terrorist crime (Government of the Republic of the Uzbekistan, 1994).

Article 155 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan (CCRU) (1994) which directly deals with terrorism has defined terrorism as follows:

Terrorism, that is, violence, use of force, or other acts, which pose a threat to an individual or property, or the threat to undertake such acts in order to force a state body, international organisation, or officials thereof, or individual or legal entity, to commit or to restrain from some activity in order to complicate international relations, infringe upon the sovereignty and territorial integrity, undermine the security of a state, provoke war, armed conflict, destabilise the socio-political situation, intimidate the population, as well as an activity carried out in order to support the operation of and to finance a terrorist organisation, preparation and commission of terrorist acts, direct or indirect provision or collection of any resources and other services to terrorist organisations, or persons assisting to or participating in terrorist activities (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1994, p. 46).

The code has also fixed and prescribed different penalties for the terrorist activities depending on the crime's gravity. The law establishes punishment with imprisonment from ten to fifteen years for those terrorist activities which attempt "to the life of or infliction of bodily injury to a state official or public figure or representative of authorities", perpetrated in association with their State or public activities. Such activities must be committed for the "destabilization of situation or influence upon decision making by government bodies or impediment to political or other public activity" (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1994).

Further, the code has added that if the actions mentioned above cost an individual's life or create other grave consequences, then the convicted shall be awarded punishment with imprisonment for fifteen to twenty years or capital punishment.

In this regard, it is noteworthy to mention that Uzbekistan's criminal code also prescribes harsh punishment to less dangerous acts such as direct or indirect connection with the creation of banned organisations or disseminating materials and publications intended to undermine state public order, etc. These are considered a criminal offence and sentenced to long terms of 10–25 years (Omeliicheva, 2011).

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan On Combat of Terrorism

The Republic of Uzbekistan's primary legislation on countering terrorism entered into force on December 14, 2000. The main objectives of the law stated in Article 1 are to "ensure security to individual, society, and state from terrorism", "protection of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state" and the maintenance of "civil peace and national accord". This law has clarified the notions about the specific commonly used terminology of terrorism discourse such as 'hostage,' 'terrorism,' 'terrorist organisations' 'terrorist actions' and so on. It also incorporates a lengthy definition of terrorism and a detailed account of all those activities included under the ambit of terrorist actions. The definition of terrorism presented in the law is almost the same as the definition incorporated in Article 155 of the Criminal Code. It defines Terrorism as:

Violence, threat of violence or other criminal acts, which cause danger to life and health of a person, of destruction (damage) of property and other material objects, and which are intended to force the state, an international organisation, physical or juridical person to undertake or withhold of undertaking of certain actions, to bring tension into international relations, to violate sovereignty, territorial integrity, to undermine security of the state, to provoke armed conflicts, to frighten population, to destabilise social-political situation, in order to reach political, religious, ideological and other aims, which are punishable under Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2000, p. 3)

The law has encompassed an extensive list of activities within the sphere of terrorist actions. The list includes:

taking and keeping hostages, infringement on the life of public figure, the representatives of national, ethnic, religious, and other groups of the population, foreign countries and international organisations; seizure, damage, destruction of the public or civil objects. Similarly, the actions like explosion, arson, deployment or threat of deployment of explosive devices, radioactive, biological, explosive, chemical and other hazardous substances are also the examples of terrorist

actions incorporated in this law. (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2000, p. 3)

The list has also contained a couple of other activities namely “the seizure, hi-jacking, damage, destruction of overland, water, and air transport means”, and so forth. Simultaneously, “the creation of panic and provocation of disorder in the area of public gathering and during public events” and the other deliberate acts such as “causing harm or threat to life, health and property of individuals or juridical entities by way of setting up crashes, catastrophes of man-caused character”; spreading of threats by various means and methods are considered as terrorist acts. Eventually, the list may include “any other actions of the terrorist character, which are determined as such by the legislation of the Republic of Uzbekistan and by universally recognised norms of international law”. All these acts, as mentioned above, are liable to legal action (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2000).

Labeling terrorism as *the special grave crime*

While looking at the official documents related to terrorism and counteraction to terrorism, adopted and implemented by Uzbekistan, it is observed that there are many articles in these official documents that directly recognise terrorism primarily as ‘criminal act’. These documents have not confined terrorism too merely as a criminal act. Instead, they have distinguished terrorism from the petty, average, and grave crime categories and have placed terrorism as the ‘special grave crime’. For example, in chapter 8, article 155 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Uzbekistan (1994) has declared terrorism as a crime against “peace and humanity”. The language of the Code concerning Terrorism is such that it does not present terrorism only as a crime. Beyond it, the code constructs terrorism as one of the gravest crime and one of the most dangerous threats to peace and humanity by prescribing punishments for specific terrorist acts with imprisonment up to 20 years or capital punishment. Such long-term imprisonment or capital punishment is established by the code only for those recognised as “especially serious crime”. In this regard, it is essential to note that the law has defined ‘crime’ as “culpable socially dangerous act”.

Further, it has divided crime with “insignificant social danger; less serious; serious; and especially serious depending on the grounds of character and degree of the crime” (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 1994). Moreover, the code has also criminalised a long list of intentional acts by incorporating them within terrorist actions. Similarly, the Republic of Uzbekistan’s law on Combat of Terrorism (2000) has also used the same language and has constructed terrorism as ‘criminal acts’.

Constructing distinct identity to the terrorist by using emotive words

The use of emotive language plays a vital role in branding terrorism as something more than merely a criminal act. It constructs terrorism as inimical to the constitutional principles and values of the state. The primary purpose of using emotive language to denounce terrorism is to create a distinct identity of the terrorist, which is defined as opposite to the self-defined identity of the 'commons' by the state. The terrorism-related official documents of Uzbekistan contain many emotive and derogatory words to describe terrorist actions and terrorist. The use of emotive language in denouncing terrorism and terrorist acts is widely seen in the Uzbek leaders' speeches and statements. Islam Karimov, the founding president of the Republic of Uzbekistan, is the most prominent regarding it. In his address at the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Prague Summit held on November 22, 2002, Karimov described terrorism as "the most dangerous challenge to the contemporary civilisation". He also used some other emotive words such as "deadly", "inhumane", "monstrous" to describe terrorist threat (NATO, 2002).

Just after a series of six-car bombing in Tashkent in February 1999, Islam Karimov, without mentioning the word 'terrorism' or 'terrorist', expressed his response in the following words-"I am prepared to rip off the heads of 200 people, to sacrifice their lives, in order to save peace and calm in the Republic" (Roth, 2016).

Another notable example of describing terrorism with emotive words by the Uzbek authority is contained in the U.N. official document. Addressing the fifty-sixth U.N. General Assembly session, Abdulaziz Kamilov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan coined terrorism and drug trafficking as "the principal threats to the present and future of humankind". In the same speech, he described terrorism as "a plague of the twenty-first century that can enter any household" (United Nations General Assembly, 2001). Such emotive language is used to construct a distinct, monster-like identity of terrorism and terrorist, which is opposite to the self-defined liberal, democratic, secular character of the state.

Projecting terrorism as an act perpetrated solely by non-state actors

While observing Uzbekistan's official records that primarily deal with the phenomenon of terrorism and terrorism-related criminal infractions, it is noticed that these documents represent the state-centric bias by structuring terrorism as an act perpetrated mainly by non-state actors. These documents have defined terrorism as an act committed by only a group of individuals with prior agreement or an organised group. Moreover, these documents also describe terrorism as those criminal acts that endanger the sovereignty, territorial integrity and public security of the state. By doing so, they rule out the possibility of involving the state in perpetuating any terrorist act. For example, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Combat of Terrorism (2000) has defined "terrorist group" as "a group of persons, who committed according to the prearranged

plan of terrorist action, preparation of terrorist action or attempt of its committing". This law has defined "terrorist organisation" as "stable association of two or more persons or terrorist groups to conduct terrorist activity" (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2000). Both these definitions describe terrorism as an act committed by "a group of persons". The non-state nature of the terrorist act has been reaffirmed in the definition of terrorism contained in this law. This law defines terrorism as "violence, the threat of violence or other criminal acts... to violate sovereignty, territorial integrity, to undermine the security of the state... To reach political, religious, ideological and other aims" (Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2000). By defining terrorism as an act committed to violating sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of the state, the law has directly discarded the perspective that assumes the state as the potential perpetrator of the terrorist act.

Is terrorism posing dangerous threat to Uzbekistan?

Islam Karimov, the Republic of Uzbekistan's founding president till his death in September 2016 had been continuously portraying terrorism as the most dangerous threat to the state's stability and security. Nonetheless, instead of the official projection and proclamation on the gravity of the terrorist threat, a considerable number of international non-governmental human rights organisations such as the "Human Rights Watch (HRW)", "the International Crisis Group (ICG)", are seen depicting a different picture regarding it. The reports based on extensive research and rigorous field study published by these organisations have negated the Uzbek government's claim on terrorism as one of the most dangerous threats to the state's security and stability (For example World Report 2016, U.S. Department of State' Annual Country report on terrorism). Similarly, many Central Asian experts, such as Mariya Y. Omelicheva (2011), Vitaly V. Naumkin (2005), David Lewis (2014), Sarah Lain (2016), Stuart Horsman (2008), have also reaffirmed the depiction of these organisations by arguing that the Central Asian states to a large extent have exaggerated the gravity of the threat posed by terrorism. The paper has analysed two popular open-source data on global terrorist incidents, namely, Global Terrorism Database and RAND database to examine the gravity of the terrorist threat to Uzbekistan's sovereignty and integrity. The database includes various essential information about terrorist incidents such as the number of events, the perpetrators' name, the number of fatalities and injuries. The data available in GTD and RAND have clarified that significantly fewer terrorist incidents have taken place in Uzbekistan than the other terrorist affected countries of the globe. According to the GTD data, Uzbekistan has faced 18 terrorist incidents from 1992 to 2018.

All these incidents have been recognised as terrorist acts on the grounds of the criteria, made by this database. According to this data, the number of total fatalities in all these incidents is fifty-eight, and one hundred sixty-six people have been reported to be injured. Out of the total, four incidents do not cost any fatality. The data has also reflected

a drastic decrease in terrorist incidents in Uzbekistan since 2005. The most important thing is that the only terrorist attack that cost 23 human lives is also seen intermingling with disputes regarding the perpetrators' identity. A considerable number of experts have very critical views about this incident. They have suspected government security forces' involvement in perpetrating such incidents to continue wide-scale suppression on the state's anti-government forces. Significantly, out of the 18 incidents, the perpetrator of the 14 incidents have been listed as unknown.

Another open-source database on terrorism, namely the RAND Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents has also reported sixteen terrorist attacks happened in Uzbekistan from 1992 to 2010. According to this database, 163 people were injured, and the number of casualties was 37 in these incidents (RAND,1994). Like the Global terrorism database, it has also reported a massive reduction of Uzbekistan terrorist attacks since 2005. This database has listed only three incidents in terrorist nature which were taken place between 2005 to 2010.

Examining the gravity of state repression

This paper has already explained how Uzbekistan's terrorism-related official documents have constructed terrorism as an act committed solely by non-state actors. The tendency of excluding the state from the label of terrorist has assigned sole legitimate power to the state to use violence against anyone if the state believes it necessary to do so. The concentration of the legal power of using force or violence upon a single entity may have brought the chance of misusing this power by that entity. One should keep in mind that the state is an abstract concept that inherently deserves idealism, but the individual or the group that regulates the state is neither abstract nor ideal. Lord Acton rightly asserts, power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

While enquiring the perpetrators of the frequently occurred violent incidents in the surrounding, Richard Jackson (2007) has put forward an important statement. He has stated that if the use of violence or the threat to use force for political objectives is considered as a terrorist act, then the state itself has committed a large number of such violence. The Central Asian countries are fit for this assertion, which has long been known for exercising the widespread scale suppression and violence against the political opponents, radical religious groups, and any anti-government voice in the state.

The ample examples of perpetrating indiscriminate and ruthless violence against civilians by the Central Asian countries' government are found in various human rights organisations' various reports. The government used to execute massive and brutal crackdown on the selected individuals or the group more acutely when it is followed by immediately occurred alleged terrorist attack. For example, in Uzbekistan, just after the serial car bombing in Tashkent in 1999, Uzbekistan's government accused the IMU of committing this terrorist act and started a large wave of repression. A total of

twenty people appeared before the court on the charge of attempting to assassinate Karimov and overthrow the government (Naumkin, 2005). The court conducted this trial in closed-door and declared all of them as guilty. Finally, the court sentenced six defendants to the highest penalty- execution by firing squad. The others received punishment with imprisonment for ten to twenty years (Naumkin, 2005). The Uzbekistani authorities continuously ruled with an iron fist by exercising arrest, torture, and repression as the most appropriate method of maintaining the state's security and stability. The International Religious Freedom report, published by the U.S. Department of States noted that "there were about 300 arrests in the first seven months of 2002 on religious or political grounds, compared with 1500 on average in any seven months in 1999–2001" (U.S. Department of State, 2002).

Uzbekistan authorities again unleashed a comprehensive campaign of arrests of persons soon after the occurrence of March 2004 terrorist attacks. According to the reports, about four hundred people were arrested in connection with this attack (Naumkin 2005). In this attack, for the first time in Uzbekistan women suicide bombers were observed. Regarding women's suicide bomber involvement in this terrorist incident, the Central Asian Expert O Roy made a significant comment. Roy stated, "as far as we know, most of the suicide bombers were just members of families whose members are in jail, and it was some protest against the police in Uzbekistan" (Pannier, 2004). The similar kind of widespread crackdown was also noticed soon after the failed attempt by an unknown gunman to assassinate Saparmurat Niyazov, the president of Turkmenistan in 2002. As a result, the criminal police arrested, tortured, and tried about 100 persons connected with that attack (Omelicheva, 2007).

The most significant example of the brutal suppression of public unrest is the May 2005 Andijan event. On May 13, the Uzbekistani police force allegedly fired upon the protesters gathered in Andijan, Uzbekistan. The protesters who also included children and women were mostly unarmed. The indiscriminate firing by the Uzbekistani police force resulted in the death of about 137 persons and hundreds of injuries (Human Rights Watch, June 2005). This violence's intensity was so intensive and inhumane that the U.S. and many other Western countries demanded an independent international investigation into this incident. However, Uzbekistan rejected any international demand enquiry. The report on International Religious Freedom, 2015 has stated that there are estimated between 5,000 and 15,000 individuals remained in prison on charges related to "religious extremism" or membership in an illegal religious group in Uzbekistan according to independent human rights group (U.S. Department of State, 2015).

The World Report has also reinforced various other human rights organisations' claims regarding the Uzbek authorities' massive repression. It has reported that the Uzbek government has imprisoned thousands of people on politically motivated charges to impose its suppressive rule, targeting human rights and opposition activists, journalists,

religious believers, artists, and other perceived critics (Human Rights Watch, 2015:599). In a nutshell, the Uzbek government has been continuously exercising state repression as an appropriate means of protecting and preserving the statuesque in the region which is often termed as the authoritarian, super-presidential and dictatorial regime.

Conclusion

The analysis and explanation of this paper on the official discourse of terrorism have reflected two crucial aspects. Firstly, the data of terrorist incidents in Uzbekistan during 1992–2018 has identified most terrorist attacks as minor, less significant and small scale on the grounds of its nature and degree. If the Uzbek State has intended to designate terrorism as one of the most dangerous threats to the country's stability and security on the grounds of these fewer, minor terrorist events, it would be a more exaggeration than the real. Secondly, the data provided by different international human rights organisations have demonstrated that the state authorities have perpetrated much more political murder and violence incidents than the number of terrorist attacks committed by non-state actors in Uzbekistan.

By summing up, it is essential to reaffirm that this paper does not justify any act of violence perpetrated by the terrorist groups. This research has only challenged one dominant approach to the study of terrorism that recognises the non-state actors as the sole perpetrator of terrorism by referring to Uzbekistan's examples. It has argued that terrorism is an act that can be performed by both the state and the non-state actors. This paper has also carefully investigated how the state used to misuse the sole legitimate power of using violence to preserve the status quo, existing regime, and suppressing the political opponents and government critics' voices.

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Mali: ECOWAS Responses to the Conflict in MALI (2012–2021)

Enoch Ndem OKON

Abstract: This paper highlights the Economic Community of West African States [ECOWAS] mode of response to the Malian conflict between 2012 and 2021 and identifies various gaps therein. It seeks to explain why ECOWAS has found it difficult to resolve the Malian conflict in spite of its commitment and experience in conflict resolution in the subregion. Secondary data are used for the study and presented qualitatively. The study reveals that the towering interest of Algeria and other neighbors in the chaotic northern Mali, as well as French interest in its former colony hindered ECOWAS initiative and its effectiveness in resolving the conflict. The paper recommends ECOWAS' involvement in negotiations at the next peace agreement, and the drawing up of a roadmap for implementing such agreement. Besides, ECOWAS needs to address governance deficits in Mali and elsewhere in the subregion through peer review mechanism; and increase its capacity to respond to violent conflicts beyond microstates and Anglophone enclaves in the region.

Keywords: ECOWAS, Malian conflict, military coup, Tuareg, Jihad.

Introduction

Between 1960 and 2021, Mali has experienced five military coups and Tuareg rebellions, four transition to civil rule programs and five unimplemented North-South peace agreements, as well as a democratic turnover. These are symptoms of protracted conflict rooted in the foundation of the state, the process of state building and consolidation, and efforts at the institutionalization of liberal democracy in a fragile state. Algeria was the first mediator in the Tuareg rebellion of 1963 which resulted in the Tamanrasset

Enoch Ndem OKON

Department of Political Science
University of Calabar, Nigeria
E-mail: enochokon@gmail.com

Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 37, October 2021, pp. 36–53

DOI: 10.24193/csq.37.3
Published First Online: 05 October /2021

Peace Agreement. Similarly, the second agreement (Pacte National) was facilitated by Algeria, Mauritania and France, which was signed in April 1992 at Bamako. The Pacte contained provisions for the transformation of the enmity relationship between the South and North to amity partnership, required for a democratic polity and socio-economic development. The discontentment within the North over poor implementation of the Pacte, interethnic and intra-Tuareg rivalry led to another rebellion in May 2006 which was resolved with another Algeria mediated agreement in July, the same year. The fall of Muammar Gaddafi in 2011 and the return of Tuareg soldiers, who fought for Gaddafi, in 2012 triggered another rebellion which almost consumed the Malian state, but for foreign intervention. The consequent Algerian mediated agreement has similar provisions with the previous Pacte and are yet to be implemented because of the raging terrorism in Northern Mali. Similarly, three of the military coups — 1968, 1991, 2012 — led to military regimes and transition to civil rule. Specifically, ECOWAS was at the forefront of the push towards the restoration of democratic order after the 2012 coup and worked for its fruition in 2013. In spite of its experience and commitment to peace and security in the West African sub-region, it is rather puzzling that ECOWAS finds it difficult to resolve the Malian historical conflicts. The objective of this discourse is to highlight ECOWAS' responses to the Malian conflict since the military coup of 2012, and the gaps in the responses. The paper is divided into seven sections including the introduction, literature review, theoretical framework, methodology, the analysis of the conflict, ECOWAS responses to the conflict, the gaps identified in ECOWAS responses to the conflicts and the conclusion with some recommendations.

Literature Review

Mali was part of the former French Empire in West Africa as partitioned by the outcome of the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885. It gained independence from the French in 1960 with Bamako as the capital. The country shares boundaries with Mauritania and Senegal in the West, Guinea in the Southwest, Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in the South, Niger in the East and Algeria in the North.

It is said to be one of the poorest countries in the world and has a population of about 20 million people: It has a diverse ethnic mix with Mande (Bambara, Malinke, and Soninke) making 50%, Fulani/Feul, 12.9%, Voltaiques 12%, Songhai 6%, Tuareg 5%, Moors 5% and others 5%. About 43% of the population live in urban centres and about 95% of the population are Muslims (Collins & Burns, 2007; Dione & Togola, 2018; Arieff, 2019). Of these ethnic groups, in Mali, Tuaregs and Moors are not part of the sub-Saharan aborigines. Tuaregs are a Berber ethnic minority group found in the Sahel and they are seen in Morocco, Niger Republic, Chad, Algeria, Libya, Burkina Faso and Tunisia. Haysom (2014) has observed that, despite the Tuareg geographical spread in the Sahelian countries, they are not a majority in any of these countries as its population in Mali and Niger is estimated at 800,000, which is the highest. Indeed,

Mali has the highest Tuareg population of about 33% of all Tuaregs in the Sahel and about 5% of the Malian population as stated earlier on. More so, the Tuareg is not the dominant group in Northern Mali where they declared an 'Azawad'. They are found in three northern cities of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu with a sparsely population of about 2 million (D'Errico, Grazioli & Mellin, 2017; Haysom, 2014).

Mali has a dominant Muslim population. About 90% of Malians are Sunni Muslims, 1% practice Christianity and the remaining 9% are adherents of traditional religion (Lebovich, 2019). The post- independence era witnessed the rise of Wahabbist and Salafist Islam in Mali, sponsored by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the Middle East and Asia. According to Dione and Togola (2018, p. 6), Saudi Arabia sponsored Afro Arabian Cultural Institute and Mountada, Libya sponsored the World Association for Islamic Call, Kuwait sponsored the African Muslims Agency, the United Kingdom bankrolled Islamic Relief and the United Arab Emirate funded the Hamdallaye Islamic Cultural Centre. Most of these Islamic charity NGOs built Islamic schools in Northern Mali and promoted Arabic language over the French and Bambara languages which are regarded as tokens of colonialism. These Quranic schools or Madrasas provided basic education for children in the region where colonial education is ineffective and poorly funded. At the dawn of the new millennium, there were about 520 Quranic schools in Mali with 13% of Malian pupils and about 100,000 students, and by 2015, 17% of Malians were said to be Francophone (Gakou as cited in Dione & Togola, 2018, p. 6). Growing by leaps and bounds, the Malian State acknowledged the ascendancy of Islamic fervor in the State and President Alpha Konare created the High Islamic Council of Mali (HCIM) in 2000 which encompassed about 150 Islamic Associations. However, the state maintained its preference for secularism and allowed Islamic advocacy as part of the large vibrant civil society organizations in the country. This might as well have accounted for the controversial appointment of Dr. Mamadou Diamute'ne, the Secretary-General of HCIM as the Chairman of the Electoral Commission in 2001 (Thurston, 2013a). With the nullification of Algerian elections in late 1980s, believed to have been won by the Islamic Salvation Front (ISF), and subsequent suppression of this party by the Algerian State, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) migrated into Northern Mali and undertook several charity activities which endeared it to the population and eventually increased anti-government / Western sentiment in the region. It later transformed itself into the Al Queeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and shared condominium with the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA) and Ansar al Din as the main jihadist elements promoting terrorism in Mali and across West Africa (Lacher, 2013; Arieff, 2019; Arieff & Johnson, 2012).

Mali practices political secularism, having adopted the French doctrine of 'Laicite' at independence. In other words, there is a clear separation between the State and religion in Mali right from the days of colonial rule, through its independence in September 1960

and till date (Wing, 2013; Dione & Togola, 2018). The French handed over the power to a democratically elected government of Modibo Keita who ruled the country for about eight years and was overthrown in a military coup by General Moussa Traore. The coup followed the pattern of military involvement in politics in Africa as experienced in Togo, Benin, Nigeria and Ghana, amongst others, in the first decade of independence (Okeke & Chukwuka, 2013; Nordlinger, 1976). The military junta adopted the one-party system and the Democratic Union of the Malian People (UDPM) dominated Malian political space for over two decades. General Traore was ousted by another military coup led by Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Toure, in 1991. The new junta had no interest in transforming himself into a civilian ruler and organized a multi-party election in 1992 which was won by Alpha Oumar Konare who led a coalition of political parties, the Alliance Pour La Démocratie au Mali (ADEMA). The coalition won the 1997 general elections with Konare as the President, who eventually stepped down at the expiration of his tenure in 2002 (Reitano & Shaw, 2015; Wing, 2013). Given the track record of Amadou Toumani Toure in terms of voluntary handing over the power to a civilian government, the Malian people entrusted the leadership of the state to him in the 2002 elections and he was reelected in 2007. However, he was deposed in a military coup in 2012 by Amadou Sanogo who ruled the Malian State for 21 days before he handed over the power to Diacounda Traore as the acting President. Traore organized elections in 2013 and handed over power to Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK). President Keita was forced to resign from office on August 19, 2020 by military adventurists led by Colonel Assimi Goita, who negotiated with ECOWAS and other stakeholders for 37 days and eventually stepped down for Bah Ndaw on September 25, 2020. President Ndaw was the transition President of the country until he was overthrown in another military coup by Colonel Goita on May 24, 2021 (ECOWAS, 2020c; ECOWAS, 2020d; ECOWAS, 2021b).

Mali is a third world country by all indices and among the poorest in the world. According to Bastagli and Toulmin (2013), Mali is marred by poor infrastructure and about 80% of its population live in rural areas with widespread poverty. As a typical third world nation, the economy of Mali depends on the export of primary commodities, such as agriculture and mining. Mainguy (2010) observed that the Malian State received royalties and corporate taxes from foreign investors in gold mines and gold accounts for about three-quarters of the country's total export in recent years. The sector also provides employment for 15% (13,000) of the workforce in the formal sector of the economy (Drakenberg, 2010, p. 3). Of all agricultural export, cotton stands out as the prime commodity, accounting for 1% of the country's GDP and is second to gold. The country also grows grains for local consumption. However, unstable prices in the world commodity market and incessant drought threatened both the incentive to expand and the capacity to consistently increase production. Therefore, artisanal mining of gold becomes the safety net for farmers in the country, especially the women, in lieu of crop failure (Drakenberg, 2010; Bastagli & Toulmin, 2013).

Another feature of the Malian economy is the localization of productive activities (mining and agriculture) in the South and Western parts of the country. The lopsidedness of economic activities also replicated in the spread of the population across the country. Thus, the scarcity of economic activities and employment in the North creates discontentment in the midst of poverty and perceived marginalization (Dione & Togola, 2018; Thurson, 2013a). With an average of USD230 annual per capital income, Malians are among the poorest in the world (Chene, 2008). This reality, amongst others, make Mali a major destination for foreign aid. For instance, in 2018, the US gave USD140 million as bilateral aid to Mali in support of development, health, governance, conflict mitigation and military training. The US also supported humanitarian service with USD82 million and the African Union peace support operations with USD317 million (Arieff, 2019, p. 2). Despite the high rate of poverty in this country, institutional corruption and elite involvement in corrupt practices further concretized the economic woes of the country (Bleck *et al.*, 2016; Chene, 2008).

The paucity of the State presence in the North of Mali, as reflected in poor infrastructural facilities, education and economic opportunities, created a huge vacuum in the area. This gap was incrementally filled by Islamic non-governmental organization from Algeria, Saudi Arabia and other parts of the Middle East. These Islamic institutions built Islamic schools and provided social security to indigent citizens. Consequently, the people of Northern Mali owe greater allegiance to Islamic institutions which provide those needs neglected by the State. Such a shift of loyalty and the accordance of legitimacy to these religious bodies increased the de-legitimization of the central government of Mali in the North and promote rebellious culture against the Malian state (Bleck *et al.*, 2016, Thurston, 2013a, Haysom, 2014). Scholars have also identified the thriving of smuggling and other criminal economy in the North with its neighbor. This region became the transition route for illicit drugs, human trafficking and kidnapping with the involvement of some influential elements in government. The high profile *Air Cocaine's scandal* was illustrative for the government involvement in rogue economy in the region. With the ascendancy of these economic activities and Islamic fundamentalism, which led to the kidnapping of 32 European tourists by GSPC in 2003, the thriving tourism industry in the region collapsed, and worsened the unemployment index, thus further entrenching poverty (Chauzal & Van Damme, 2015; Reitano & Shaw, 2015).

Mali has become a source of global and regional threat in the past decade due to the precarious socio-economic and security realities in the North. The convergence of Islamic fundamentalists, the revisitation of socio-political and economic marginalization by Tuaregs and emergence of criminal economics have made it difficult for the ill-equipped Malian Armed Forces to contain the violent outburst (Bleck & Michelitch, 2015, Lebovich, 2019). History have shown that Mali has been a theatre of violence with four Tuareg rebellions and five military coups. The most outstanding was the 2012 Islamic uprising and insurgency which almost led to the Islamization of the country and

its near break-up. The short-term management of the conflict has not led to a long-term resolution of the conflict. Thus, the Malian conflict of 2012–2021 is a relapse of the protracted conflict rooted in the historical foundation of the State, its structure, norms and processes. Its resolution, therefore, should not be restricted to transition to civil rule and some rhetorical commitment to implement peace agreement(s) as done in the past.

Theoretical Framework

The preferred framework for this study is the Power Theory. Proponents of this theory include Arnold Wolfers (1962), Hans Morgenthau (1967) and Joseph Frankel (1973). Wolfers (1962) refers to power as the ability to make people to do what one desires, not to do what one does not approve, since it involves the ability to move others by the threat or affliction of deprivation. In other words, it is the capacity to get one's wishes carried out despite opposition, and the capacity to influence the actions of others in accordance with one's own ends (Frankel, 1973). This is simplified by Dahl's (1969, p. 80) explanation that 'A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do'. According to Morgenthau (1967), political power is derived from and measured by both tangible and intangible assets of a nation or region. Tangible assets (hard power) include military capability and technology, level of industrialization, resource endowment, level of economic and political development, population and geostrategic location, while intangible assets (soft power) include culture, values and foreign policy (Nye, 2004). The optimum combination of both types of power in the management or resolving violent conflict is seen as the deployment of 'smart power' of an actor (Wilson, 2008). The basic axiom of Power Theory is the imposition of one's will on other(s). The relevance of the theory to this study lies on its explanation of the gaps in ECOWAS responses to the Malian conflict 2012–2021, which may be attributed to its power deficits and inability to enforce its will on other actors in the conflicts.

Methodology

The case-study design is adopted because it probes deeply, intensively, and analyzes the interaction between factors involved in the study (Idaka & Anagpogu, 2012). This has the advantage of identifying the major issues in the Malian conflicts as well as outlining ECOWAS responses and the gaps in them. It also has the advantage of providing a yardstick for similar studies on conflicts in other regions of the world. This study focuses on ECOWAS response in the Malian conflict but also covers issues of common concern to all regional groupings saddled with the responsibility of intervening in violent conflicts in their domain. It relies on secondary data from extant literature such as textbooks, magazines, communiqué, scholarly journals and the internet. This data was presented qualitatively and content analysis technique was used in the analysis of the research findings.

The Analysis of Malian conflict (2012–2021) is presented on the table below:

The Analysis of the Malian 2012-2021 Conflict

Profile of the conflict

The conflict centers on the structure and processes of the Malian State, as presently constituted, the state and nation building, as well as the consolidation of democracy and its ethos in a security challenged environment.

Actors in the Conflict

There are multiple actors in the conflict and could be classified into two classes: the endogenous and exogenous actors. Actors within Mali include (1) the central government, which failed to integrate the Northern part of the country with the rest of the Malian State, (2) separatist Tuareg rebels who violently campaigned for the independence of the 'Azawad', (3) the terrorist groups (AQIM, MUJAO) who fought for the establishment of an Islamic state in Mali, (4) criminal entrepreneurs who crisscrossed the country's borders with illicit arms, drugs, human trafficking and kidnaping for ransom, (5) Islamic NGOs with radicalization agenda, and (6) the Malian Armed Forces which struggled to secure the country and also plot the coups. The external actors consist of the tricentric level of analysis – Malian neighbors, ECOWAS and the AU, and extra-continental elements. Algeria has been a perpetual mediator between the Malian state and Tuaregs. She tacitly pushed out her radicalized Islamic elements and AQIM to live in northern Mali. Niger, just like Algeria, worked against the Tuaregs' *Azawad* dream since it may trigger similar demands from the Tuaregs in her territory and elsewhere in the region. Besides, Malian neighbors tacitly approved the criminal economy in Northern Mali as illicit commodities passed through their borders with little or no restraint. ECOWAS, on the other hand, is involved in diplomatic maneuvering with successive military juntas since 2012 for the return to civil rule, as well as mobilization of troops for PSOs in the conflict zone.

The African Union (AU) also participated in diplomatic solutions and PSO through the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA). Outside Africa, France acted as the first responder when her airplanes were sent to halt the jihadist advancement to central and southern Mali. France also has 5,100 troops in Mali and works with other members of the UN Security Council to approve the deployment of PSOs. This was understood against her status as the former colonial master of Mali with vested interest in every development in the country and region. The US deployed its military asset to Mali as part of her counter terrorism operations in the Sahel region and continues to provide military /counterterrorism aid to Mali. The United Nations established a 3,000-man United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSAMA) and it is ongoing. It has the objective of stabilizing the security barometer in the country. On the other hand, member states were complacent about the socio-economic and political marginalization in the country.

Causes of the conflict

The central cause of the conflict is the faulty structure of the Malian State. This is aggravated by political and economic marginalization as well as social stigmatization of the Tuaregs and vices. The geo-strategic location of Mali in the Sahel exposes it to radical Islamic adventurists. Climate change induced drought leads to farmers/herders conflict and global revival of Islamic Wahhabism and Salafism in the country. Weak armed forces with political ambition accounts for recent coups. The collapse of Muamar Gaddafi and proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region provide the means for the escalation of the conflicts since 2012.

Dynamics of the conflict

The 2012-2021 conflict in Mali has a remarkable implication on both the regional security of West African states and the global security. The continuous weakening of the cohesion between the ruling elite and the military may provide opportunity for the Jihadists to make attempts to overrun the country again, as done in 2013. A radical Islamic enclave, as envisaged by AQIM and ISWAP in northern Mali, could become a safe haven for terrorists, as experienced in Afghanistan before the 9/11 attack. Besides, such an enclave could become a launching pad for attacks on Western targets within and outside Africa. The best-case scenario is for all stakeholders to make Mali a vibrant state free of Islamic terrorists' occupation of any of its territory, as well as get Bamako to prioritize politico-economic and social inclusion of the Tuaregs and other northern minorities in the mainstream of national activities.

Worse still, the junta's Colonel Assimi Goita may hold on to power at his second coming from May 24, 2021, and orchestrate a transition to civil rule which transmutes him to a civilian President. Such decision could attract the anger of civil society organizations in Mali and lead to massive protests as done against the former President Ibrahim Keita in June 2020. Besides, regional and global economic embargoes, as responses to such decision, would further weaken the fragile economy of the Malian state, and the required military support of the West for its counterterrorism operations and security sector reforms in the country.

However, a national dialogue on the future of Mali is very important. The Malian state is a product of French patrimony and the insistence on the sacrosanctity of the colonial boundary is a major source of conflict in Africa and Mali. A creation of an *Azawad* for all the Tuaregs in the Sahel could be very dignifying, even when the viability of such state is questionable. In all, there must be a deliberate effort at state building in Northern Mali and containment of corruption by Malian elites, if the present conflict is to be transformed to an instrument of national rebirth.

Source: Compiled by the author

ECOWAS response to the Malian conflict 2012-2021

The enabling framework for ECOWAS's response to the Malian conflict include, amongst others, the protocol on the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention (1999) and the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (2001). These protocols are mutually reinforcing instruments of the ECOWAS Conflict Preventive Framework (ECPF) (Atuobi, 2010; Okon & Williams, 2018). Mali is a signatory to the framework which despise the unconstitutional change of the government in the member states and emphasizes the sanctity of the ballot box and the completion of executive tenure in office as spelt out by the countries' constitution. Hence, the military coup of March 22, 2012, led by Captain Amadou Sanogo, marked the entrance of ECOWAS to the Malian conflict (Alozieuwa, 2013; Francis, 2013).

The regional body condemned the coup and, in collaboration with the African Union (AU), suspended Mali from its fold. ECOWAS also lobbied the UNSC to condemn the putsch and call for the immediate release of detained President Amadou Toumani Toure

and others arrested during the coup. ECOWAS also initiated diplomatic missions to Mali to persuade the military junta to restore the overthrown government. The then President of ECOWAS, Alassane Ouattara, had an abortive trip to Bamako on March 22 and the subsequent meeting of the regional body held in Abidjan gave the Malian junta 72 hours to handover to the embattled administration. At the expiration of the ultimatum, ECOWAS unveiled a series of sanctions against the junta, and these included the freezing of the Malian state accounts in West African Central Bank, travel bans and freezing of the junta's assets, and denial of port access and border closures. The impact of the sanction was immediate, as Sanogo and his cohorts agreed to discuss with ECOWAS. Although the previous constitutional order was not restored, the junta agreed with the formation of a transition government headed by a civilian — the President of the Parliament, Dioncounda Traore, and the resignation of President Amadou Toumani Toure on April 20, 2012. ECOWAS also upturned the 40 days election timetable sanctioned by the junta and extended the lifespan of the transition government to 12 months. Everyone arrested during the coup was released from detention (Alozieuwa, 2013; Francis, 2013).

Haysom (2014) noted that, with French support, ECOWAS proposed a political and military intervention with its mobilization of the 3000 strong ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF) for the ECOWAS Mission in Mali (MICEMA), and then the AFISMA, which were blocked by both Algeria and Mauritania. Besides, the UN was skeptical about the ECOWAS' capacity to resolve the conflict, since the sub-regional body regarded the junta as an illegitimate regime. More so, the organization was perceived to lack the capacity to undertake such a mission and there was a fear of strategic danger of dispersing terrorist fighters in Northern Mali, if the mission was poorly executed.

A similar sentiment was expressed in August 2012 by Arieff (2012) as he observed that ECOWAS sanction 'underscored its operational shortcomings, but warned that a delay in confronting armed groups in the north, including terrorist actors could enable them to consolidate or expand their hold, it could also lead to open conflict among various entities vying for control' (p. 2). This was prophetic as the delay by global actors to support ECOWAS with the needed financial and logistic supports did not only lead to belligerents' battle for supremacy and control; the victorious jihadist in the northern power contest unfolded their caliphate agenda and expanded towards Bamako. Nevertheless, ECOWAS formed the bulk of AFISMA contingent which complemented the French airstrike that halted and killed the caliphate ambition of the Jihadists (Haysom, 2014; D'Errico et al., 2017). ECOWAS troops also remained in the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) since 2013. This had encouraged the deployment of the European Union training mission in 2013, the French-led operation Barkhane and the G5 Sahel joint task force in 2014 respectively. These PSOs are ongoing and were instrumental to the relative stability which facilitated the peace talk

between the government and the belligerents, as well as the conduct of presidential and legislative elections in late 2013. The emergence of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita as President in the 2013 elections was greeted with optimism and so was the Algeria mediated peace agreement signed in 2015 (Lamarche, 2019; Arieff, 2019). However, scholars attributed the ongoing crisis to the stalled implementation of the 2015 peace agreement and the endemic corruption of Keita's government which alienated the majority of the governed from the state and promoted socio-economic discontentment and widespread poverty in the pandemic environment (Arieff, 2019; Bleck *et al.*, 2016; Lemarche, 2019).

Through data obtained and analyzed by the ECOWAS early warning system, it was obvious that another political conflict was brewing in Mali in 2020, a reminiscence of the 2012 scenario. Consequently, ECOWAS heads of state and government held an extraordinary summit through video-conference on July 27, 2020 to evaluate the situation characterized by a serious security threat with recurring terrorist attacks and inter-community tensions in the central part of the country. Besides, there was also social tension arising from demonstration by June 5th Movement — Group of Patriotic Force (M5-REP), a group comprising political parties, civil society and religious organizations, all together with a prolonged strike by school teachers in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and its attendant financial and economic challenges (ECOWAS, 2020a). The summit was a follow-up to the earlier ECOWAS ministerial mission sent to Bamako between 18 and 20 June, 2020, to determine the causes of the conflict and propose solutions through recommendations. Those recommendations were not implemented and that contributed to the deterioration of a violent demonstration with high casualties between July 10 and 12 and destruction of private and public property. Consequent to the violent outburst, ECOWAS appointed Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the former Nigerian President, as a mediator in the conflict and he visited Bamako between 15 and 19 July with his team. The mediation team met with stakeholders and drew a road map for peaceful resolution of the conflict, but the M5-RFP was adamant on its demands on the resignation of President Ibrahim Keita, the formation of a transitional government, the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the death of protesters in July 10-12 demonstration, and the release of Soumaila Cisse, the opposition leader abducted at the eve of the parliamentary election in March. The M5-RFP also threatened to continue with street protests until their demands were met (ECOWAS, 2020a). Based on the outcome of the mediation, ECOWAS sent a fact-finding mission of (5) Heads of State — Mahamadou Issoufou of Niger and Chair of the ECOWAS authority, Nana Akufo Addo of Ghana, Alassane Ouattara of Cote d'Ivoire, Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria and Macky Sall of Senegal — to Mali on July 23, 2020. The mission met with all parties in the conflict and insisted on the supremacy of the country's institutions, especially the sacrosanctity of ballot box as the only means of ascending to power in line with the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance (Atuobi, 2010;

Okon & Williams). In addition, the mission decided as follows:

- (a) that political parties ensure the resignation of 31 members of Parliament whose elections were contested,
- (b) immediate recomposition of the Constitutional Court,
- (c) the establishment of a Government of National Unity led by Prime Minister Boubou Cisse, with 50%, 30% and 20% from members of the ruling coalition, opposition parties and civil society, respectively,
- (d) investigation of the causes of July-10-12 violent demonstration, identification of perpetrators for prosecution and compensation for the wounded and family of the dead and the setting up of monitoring committee made up of the conflicting parties to oversee the implementation of these decisions within 10 days (ECOWAS, 2020a).

The ECOWAS mediator was in Mali in the second week of August to review the implementation of the decisions reached during the video-conference Extraordinary Summit of July 27, 2020. The mission observed that progress was made in the recomposition of the Constitutional Court, amongst others. But on August 18, Colonel Assimi Goita announced a military takeover of the country's leadership and arrested President Ibrahim Keita and other top government functionaries. Some days later, the embattled President was forced to resign and announced the dissolution of the National Assembly. Following the development, ECOWAS condemned the coup and called for continental and global rejection of the putsch. It also invoked all the sanctions, as was done in 2012 — the freezing of Malian state account with the Central Bank of West African State, travel ban on the junta, as well as denial of port access and border closure. ECOWAS also put the ESF on a standby for possible deployment to Mali and suspended Mali from all ECOWAS decision-making bodies with immediate effect (ECOWAS, 2020b). These measures were transmitted to the AU, EU, the UN and their support was total. Following a series of consultation and negotiation with the junta, the former Defense Minister — Bah Ndaw — was nominated and sworn in as the interim President. He was saddled with the responsibility of organizing presidential and legislative elections in eighteen months. The head of the military junta, Colonel Assimi Goita, was appointed Vice-President of the interim government with the responsibility of overseeing the security and defense of the country.

Consequently, an ECOWAS mediation team visited Bamako between September 23–25, 2020, to assess the implementation of earlier decisions made on the resolution of the conflict such as the restoration of constitutional order in Mali and the release of those detained by the junta. The mediation team held discussions with President Bah Ndaw, Colonel Assimi Goita, ECOWAS member states' ambassadors accredited to Mali as well as the ambassadors of the Big Five members of the UNSC and EU in Mali. The mediation team insisted on the release of all members of former administration still under detention and the urgent need to appoint a civilian Prime Minister to oversee

the drafting and implementation of political transition and various reforms of an inclusive national dialogue.

More so, the Goodluck Jonathan-led mediation mission called for a clean-up of the transition charter which would reflect the decision of the ECOWAS leadership on the dissolution of the junta's National Committee for the Salvation of the People (NCSP) before / after the swearing in of the interim President, the clarification of the responsibilities of the Vice President in charge of security and defense, the impossibility of the Vice-President to replace the President, and the sanctity of the eighteen months transition period with effect from September 15, 2020 (ECOWAS, 2020c). The report of the mediation mission outlined the membership of the monitoring committee as was named by the ECOWAS leadership to work in conjunction with bilateral and multilateral partners to support the transition process (ECOWAS, 2020d). With the appointment of Moctar Ouane as the interim/transitional Prime Minister, the chair of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, Nana Akufo-Addo, visited Mali to assess the progress made in the transition process and affirm the support of the regional body to the process. He was accompanied by the ECOWAS mediator, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, amongst others. He had discussions with three major players in the transition process — President Bah Ndaw, Colonel Assimi Goita and Prime Minister Moctar Ouane. He praised the Malian authority for the progress made in line with the ECOWAS decisions, considering the release of all those detained by the junta, the appointment of President and Prime Minister, as well as the ratification of the Transition Charter and urged the transition authorities to design the calendar of the electoral process in accordance with the 18 months deadline agreed upon (ECOWAS, 2020d). Another visit by the ECOWAS mediation team to Mali took place on January 12, 2021 and was led by Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, the Chief Mediator. The objective of the visit was to evaluate the progress made towards effective transition. The mission met with major stakeholders and the heads of transitional institutions as done by Chair of ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government. At the end of the meeting, the mission noted with concern the complaints of poor consultation made by some stakeholders in spite of the progress made. It also called for the scrapping of the junta's CNSP since key transitional institutions were in place. It insisted on the primacy of adequate consultation with all key stakeholders in the transition program to enhance their buy in and ownership since such process is essential for transparent, free and fair elections, and indeed the entire transition to civil rule program (ECOWAS, 2021a).

In all, Mali, with the support of ECOWAS, was making progress towards a successful transition to civil rule until the sacking of the transitional government by Colonel Assimi Goita on May 24, 2021. Goita was the Vice President and the leader of the junta in the August 18, 2020 putsch. ECOWAS response was to condemn the coup in the strongest term as usual and imposed its traditional sanctions as were done in 2012 and

August 2020 (ECOWAS, 2021b). It is, therefore, important to evaluate the inadequacy of ECOWAS mediation in Mali which explains the cyclical pattern of instability in the country.

The Gaps in the ECOWAS mediation of the conflict

The ECOWAS dominance in finding solution[s] to the on-going conflict in Mali is salutary, but there are questions on Algeria and other neighboring spoilers and how to checkmate their activities. Algeria has been a perpetual mediator between the Malian state and Tuareg rebels over time due to its affinity with Tuaregs and its utilization of the ungoverned space in Northern Mali as home for its Islamic terrorists and dissidents. ECOWAS' inability to influence Algeria and similar interests in the resolution of the conflict remains a gap since Northern Mali has become a safe haven for Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF) who were forced out of Algeria, and many of them desire the maintenance of the chaotic status quo for the safety, security and prosperity of their criminal economy (Lacher, 2013; Reitano & Shaw, 2015). The continuous exclusion of ECOWAS in the peace negotiation process with Tuaregs and other belligerents in Northern Mali has reduced the status of the sub-regional body as an important stakeholder in the peace and security of the country, hence, the belligerents hardly see ECOWAS as a partner for sustainable peace and prosperity of their domain. Similarly, the continuous patronage of Algeria in the negotiation with the Tuaregs and aggrieved elements in the region is counter-productive since those agreements incrementally serve to appease the belligerents and Algerian interest. In other words, those agreements are meant to strengthen the belligerents and give Algeria condominium over Malian territory, a situation which could be seen as one state with two governments (Chauzal & van Damme, 2015; Caparini, 2015). Given this reality, the best effort of ECOWAS at making peace in Mali tends to yield a minimal result in a very unfriendly neighborhood. In sum, Algeria's involvement and its interest in keeping its radical elements at the Malian border and the inability of ECOWAS to check this trend remains a gap, since this variable has the potential to stall the implementation of agreements and ignite conflict in future as experienced since 1963 till date (Dione & Togola, 2018; Lacher, 2013).

Another gap in the ECOWAS response to Malian conflict since 2012 is the poor monitoring and probing of Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's government. ECOWAS leadership is quick to invoke its provision on zero tolerance for unconstitutional change of government against entities who decide to change bad and corrupt leadership, but nothing is done to check the excesses of those in power. Instances of corruption and complacency in criminal activities leveled against the Malian government includes the viral *Air Cocaine* scandal, yet ECOWAS did nothing to verify these corrupt practices despite sub-regional instruments against these vices (Bleck & Michelitch, 2015; Hagan & Harvey, 2016). By rejecting the good governance, characterized by respect for the rule of law; transparency

and accountability in governance, freedom of the Press, predictability in government behavior, expectation of rational decisions by government; people-oriented policies and openness in government transactions, the Malian leadership was courting another crisis, which ECOWAS ought to have noted and discussed with Toure and Keita (Eneanya, 2009, pp. 220–221). In addition, ECOWAS' tolerance of bad governance from its members reduces its integrity and legitimacy among actors and entities in the sub-region. This justifies why attempts by the ECOWAS leadership to mediate in some crises in the region are rebuffed and seen as means of supporting one of their own and ensure personal and regime security of a bad leader (Alozieuwa, 2013; Ofuatey-Kodjoe, 1994). The African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) is handy and many West African states are signatories which makes it easy to be regionalized and make periodic peer review mandatory instead of voluntary (Grudz, 2009). It is indeed the failure of ECOWAS to ensure the implementation of Algeria agreements, monitor the distribution of public goods, especially those from donor agencies to the impoverished North, as well as the ascendancy of parochial interests of elites over that of the nation that continues to generate ripples that threaten the state stability. ECOWAS, therefore, needs to close the gap between shoot and vote models and address the root causes of the Malian conflict which it failed to do in the last ten years (Chauzal & Van Damme, 2015; Wing, 2013).

Going forward, the French interest in its former colonies generates yet another gap in the ECOWAS' response to Mali conflict between 2012 and 2021. For instance, ECOWAS PSO metamorphosed from MICEA to AFISMA due to French influence on the preferred first responder to the conflict (Lamarche, 2019). Therefore, ECOWAS is cautious in deciding every step in its response to Malian conflict since the French has the capacity to veto such decisions and actions at the UNSC (Akinboye & Attoh 2005). Such scenarios hardly play out in the Anglophone countries in the region, where ECOWAS unilaterally initiated PSOs in Liberia (1990), Sierra Leone (1997), Guinea Bissau (1999) and, recently, Gambia (2016). ECOWAS' capacity to predict French policy options at every stage of the conflict remains a gap that must be filled to initiate and undertake timeous measures to enhance stability and peace building in Mali. For instance, ECOWAS did not want to discuss with Captain Sanogo in 2012 after he took power from Toure. However, the restoration of the constitutional order under Toure was a closed chapter as France called for an early election, instead of restoring the preceding order (Guindo, 2018). Given this reality, ECOWAS had to follow the same direction. Similarly with the acceptance of the coup against Keita by France, ECOWAS had to reiterate to Malians and global community that its mission in the Sahel country was mainly concerned with the preservation of constitutional democracy, but not with the provision of support to any regime (ECOWAS, 2020c).

ECOWAS response to the Malian conflict has also revealed a huge gap between its aspiration and capacity. Since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of 'new wars'

in Africa, ECOWAS has positioned itself as the 'gateway' for the EU and other partners in attracting resources for capacity building of its PSO institutions (Ellowson & MacDermott, 2010). In spite of these efforts, the gap between ECOWAS ambition to be a security community with timeous response to multidimensional security threats in West Africa is enormous. This is due to the weakness of key institutions in the sub-region as well as poor funding and lack of equipment / logistics and infrastructural facilities. More so, most of the countries in the sub-region do not have well trained personnel in security related institutions for immediate deployment to conflict zones. This is complicated by the menace of terrorism and insurgency in the sub-region which has affected the capacity of Nigeria to play its traditional role of a sub-regional hegemon in conflict management in the region (Ellowson & McDermott 2010; Onuoha, 2014). Specific to Mali is the challenging terrain of the Sahel which presents operational difficulties to even the best security operators in the world. Besides, the massive landmass of Northern Mali is a challenge to effective security coverage in terms of manpower and equipment required for such operation. ECOWAS, as highlighted earlier, does not have such capacity and therefore relies on partners for all round supports, which sometimes do not come on time (Tepjar & Albuquerque, 2015). On the other hand, the sub-regional body enjoys great skills in responding to conflict in micro-states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and Gambia where the land mass is relatively smaller and the operational requirements are easily met by Nigeria and other partners in a coalition of the willing.

Conclusion

Mali has suffered political convulsion inherent in post-colonial and fragile state due to the contradictions and manipulations entrenched in its foundation. The politico-economic marginalization and social stigmatization of the Tuaregs are the root causes of the conflict since independence. This is exacerbated by drought, the revival of Islamic fundamentalism, proliferation of SALW arising from the fall of Gaddafi, poor state penetration of Northern Mali and governmental corruption, as well as its massive landmass. The failure of the Malian state to address fundamental issues since the first Tuareg rebellion continues to explode with violent outburst as illustrated by numerous coups and rebellions. The outburst of 2012 has refused to calm and continues to threaten the very existence of the state till date. ECOWAS formed as an economic integration instrument in 1975 has transmuted to a conflict management / resolution entity since the end of the Cold War. Its intervention or response to the Malian conflict since 2012 and its gaps were the subject of this study. The study shows that while ECOWAS has the enabling framework to respond to the current conflict, it is hindered by the overbearing interest of Algeria and other neighbors, as well as France. Additionally, ECOWAS' inability to address governance deficits in Malian politics, especially the marginalization of the minority Tuaregs and governmental corruption weaken its legitimacy as an impartial arbiter. More so, the sub-regional body lacks the capacity to undertake massive response

required in the difficult terrain with massive landmass. ECOWAS needs to participate in negotiations for lasting peace in Mali and initiate road map for the implementation of the peace agreement. In addition, ECOWAS needs to domesticate and mandate member states to incorporate the African Peer Review Mechanism into their domestic policy and work for compulsory biennial review of member States in order to reduce governmental deficits that generate tension in Mali and elsewhere in the sub-region.

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Nigeria: Power Sharing and the Resurgence of Separatist Agitation. The Prospect of a Consociational Model

Olusola Samuel OYETUNDE

Abstract: The theory of consociationalism has been extensively discussed in literature; however, its feasibility in managing conflicts in deeply divided societies is heavily contested. The few studies that have examined how the theory applies in real-world situations remain inconclusive. The present work, therefore, explored the prospect of consociational power-sharing model in addressing the problem of under-representation, political exclusion, and marginalization in Nigeria. This is against the backdrop of the incessant separatist agitations in Nigeria, which has undermined the peace, stability, and unity of the country. Using qualitatively analyzed data from secondary sources, this study argues that even though Nigeria does not meet any of the favorable conditions of consociationalism set out by Lijphart (1985), it would still benefit from consociational power-sharing. The study proposes the adoption of semi-presidentialism based on the principle of grand coalition and proportionality and gives an assessment of how it could work for Nigeria. It contends that the rotation of power among the six geo-political zones in the country and the adoption of proportional sequential mechanism would facilitate elite cooperation and inclusion of all segments of the society in the political process, thereby easing the fear of sectional domination in Nigeria.

Keywords: power-sharing, consociationalism, separatist agitation, under-representation, political exclusion, Nigeria.

Introduction

In Nigeria, the quest for secession based on claims of political exclusion, marginalization, and perceived sense of injustice by various ethnic groups has been a reoccurring phenomenon since independence (Johnson, and Olaniyan, 2017). This clamour for greater autonomy led to the 1967–1970 Civil War fought between the Igbo ethnic group, who

Olusola Samuel OYETUNDE

School of Politics and International Relations,
University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom
E-mail: oyetundeolusolasamuel@gmail.com

Conflict Studies Quarterly
Issue 37, October 2021, pp. 54–74

DOI: 10.24193/cs.q.37.4
Published First Online: 05 October /2021

wanted an independent Republic of Biafra, and the Nigerian government, who sought to maintain the status quo. Although the war ended in 1970, the underlying causes of the war have not been addressed. The inability to address the issues has led to the increasing marginalization of the Igbos in all spheres of the Nigerian polity (Harnischfeger, 2011). Consequently, the situation has resulted in the resurgence of the agitation for the Republic of Biafra by groups such as Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra, Biafra Zionist Movement and more recently, the Indigenous People of Biafra (Abada *et al.*, 2020). At the center of these separationist agitations, is the problem of power-sharing among various ethnic configurations that constitute the Nigerian society.

Arend Lijphart (1969) developed the concept of “consociationalism” as a power-sharing arrangement designed to resolve conflicts in plural societies through elite’s cooperation and formalized power-sharing institutions, which could lead to democratic consolidation. The consociational model consists of empirical and normative elements (Orji, 2008). The empirical component elucidates democratic stability in culturally divided western countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Belgium. Arend Lijphart (1969, p. 212) argues that the stability in some European states is a consequence of the attempts by political elites to “counteract the immobilizing and unstabilizing effects of cultural fragmentations”. The normative element, on the other hand, rests on the contention that the pattern of consociationalism observed in Europe might contribute to democratic stability if extended to other divided societies in the world (Orji, 2008). However, the attempts to extend the empirical aspect of consociationalism to the normative have been criticized by scholars who argue that the experience of countries such as Switzerland may not be suitable for other multi-segmental countries (Barry, 1975; Steiner, 1981).

In response to these criticisms, Lijphart (1985) identified nine conditions that make consociationalism favorable. They are (a) lack of an ethnic majority (b) lack of substantial social and economic differences (c) ethnic groups of nearly equivalent size (d) small number of groups (e) small demographic size (f) external threats (g) overarching loyalties (h) geographic concentration of groups and (i) previous conditions of compromise and accommodation (Lijphart, 1985). Furthermore, he states that the conditions are neither necessary nor sufficient for the effective implementation of consociationalism as all countries irrespective of their historical and political realities could benefit from the model (Lijphart, 1985). However, this position has been criticized by scholars who argue that Lijphart failed to take individual differences and specific needs of each society into consideration. For instance, none of the favorable conditions of consociationalism appears to be present in Nigeria (Njoku, 1999). Nevertheless, Lijphart (1969) contends that power-sharing is a solution for states emerging from ethnic, religious, social, or political conflicts, and thus insisted that the consociational model should be adapted or changed to fit the specific needs of each state (Rees, 2007).

This article assesses how the consociational model would work in Nigeria, even though the country does not seem to fulfill any of the favorable conditions. It argues for the adoption of a semi-presidential system based on the principle of proportionality and grand coalition. The study contends that the adoption of consociationalism in Nigeria would lead to the incorporation of marginalized groups in decision-making processes, which would help to quell secessionist agitations. This article is structured into three parts. First is a discussion of the theoretical argument followed by an analysis of the political realities of Nigeria. The final section examines the prospect of adopting consociationalism in Nigeria.

Theory

Power-sharing has generated significant attention in the field of conflict management since the end of the Cold War because of the emergence of ethnic cleavages and pursuit of self-independence as one of the factors responsible for violent conflicts in the world. Several “third world” countries that have experienced violent conflicts since the end of the Second World War have succeeded in ending the conflict through the conclusion of peace agreements and formation of a unity government using power-sharing as a stabilizing mechanism (Adekanye, 1998). The concept of power-sharing has a broader scope that involves all forms of political arrangements which deal with power allocation such as political, military, economic and territory. Moti (2012) sees power-sharing as a mechanism for settling disputes regarding who should occupy the most influential position in a political system through the joint exercise of power, which is designed to enable unity and integration. It provides the majority and minority groups in the polity with the ability to represent and make decisions on common concerns including a level of autonomy over subjects relevant to the groups (Sisk, 1996). The adoption of an appropriate power-sharing arrangement is often seen as a political remedy for societies endangered by civil conflicts because it ensures that conflicting parties are accommodated and included in a joint coalition government (Binningsbo, 2013).

Arend Lijphart developed the theory of consociationalism as an approach for resolving conflict in deeply divided societies based on extensive studies of the power-sharing elements in Switzerland, Belgium, and the Netherlands. He argues that centrifugal forces in divided societies can be counterbalanced through the process of elite cooperation, which is based on collaborative policies among representatives of various groups in a political system (Lijphart, 1977). The advocates of consociational power-sharing contend that accommodating the interests of different fractions through a formal power-sharing arrangement would facilitate the achievement of post-conflict settlement in multi-ethnic societies (Bogaards, 2019). They further contend that the integration of the demands of different segments of the society into institution arrangements would help to curb the threats of secession and civil war through the guarantee of significant participation in politics (Mehler & Degenhardt, 2008). Thus, O’Leary (2003) perceives consociation as

a state where there is peaceful coexistence between at least two groups, which are not institutionally superior to each other and where there is political cooperation among significant communities through self and shared government.

Lijphart (2002) identifies grand coalition, proportional representation, segmental autonomy, and mutual veto as the four significant characteristics of consociationalism. Grand coalition deals with the involvement of all major groups in governance and the political process. McCulloch and McGarry (2009) argue that the grand coalition is a typical feature of a parliamentary system of government due to its association with the establishment of a multiparty cabinet. Though consociational executive can also be noticed in a presidential system, Lijphart (2007) preferred a parliamentary provision because of its collegiality and capacity to counteract majoritarianism. Furthermore, segregated autonomy refers to the minority rule over matters of exclusive concern intended to facilitate their inclusion into a broader institutional framework (McCulloch & McGarry, 2009). This autonomy can take either a territorial form, non-territorial form, or a combination of the two (Njoku, 1999). Devolution and decentralization are examples of ways of granting autonomy on a territorial basis, while the non-territorial involves the freedom on social and cultural issues (McCulloch & McGarry, 2009).

Reilly (2000) states that proportional representation enables the fair representation of ethnic minorities in politics, political appointments, and revenue allocation in proportion to their population. The proportional representation system is designed to safeguard the maximum representation of the citizen by ensuring that the parliament's composition reflects their electoral choice. Lijphart (1984) categorize proportional representation into List and Single Transferable Votes (STV). The STV is an electoral technique that utilizes multi-member constituencies and allows political parties to present multiple candidates, which are ranked by the electorates in order of preference (Banks, 2017). In STV, the electorates' vote can be transferred to other competing candidates if their first choice is eliminated or has more than the required votes. In contrast, the List allows the voters to elect their representatives from the list presented by the political parties and the seats won is in proportion to the parties' overall share of the popular votes received (Reynolds *et al.*, 2008). The final element of Consociationalism is Mutual Veto, which enables the protection of minorities' interests by facilitating their inclusion in the decision-making process and prevents them from being outvoted by the majority. Mutual Vetoes can be informal, constitutional given or both (McCulloch and McGarry, 2009).

However, Brass (1991) argues that the consociational model is undemocratic because it can lead to the violation of right of individuals and groups and prevent political opposition; thus, making it a loser-takes-all system. It is also argued that even in a democratic setting, the application of the grand coalition principle is questionable because of interethnic competition (Åkerfeldt, 2016). Besides, Horowitz (1985) contends that

consociationalism is a Eurocentric model built on the experience of the Europeans, which makes it unsuitable for multi-segmental societies of the 'third world'. Critics also claim that the regional autonomy associated with the consociational model could lead to increased conflict between various segments of the society, which might lead to secession and partition (Nordlinger, 1972; Bellamy, 2000). The attempts to address the weaknesses of the consociational model led to the development of the centripetal model, which is based on Horowitz's (1985) claim that consociationalism does not emphasize incentives for inter-group accommodation. McGarry and Loizides (2015) contend that centripetalism seeks to promote the influence of a minority on majority decision-making using electoral rules that make cross-ethnic appeals among political leaders necessary. Thus, centripetalism advocates for the coalition of elites before an election through vote pooling, which occurs when political elites seek external support from another group to emerge victorious in an election, and there is an exchange of votes by the electorates across group boundaries (Bogaards, 2019).

Establishing Nigeria's Political Realities

• *Socio-Political Background*

Nigeria is a complex conglomeration of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversities with over 250 ethnic nationalities (Orji, 2008). As of 17 April 2021, Nigeria's population was estimated to be about 206 million making up about 2.64 per cent of the world's population (Worldometer, 2020). The major ethnic groups, which exercise the most political influence are the Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba, and the Igbo, and they constitute about 29, 21, and 18 per cent of the total population respectively (CIA, 2015). The Hausa/Fulani are distributed across the northern part of the country, with a Muslim majority, while the Igbos, located in the Southeast, and are predominately Christians. However, there is a balance between Christianity and the Islamic population in the South-West, which is home to the Yoruba with a tiny proportion practicing African Traditional Religion (Rustad, 2008). This composition makes it difficult to detach ethnic, regional, and religious divides from Nigerian domestic politics. Due to its diversity, Nigeria has witnessed many intra-state and state-level conflicts such as the civil war in 1967, driven by the competition over the control of political power among the major ethnic groups (Falode, 2011).

To promote unity in diversity, Nigeria operates a federal system of government. As a federation of three governmental levels, political power is divided between the central government, thirty-six states and 774 local government areas including the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja (See Figure 1). Nigeria is further divided into six geo-political zones according to economic, ethnic, political, and cultural preferences for power-sharing and resource allocation purposes (Bakare, 2015). The six sub-regions, reflecting the North-South Divide are the North West, North East, North Central, South West, South

East and South-South (See Figure 1). Nigeria practices a presidential system of government, where power is separated between the executive and legislature. The president is directly elected through universal adult suffrage. The National Assembly is made up of the Senate, and House of Representatives. The senate consists of 109 members with three members from each state and one from the Federal Capital Territory. In contrast, the House of Representatives comprise 360 members from the 360 constituencies in which the country is divided. The allocation of seats in the House of Representatives is based on the population and size of each state (Fashagba, 2019).



Figure 1: Map of Nigeria showing the Thirty-Six States and Geo-Political Zones

Source: Ibenegbu, (2017)

• *Issues and Challenges of Power-Sharing in Nigeria*

The power-sharing process in Nigeria aligns with some of the principles of consociationalism and centripetalism, especially in the division of power-sharing into territory, economics, and politics. Although the motive behind the institution of the three types of power-sharing is the same, this article focuses on the political aspect of power-sharing, which deals with office distribution. Central to the politics of political and bureaucratic office distribution is the need to prevent the domination of state institutions by a few groups (Orji, 2008). The two major ways of distributing elective or appointive positions in Nigeria are through zoning and federal character principles. The federal character principle is a constitutional provision, which authorizes equal representation of various groups in states institutions. On the other hand, the zoning principle is an informal arrangement developed by the political elites to ensure that each geo-political zone is adequately represented in government (Nwozor, 2014). The federal character principle

and zoning seem to be a variant of the principle of consociationalism of elite coalition and proportional representation.

Federal Character was adopted as a framework for the promotion of equal representation and to prevent the dominance of individuals, few states or ethnic groups in government and its agencies. The principle was designed to address the problem of imbalance, marginalization, and discrimination in Nigeria public service. The Nigerian constitution mandates the president to appoint at least one minister from each state, and political appointments including civil service recruitments, are mandated to reflect the federal character (Demarest *et al.*, 2020). As expected, the introduction of federal character led to an increase in the number of ethnic minorities in federal ministries and the spread of cabinet positions among various segments (Justine *et al.*, 2015). However, the principle has failed to guarantee the equal allocation of public offices across the federating units in Nigeria due to a lack of political will as evident by the resurgence of the clamor for self-actualization by the Igbos (Eme & Okeke, 2017). For instance, President Buhari's administration appears to have violated the provisions of the federal character principle in most of their political appointments by being ethnically biased in favor of the Northern region (see table 1). Furthermore, the federal character principle does not extend to elective positions, thereby, making it possible for the President, Senate President and Speaker of the House of Representatives to come from the same geo-political zone, which is against the idea of the principle of federal character (Okeke, 2019).

Table 1: Asymmetrical Appointments of Service Chiefs
under President Buhari Administration

S/N	Names	Position	Religion	State	Zone
1.	Major General Farouk Yahaya	Chief of Army Staff	Muslim	Sokoto	North West
2.	Yusuf Bichi	Director-General of the State Security Service	Muslim	Kano	North West
3.	Air-Vice Marshal Ishiaka Amao	Chief of Air Staff	Muslim	Osun	South West
4.	Rauf Adesoji Aregbesola	Minister of Interior	Muslim	Osun	South West
5.	Retired Major General Babagana Monguno	National Security Advisor	Muslim	Borno	North East
6.	Major General Bashir Magashi	Minister of Defence	Muslim	Sokoto	North West
7.	Usman Baba	Inspector-General of Police	Muslim	Yobe	North East
8.	Ahmed Abubakar	Director-General, National Intelligence Agency	Muslim	Katsina	North West

S/N	Names	Position	Religion	State	Zone
9.	Retired Colonel Hameed Ali	Comptroller-General of Nigeria Custom Service	Muslim	Kaduna	North West
10.	Mohammed Babandede	Comptroller-General of Nigeria Immigration Service	Muslim	Jigawa	North West
11.	Haliru Nababa	Comptroller-General of Nigeria Correctional Service	Muslim	Sokoto	North West
12.	Boboye Oyeyemi	Corps Marshall Federal Road Service Corps	Christian	Kwara	North Central
13.	Dr Liman Ibrahim	Comptroller-General of Federal Fire Service	Muslim	Niger	North Central
14.	Ahmed Abubakar Audi	Commandant-General of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps	Muslim	Nasarawa	North Central
15.	Abubakar Malami	Attorney-General of the Federation	Muslim	Kebbi	North West
16.	Abdulrasheed Bawa	Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission	Muslim	Kebbi	North West
17.	Retired General Mohammed Buba-Marwa	Chairman/Chief Executive Officer of The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency	Muslim	Kaduna	North West
18.	Major General Lucky Irabor	Chief of Defence Staff	Christian	Delta	South South
19.	Rear Admiral Awwal Zubairu Gambo	Chief of Naval Staff	Muslim	Kano	North West
20.	Muhammed Dingyadi	Minister of Police Affairs	Muslim	Sokoto	North West

Source: Chiamogu and Chiamogu, 2019 (adapted and updated)

The second technique of office distribution in Nigeria is the Zoning principle. Ezeibe *et al.* (2016) define zoning of public office as the distribution and rotation of public office among various segments, which could be based on regions, ethnicity, or religion. The main elements of zoning mechanism in Nigeria are Power Shift and Rotation of Office. The zoning principle aims to ensure the inclusion of all regions in power and to ensure that no political party is perceived to represent only a particular segment of the country. For example, the presidential and vice-presidential candidates of various political parties are taken from different regions in Nigeria (Falola, 2008). The same principle applies in the selection of the leaders at the National Assembly. However, the power rotation principle has not been enshrined in the constitution, and the attempts to constitutionalize it have proven abortive, making it a subject of manipulation and controversies. Banjo (2010) argues that rotation of power is inconsistent with demo-

cratic ideals because it allows political parties to allocate power based on loosely defined geo-political regions that are not authorized by the voters. The rotation arrangement has generated much discontentment under President Buhari administration by people who felt that it was unfair to have the Vice President and the Speaker of the House of Representatives from the South-West, and the President, Senate President and Chief Justice of Nigeria from the Islamic religion. This discontent partly demonstrates the reason for the resurgence of separatist agitation by groups who felt excluded and discriminated against in the political process.

The reason for the adoption of the federal character principle and the informal practice of the zoning principle is to balance the obvious inequality inherent in Nigeria's practice of liberal democracy principle of majoritarianism. However, Ukiwo, (2003) argues that the politicization of the principle of consociationalism in Nigeria has affected its effectiveness in checking conflict and competition based on ethnicity. Glickman and Furia (1995), thus submit that consociationalism is ineffectual in a presidential system characterized by the winner takes all approach as practiced in Nigeria. Hence, none of the power-sharing measures has ensured ethnic balance and equal representation in Nigeria's political process. Instead, these power-sharing arrangements have led to the reinforcement of separatist agitations by groups, who felt marginalized and underrepresented in government.

- ***The Resurgence of Separatist Agitation in Nigeria***

The threat of separation by some ethnic groups in Nigeria is not a modern phenomenon. However, the contemporary dimension of these agitations is connected to the yet to be resolved national questions revolving around religion, ethnic balancing, marginalization, revenue allocation, power-sharing, among others (Awofeso, 2017). The current demand for an independent state of Biafra by some groups in South-East Nigeria can be traced to the Civil War, which was fought from 1967 to 1970. However, the new wave of separatist agitation started in 1999 with the advent of the Movement for the Actualization of the State of Biafra, who used peaceful approaches such as protest and display of Biafra symbols as tactics to further their objectives.

The emergence of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), who occasionally used violent means to further their objectives, has taken the agitation to a new dimension. The advent of IPOB is connected to the exclusion and marginalization of the Igbos in vital political positions, a situation that became worse under the President Buhari administration (Alumona *et al.*, 2017). For instance, the Igbos are yet to produce a Nigerian president since the 1960s when Nnamdi Azikwe was a ceremonial president, and Aguiyi Irosoi was the Military Head of State (see table 2). The attempts of the government to repress these agitations through violent means instead of addressing the underlying causes through dialogue has further intensified the demand. The resultant effect was

clashes between the IPOB and state security apparatus, which eventually led to their proscription by the Nigerian government in 2017 (Ejeh *et al.*, 2020).

Table 2: Nigeria's Previous and Current Presidents/Head of States and Government

S/N	Name	Position	Geo-Political Zone	Tenure Period
1.	Nnamdi Azikwe	Ceremonial President	South East	1960–1996
2.	Tafawa Balewa	Prime Minister	North East	1960–1966
3.	Major General Aguiyi Ironsi	Military Head of State	South East	January 16–July 29, 1966
4.	General Yakubu Gowon	Military Head of State	North West	July 29, 1966–July 29, 1975
5.	General Murtala Mohammed	Military Head of State	North West	1975–1976
6.	General Olusegun Obasanjo	Military Head of State	South West	1976–1979
7.	Shehu Shagari	Executive President	North West	1979–1983
8.	Major General Muhammadu Buhari	Military Head of State	North West	1983–1985
9.	General Ibrahim Babangida	Military President	North Central	1985–1993
10.	Ernest Shonekan	Head of State (Interim National Government)	South-West	August 26–November 17, 1993
11.	General Sani Abacha	Military Head of State	North West	1993–1998
12.	General Abdulsalami Abubakar	Military Head of State	North Central	1998–1999
13.	Olusegun Obasanjo	Executive President	South West	1999–2007
14.	Musa Yaradua	Executive President	North West	2007–2010
15.	Goodluck Jonathan	Executive President	South South	2010–2015
16.	Muhammadu Buhari	Executive President	North West	2015 till date

Source: Alumona, Azam, and Iloh, 2017

Table 2 above indicates that the three geo-political zones from North (North East, North West and North Central) have occupied the position of the president more than other geo-political zones from the South (South East, South West, and South-South) throughout the country's sixty years of independence. The clamor for increased representation of the South-eastern zone in the political process is a major factor responsible for the resurgence of the separatist movements. However, since power-sharing is at the root of the various agitations, there is a need for the institutionalization of an effective power-sharing arrangement based on the consociational model to reduce inter-ethnic suspicion and enhance the involvement of all ethnic groups in the political process.

Consociational Power Sharing as a Panacea to Secessionist Agitations in Nigeria

• *Nigeria and Lijphart's Favorable Factors*

Nigeria could be considered as an unusual case because of the absence the favorable factors of consociationalism identified by Lijphart (1985). Schneekener (2002) contends that the chance of attaining a power-sharing agreement is greater where the favorable conditions are feasible than where they are non-existent. The following factors appear to be an impediment to the practice of consociationalism in Nigeria: (a) The dominant size of the Hausa/Fulani ethnic group compared to others groups (b) existing wide gap between the North and South in terms of socio-economic development (c) the existence of wide group inequalities in terms of size and economic resources (d) The non-existence of external threats that can prompt national solidarity (e) Huge population size (f) Absence of an overarching loyalty to the Nigerian nation (g) Lack of geographically concentrated ethnic groups (h) Absence of compromising and accommodative history (Njoku, 1999). The absence of these conditions in the Nigerian society is partly caused by colonialism, which created an artificial boundary and forcefully integrated people of diverse cultures and traditions (Nwonwu, and Kotze, 2008). Consequently, the amalgamation of different communities under one umbrella, called Nigeria led to an ethnic-based voting behavior, which further hinders consociational practice.

Notwithstanding, Fitri and Rahman (2015) argue that cooperation, accommodation, and compromise are still possible due to the absence of a clear majority between the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. The lack of a clear dominant group enhances the possibility of the effectiveness of the consociational model in Nigeria because none of the three major ethnic groups is too large in terms of population size to dominate one another. However, Lijphart (1977) states that the possession of these conditions is not adequate or does not have to be present before consociationalism can be adopted or effective in any nation. Bogaards et al. (2010) state that the absence of favorable factors is not an insurmountable obstacle provided there is adequate political will from the elite. There is a possibility of success even when most of the conditions or the most decisive ones are unfavorable or absent. Therefore, the synthesis of consociational mechanisms is essential for the development of a recognized democratic system in Nigeria (Joseph, 1978).

• *Prospect of a Consociational Model in Nigeria*

The constitutional arrangement of any nation must address its historical and ethnological realities. Nigeria's attempts to build its democracy on the British parliamentary and the United States presidential model have not been effective due to its ethnoreligious composition and social-political environment, which is different from that of the Western countries (Akinola, 1996). Unlike the United Kingdom, there is an absence of

an institution equivalent to the British monarch to function as a uniting force in the heterogeneous Nigerian society. Thus, when the parliamentary system was introduced at independence, the political parties were ethnically based and merely represented the various ethnic segments, which makes their relationship hostile towards one another, leading to various ethno-political conflicts and secessionist agitations. Similarly, the zero-sum nature of Nigeria's practice of the presidential system has failed to integrate the diverse population of the country by exacerbating the politics of ethnic anxiety leading to disintegrative conflicts (Suberu and Diamond, 2002). Therefore, due to the failure of these models, there is a need to either jettison or modify the current presidential system, revert to the parliamentary system, or adopt a new system of government that is more suited to the realities of Nigeria in order to accommodate and integrate the minorities by involving them in the decision-making process.

To resolve the issues surrounding power-sharing in Nigeria, this article proposes the adoption of a semi-presidential system adapted to suit its socio-political realities. Semi-presidentialism integrates the features of the Parliamentary and Presidential systems of government by having a president who is directly elected for a fixed term and a prime minister plus the cabinet who are either responsible to the president or parliament (Elgie, 2008). Moestrup (2007) argues that having a dual executive permits a level of power-sharing between contending forces in the political system, thus enabling grand coalition and majority representation. In Nigeria, for instance, the adoption of a semi-presidential system would create the possibility for power to be shared between/among various ethnic and sectional groups in the country. If the Northern region holds the presidency and the Southern region holds the prime ministership, the likelihood of integration would be higher because each region would have an institutional stake in the political process.

Lijphart (2004) agrees with the contention that semi presidentialism will enable substantial power-sharing among the executives in a political system. However, he argues that the system will not stop the zero-sum approach associated with pure presidentialism, which consolidates the power of the president. In order to prevent the over-concentration of power in the hands of the president, the French system of premier-presidentialism, in which the prime minister and his cabinets are answerable to the legislature, would be appropriate for a country such as Nigeria instead of the president-parliamentarism, where the prime minister and the cabinets are responsible to the president. This will help to deconcentrate and reduce the amount of power being wielded by the president (Choudhry and Stacey, 2013). The adoption of the premier-presidentialism in Nigeria would allow for a collective and unified government, where power is divided among the organs of government, thus serving as an effective strategy for inter-ethnic cohesion. France for instance, struggled with a parliamentary system in their Fourth Republic (1946–1958) when they had twenty governments in ten

years but the adoption of a premier-presidentialism type of semi-presidential system in the Fifth Republic has ensured some degree of stability due to the stable, collective, and cohesive leadership (Skach, 2011).

The capacity of semi-presidentialism to generate intra-executive conflict between the president and prime minister, especially during the cohabitation period, which could lead to a divided executive and delay in decision-making has a subject of criticism (Elgie, 2008). However, Choudhry and Stacey (2013) state that it is possible to avoid such conflict if there is a well-structured relationship between the two executive and their powers clearly stated. An appropriate power distribution and structural relationships between the institutions of government would have a major impact on the success of semi-presidential systems. A premier-presidential Nigeria would benefit from the clear statement of the power and responsibilities of the president and prime minister and ensure that neither of them can exercise exclusive executive power. This would help to mitigate against any potential conflict that may arise in the performance of their duties.

In terms of power-sharing, the present six geo-political zones (see figure 1) are to function as the basis of allocating political power in Nigeria. Following the consociation model, the power rotation principle should be introduced and entrenched in the Nigerian constitution. This principle would rectify the shortfalls of the federal character principle by ensuring that all major groups in Nigeria occupy political power successively, thereby help to create a sense of belonging. The constitution should be amended to provide for the establishment of the office of the prime minister, deputy prime minister, President, and vice president at the executive level and senate president and speaker of the House of Representatives at the legislative level in accordance with the semi-presidential system. These positions should be rotated among the six geo-political zones in the country, and no zone should produce more than one occupant. Therefore, if the president is elected from a particular zone, the prime minister, senate president, deputy prime minister, speaker and vice president must be chosen from other zones to ensure balanced representation of different groups in governance. A major advantage of using the zones as the basis of power rotation is that it will reduce the impact of ethnicity and religion in the electoral process, thus lessening ethnoreligious conflict and separatist agitations (Ezeibe *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, inter-ethnic political rivalry and competition will be reduced because each zone will be aware of their turn to occupy certain political office thereby, minimizing the controversies surrounding which geo-political zones to present candidates when the opportunity arises. Thus, encouraging each zone to wait for their turn patiently.

Nwozor (2014) states that the focus on geopolitical power rotation is capable of depriving various ethnonational groups in Nigeria of their identities if not properly implemented. However, the power rotation principle has the potential of facilitating cordial relationships among various sections in Nigeria and promoting peace and stability in

the country because it will ensure that marginalized groups are accommodated in the political and decision-making process. Power rotation will resolve the issue of national disunity and disintegration by recognizing the rights of all individuals irrespective of their ethnic and religious groups to be involved in the process of governance. Moreover, the proposed system would allow the office of the president, vice president, prime minister, and deputy prime minister to be distributed among the major religions in the country in order to maintain a religious balance. For instance, if the president is a Christian, the vice president is expected to be of the opposite religion. This will ensure that all sections of the society are given an equal status in the federation through adequate involvement in the power-sharing process.

Furthermore, when electing the president, the centripetal based electoral system currently being used where the winning candidate must obtain a minimum of one-quarter of votes cast in at least two-thirds of the thirty-six states of the Nigerian federation should be maintained. This arrangement will allow political parties to have a wide-ranging geographical and ethnic membership spanning two-thirds of the constituent states of the federation and ensure that no sectional group dominate governance since the president would enjoy widespread support. Bogaards (2019) contends that the theory of consociationalism and centripetalism are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and there is a possibility for the elements of both theories to be operated within a country. The presence of both features will better suit Nigeria's political realities because it will stop the accusations of parochialism or regionalism by groups who felt marginalized. Furthermore, the term of office of the president and vice president should be restricted to a single term of five years. If there is any vacancy due to impeachment, resignation, incapacitation or death, the vice president will temporally hold the office before the election of a new candidate from the same geo-political zone as the exited president to complete the tenure. This provision will help to eliminate succession controversies, prevent acrimonious power struggle between different zones and ensure the maintenance of the five-year power rotation among the zones.

The power rotation principle, along with the presence of a dual executive associated with a semi-presidential system is a manifestation of the consociational principle of elite cooperation and grand coalition. Grand coalition facilitates the involvement of all representatives of various factions in the political process. Lijphart (1984) states that peace and stability can be achieved in heterogeneous societies if political elites engage in accommodative behavior and abandon centrifugal competition among themselves. The constitutionalizing of the proposed system of government and power-sharing arrangements in Nigeria will promote stability by ensuring that the country's diversity is reflected in the composition of political elites through the facilitation of adequate representation of various groups. The rotation of executive and legislative power among geo-political zones will ensure that within the period of twenty-five to thirty years, each zone would have occupied all available principal positions.

The concept of power rotation is not a new phenomenon. The European Union and Switzerland are prominent examples of countries and institutions that have effectively applied the principle of power rotation to suit their geo-political realities. The EU, for example, rotates its chairmanship position every six months among member states to give members equal access to council presidency regardless of their economic and political power or demographic size (Pasarín, 2011). In Switzerland, the German ethnic group who constitute the majority subscribes to the rotational principle in order to accommodate the minorities despite being capable of political dominance. This informal power-sharing arrangement in Switzerland provides for annual power rotation among federal councilors who take turns serving as president hierarchically starting from the most senior to the youngest member (Altman, 2008). Thus, making Switzerland one of the most stable multi-ethnic countries in the world.

Moreover, the consociational principle of proportional representation (PR) should be introduced in Nigeria to enhance the opportunities of participation for ethnic minorities in the legislature and executive arm of government. According to McGarry and Loizides (2015), the principle of proportionality allows a liberal model of consociation in which political parties are assigned positions if they meet the electoral threshold, irrespective of their basis. It will ensure that all candidates are rewarded as the winners and losers in the election would participate in decision-making or guarantee inclusion in government regardless of the total number of votes cast in their favor. Given the semi-presidential arrangement being proposed for Nigeria, PR should be introduced in the election at the legislative level and in the selection of cabinet ministers. At the legislative level, the PR electoral system should replace the problematic first-past-the-post winner system, where the party with the highest votes wins all legislative seats. This principle has the advantage of ensuring that all electorates are of equal value as all valid votes cast are considered, and no vote is rendered useless or wasted (Bakare *et al.*, 2018). For instance, if a party has the support of twenty-five per cent voters, it will win about twenty-five per cent of legislative seats. This will help to guarantee inclusiveness of the minorities by giving them a stake in decision-making irrespective of their population because all political parties will be represented in the legislature regardless of the extent of their support base.

The “proportional sequential” mechanism, an innovative form of consociationalism proposed by McGarry and Loizides (2015) would be appropriate in the selection of ministers at the executive level in Nigeria. They argue that PS coalition would provide an inclusive and negotiable resolution to conflicts in heterogeneous political systems because positions are apportioned automatically on a proportional and liberal basis among the major political parties based on their electoral strength (McGarry & Loizides, 2015). Thus, ministerial seats would be allotted in a way that is proportionate to the share of votes garnered by parties in the legislative election. The d’Hondt method

currently being operated in Northern Ireland can be used as a divisor in the allocation of ministerial seats. The political party with the highest seats wins the first ministry, and each subsequent seat is allocated to the party with the highest votes after being divided by the divisor until all ministerial positions are occupied. Loizides (2016) states that the d'Hondt formula has the potential of facilitating the introduction of semi-presidentialism in resolving future deadlocks. Applying the PS executive coalition to Nigeria, the ministers would be drawn from political parties who have at least ten per cent of votes cast at the legislative election based on the d'Hondt method. The justification for setting the ten per cent votes limit is to ensure that political parties that get seats allocation in the National Assembly are parties who show dedication to galvanizing support base in the polity. This system will consolidate democracy by giving the minor political parties guaranteed seats in relation to the total votes received.

Another advantage of the P. S. coalition is that it will lead to the promotion of consensus-building instead of hostility among political parties, thereby reducing electoral violence as the winning party will integrate the losing party by giving them a certain percentage of legislative and executive positions. Violent competition, secessionist agitations and the possibility for losers to upset the whole framework will be reduced when all parties are included in the system. As the case of Northern Ireland suggest, the method will provide an incentive for political parties to stay away from violence and focus exclusively on politics to broaden their electoral support (Medina and Loizides, 2013). It will lead to the disbandment of the winner takes all approach that characterized Nigeria politics where the president appoints the ministers among the party loyalties. Finally, McGarry and Loizides (2015) state that the automaticity of the PS coalition makes it more beneficial because the formation of the executive ensues automatically after elections making further power sharing negotiation or legislative approval irrelevant. Thus, the bottleneck associated with seeking legislative approval in Nigeria will be eliminated if adopted.

Conclusion

The unity and continued existence of Nigeria are constantly being threatened by the increasing separatist agitations from ethnic minorities who use it as tool to express their dissatisfaction with the Nigerian state over their under-representation in the political process. The resurgence of separatist agitation by the Indigenous People of Biafra is based on the claims of marginalization, political exclusion, and underrepresentation being suffered by the Southeast geopolitical zones under the current political dispensation. This article argues that Nigeria could still benefit from implementing a consociational model of power sharing despite the absence of the favourable factors. To facilitate the inclusion of the diverse segments of the Nigerian society, it proposes the adoption of a semi-presidential system of government adapted to the political realities

of the country based on the principle of grand coalition and proportional representation. It contends that the constitutionalizing of power rotation principle will discourage inter-ethnic rivalry and ethnoreligious conflict through facilitating cordial relationship among various groups in Nigeria. The rotation of power will lead to the accommodation of minorities in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, this article suggests that the principle of proportionality will enhance the opportunities available for minorities to participate in governance irrespective of their electoral strength. The study advocates for the adoption of the P. S. coalition based on the d'Hondt mechanism in the election of legislative members and executive ministers in Nigeria. This method will resolve the problem of underrepresentation and provide an incentive for political parties to stay away from violence and focus exclusively on politics to broaden their electoral support.

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