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Nigerian Oil and the National Questions of Insecurity and Deep Conflict Divide

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Abstract

The Nigerian state appears to have had more cohesion during the colonial times up to the 1914 amalgamation of the southern and northern protectorate. The cohesion between the Nationalists towards the attainment of independence in 1960 is presently looking like a golden age in the history of the country. Though there were scimmages between the nationalists on the one hand and between the nationalists and the colonialists on the other hand from 1914 till 1960, the period after independence till date appears to be age of 'tug-of-war' with at least one civil war in the country's kitty. Not much is working since independence. Added to corruption and ethnicity, oil appears to have laid a foundation of permanent crises in the country. Since the finding of oil a decade before the civil war, the Nigeria space which was taunted to be one of the brightest art of empire building in the history of modern European colonialism has been in perpetual turmoil. Even as all the divides to be discussed in this study had existed during the colonial and post-colonial eras, they have all been accentuated by oil. The lubricant of oil which could have

been used to crease the ship of state has turned the chief instrument of friction and divide. The state and the multinational oil companies have (in their seeming collusion) used the instrument of oil to divide than glue the relationship between the peoples of the country. This study which adopts the doctrinal method highlights the divides which oil has created amongst the Nigerian people and how these divides have become their hurdles in the course of national development and integration. The hurdles are tagged 'deep' because there are several of them but the most notable and easily identifiable ones in relation to oil business are captured in this study. This study finds that until the Federal government is disillusioned and allow the nation to develop all the 39 natural minerals resources evenly distributed across the country, conflicts will not subside. The sole concentration on oil as the mainstay of the national economy and its non-transparency in the management of same, has not only bred divides, it has made a great nation which is supposed to move around as a giant to strut around like less than an ant.

Keywords: Nigeria, Oil, National Question, Technology, Divisions

Introduction

Several divides that are normal in the existence of nations have turned intractable and almost impossible for Nigeria to surmount. These divides run between the north and the south, between oil producing and non-oil producing and between religious believe systems. This triple heritage as Ali Mazrui has been well known to characterize such conundrum shall be closely studied in this paper and, attempt shall be made to determine which is driving the other as the Marxists would sometimes attempt to do. The triple heritage in this study are constructed and domiciled in the politics of territorial configuration, in the economic sphere of ownership of natural and mineral resources and the religious space of worship.

The debate of which is driving the other had always been the scimmage between politicians, philosophers, and the spiritualists. Between Max Weber and Karl Marx, the question was to a significant extent settled. While the functionalist school of thought to which the Weberians belong advocated that no one factor determines the other but that in some historical circumstances the one affects and impacts the other(s), Marxist believe that in the final analysis, it is the economic factor that prevails. Applying this general principle to the interpretation of the phenomenon (of the crisis of the great divides and oil) that is engaged in here, it is suggested that in as much as the crisis in the country is propelled not clearly by the questions of which part of the country produces oil and which religious sect is saying what about its appropriation, the economic issue of oil and its appropriation is driving the crisis in the country.

Taking it from a historical dimension, it would be noted that not much debates and dissensions occurred during the pre-colonial and colonial periods about and around the issues of which region and which religious believe a citizen came from or abided with than the question of who gets what when and how in the colonial and post-colonial state. The role of oil resources in conflict has been well articulated as primary and significant. It was Oyefusi (2007) ^[59] and Masajuwa (2014) ^[34] in their

studies on oil-dependence and civil conflict in Nigeria that submitted that the Nigerian-Biafra civil war was not unconnected with oil and disagreement on the sharing revenue from oil.

In Nigeria, the earliest evidence of oil's role in civil conflict can be traced to the Nigerian civil war. It was clear that majority of Nigeria's early oil reserves were in Biafra and this was perhaps the galvanizing force behind the secessionist obstinacy, diplomacy, sting and strike. And the Federal government of Nigeria on the other hand equally realized that Biafra's independence would certainly have cut the nation's oil wealth production into half and therefore decided to come down fiercely and swiftly on the secessionists. Though it has been argued by Agbese (2012, p. 92) ^[1] that oil did not cause the war but the pogrom (against easterners) in the north (as Ojukwu portrayed the northern killings as a pogrom indicating that 'the rest of the country no longer wanted the Igbos in Nigeria') oil was 'most definitely a stronger contributor' to the declaration of the war. In *Oil and Gas in Africa: Boom or Doom?* Nwadior (2012) ^[44] argues that one of the factors which were enumerated as the causes of the Nigerian civil war was the discovery of oil in the eastern region and why Biafra declared a Republic was to colonize the oil of the Niger delta and that the reason why the north fought 'to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done' was not to lose the oil wealth of the south.

In a similar vein Onwuka (2004) ^[55] believes that the civil war was caused because of 'barrels of oil and would end with thousands of pints of human bloodshed'. It was fought not so much for the territorial sanctity of the country but the 'desperate gamble' of the Nigerian state to 'win back the oil fields of the Niger delta' from the rebels as otherwise would have cut off the oil reserves in the eastern divide from the country thus leading to the promulgation of the 1968 Petroleum Decree. Indeed, the period of the Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) is often neglected in the analysis of Nigerian oil yet it was during this period that the legal structures, framework, policies and relations that created Nigeria's unique version of oil curse were established. The greatest characteristic feature of this curse is opacity; the deliberate obfuscation of information related to oil production, revenues, accounting and operations as governing principle. It is argued that opacity arose from the conclusions reached by the key actors in the conflict due to diverse, but strategic reasons to keep oil matters out of the public glare and reckoning even though it was basically for it that the war was prosecuted, lost and won (US oil companies...2012 and Duncan, 2010 ^[13], pp. xiii and xvi)

Statement of the Problem

To reconstruct Oronto Douglas (2001) ^[57]: Why is oil the stuff of contemporary Nigerian politics and why is the Niger delta the field on which the vicious battle for the money spinner waged? The Nigerian state has made the oil of the Niger delta a political issue of divide due to its neglect and de-emphasis on over 39 such other natural mineral resources that can attract as much foreign exchange, investment and investors as possible and even more. Why mine only oil and politicize it in Nigeria? In the history of the country, coal mines in Enugu in the east and Tin ore mines in Jos plateau in the north had been great centers of mining activities during the colonial, early post-colonial eras and up till now and not much conflict and friction is arising from these

places. It is even well known that there are so many foreigners who have been in Nigeria for over 50 years mining emerald in commercial quantities and no one is raising a cain (Aisha Ismail as cited in Okeke, 2014) ^[51]. Much of the conflicts the old mines bred were issues reflecting inhuman conditions of the mines, the miners and industrial and labour related conflicts. The colonial state in Nigeria witnessed labour revolts, strikes and agitation for independence. The later was treated within the substratum of nationalist agitations. But the case of oil has not only kept the mining of coal, zinc, tin etc on the shelves and silent, it has bred the most critical genre of divides in the history of the country and even war.

Tin ore was the first mineral to be mined in Nigeria by the Royal Niger Company in 1905 followed by gold, zinc, lead and limestone etc. Though they were mined at both artisanal and industrial levels and by foreign firms and local concerns, not much hullabaloo attended to these as currently against oil. Why then the hype on oil and its national divides whenever the issue of natural mineral resources is raised? The divides that oil has bred is so much in the present configuration of the Nigerian state that it appears as if every issue is hinged on it. Attempts have been made in recent studies and literature to dissociate the militancy surrounding oil exploration in the south from the insurgency and banditry wracking the north. Is that divide sustainable? Is there no link (if subterranean) between oil militancy in the south and Boko Haram insurgency in the north? This study shall interrogate these divides and the legal issues they raise within the context of the national question

Theoretical framework

The Resource Curse Theory

Rearticulating the resource curse thesis Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2003) ^[64] postulate that minerals exert negative impact on the growth of countries they occur particularly if they are mismanaged or if they are found before the country attains democracy and this thesis is robust in the Nigerian context where waste and poor-long term economic performances prevail. They believe from their study that it was better to share the resources from oil 'to the public no matter how difficult' the sharing formula may be because it would well be better than as currently done in Nigeria. They pose the question: Who is then entitled to oil revenue? They answered, 'all Nigerian citizens'.

Dependency Theory

Two historical divides, tendencies and movements are trailing the study of modern petroleum law in Nigeria. They have equally to do with the two major geo-political zones of the nation: the north and the south. The first tendency is the cluster of studies that pander to find expression in the south-south of Nigeria revolving on the claims of the Niger delta of Nigeria. The general impression which appears to emanate from the zone is that it is the cash-cow of the Nigerian economy. That since the finding of oil in Oloibiri in the south, the economy of the nation had received a boost which launched it into international limelight and reckoning to the extent not only that 90% of the revenue of the economy flows from the region but that the finding has diverted the attention of the political-economy from the other critical sectors such as agriculture which used to sustain the nation such that Nigeria began to suffer from the

adverse effect of dependency on oil and to the extent that a shortfall or quantum shift downwards or a change in the international price of the commodity spells doom or boom for the nation.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Within the above dependency theory is the cain being raised by the region, particularly the south-east, that although it is the goose that lays the golden egg, infrastructural development and key positions in the governance of the polity have eluded the region. Since after the last war, the southern region has been perceived as not more than playing a second fiddle in the scheme of governance in the nation. In addition to the second fiddle status, injury is also being fingered and witnessed in form of ecological or environmental degradation arising from the side effects of the exploration of oil and gas in the zone. Consequently, a sea of research data is beginning to be amassed to explain issues relating to resource control, climate change and ecological disorder.

Self Determination Theory

The most chronic effect of the first dimension is the rise of militancy in the delta. The waterways, the critical assets and human population of the Niger delta have become bedeviled with insecurity to the extent that the political economy has become prostrate arising from vandalism, sabotage, oil theft and illegal refineries. The kidnap of expatriates was the initial fang of the militants until it morphed into the bombardment of the critical assets leading to a descent in the output of the nation and a near collapse of the economy when recession keyed in. This particular tendency has been best captured in Ebeku (2002) where the Kaiama declaration of the Ijaw communities of the Niger delta was framed and reported as follows, 'all land and natural resources (including mineral resources) within the Ijaw territory belongs to the Ijaw communities and are the basis of our survival...we cease to recognize all undemocratic decrees that rob our peoples and communities of the right to ownership and control of our lives which were enacted without our participation and consent'.

Nationalism Theory

The second tendency of the divide is the northern argument that groundnut money was exclusively used by the government for exploratory activities at the early stage of the oil business in Nigeria. Professor Yadudu and the Kano state position paper raised the issue more polemically that agitators of resource control and derivation fail to take into account, the contribution Nigerians from all works of life have, over the years, made and continued to make with their blood and toil to protect the territorial integrity of the nation, including the protection of the oil wells and other vital strategic installations. They posit that the advocates have easily forgotten and continue to ridicule and even belittle the incalculable material contributions made from the resources of other parts of the country to make the initial investment at the exploration stage which ultimately led to the discovery of oil and its subsequent exploitation in the Delta.

Aisha Ismail (a nominee to the National Conference from Kano state and later a Minister) in an interview with Okeke (2014) ^[51] had restated the position of the northern divide as follows, 'there is a new thinking that people who have a certain kind of mineral from the area they live in should be

given the control of their resources' but the other regions would not buy into that. Ismail was trenchant that resources from groundnut and other agricultural produce from the north were used for exploration before it was determined that there was oil and before the multinational oil companies were invited to invest and the north contributed most in these efforts. Therefore, it was impossible if not reckless for the south to agitate for 50 percent of a resource that belongs to all Nigerians even though the sympathy for the despoliation of the south through natural resources exploration is undeniable and goes solely to the south.

It is warp nationalist perspectives of this nature that predisposes separatists to submit that northern Nigeria has huge solid minerals far more lucrative than oil but the greed to conquer others and engage in unimaginable desire over oil drives the conflicts deeply in the Nigerian eco-political space. On the basis of such northern perspectives, it was easy to appreciate why the 19 Governors of the 19 northern states had vehemently opposed the review of derivation fund from 13 to 50 percent even demanding that the fund be abolished instead of being kin to develop the solid minerals in the 19 states (Eme & Anyadike, 2012) ^[15]. Additionally, the argument of Nigerian ownership of oil has been flooded by Ejobowah of Indiana University, USA (2000) who believes that Nigeria neither belongs to its entire people nor its natural mineral resources.

Anti-Nationalism Theory

For Ogbodo (2005 p. 65) ^[49] the questions are legion. At what point did this happen? What was the contract of the joint venture agreement entered into between the government and Shell the foremost oil company in Nigeria? It is not enough to make wild claims and indulge in sanctimonious cheap talk. Those claiming to have sponsored the discovery of oil in the delta should come out with the figures of their contributions. At least it is on record that the Federal government has invested close to N500 billion searching for oil in the Chad basin. The Nigerian government came effectively into the picture of oil business only in 1973 when all the risks and investments had been undertaken by the prospecting companies and the oil business had been fully established. That year, the Federal government acquired 35% shares of SPDC marking the beginning of the fallacious joint venture company.

For Akiri (2005 p. 9) ^[3] the fallacy of the mantra by the trio of Professor Yadudu, Dr Tahir and Aisha Ismail becomes clear after a reading of 'the Story of Shell-BP'. In it, it is clearly stated that Shell-BP, and not the Federal government of Nigeria, owned the initial investment in oil exploration and discovery in the Niger delta and the trio's claims ignore the fact that billions of naira earned from the delta has been sunk into the fruitless search for petroleum in the frontier basins believed in Nigeria to be Chad basin, Dahomey basin, Bida basin, Benue Trough etc. A clearer rebuttal of the northern claim can be found in the account of Onwuka (2004) ^[55] submitting that oil was first discovered in the eastern region of the Niger delta in 1956 and as the country was under British colonial rule, Shell teamed up with British Petroleum Company to open up the oil fields and formed the Royal Dutch Shell which joint venture produced 367,000 bpd for nearly a decade. After independence in 1960 Shell 'ensured that Nigerian government would have a share in the company.'

Yet in a paper, '*Resource control – A misunderstood phenomenon*' delivered at a forum in Kaduna, ex-Governor Attah had stated that in agitating for the control of the oil produced in their area, the Niger delta people were merely taking a cue from the north. In 1954, the Sardauna of Sokoto, Sir Ahmadu Bello had advanced resource control as a pre-condition for Nigeria's independence demanding that the regions must be allowed to have control over the resources derivable from their respective regions, and contribute to the Federal government for the maintenance of law and order (Ndujihe, 2004, p. 8) ^[41]. Resource control agitation is therefore not a new thinking or is it a caricature of thought.

Conceptual Clarification

The Divide

In this study divides are issues and structures that trigger differences and constitute hurdles and impediments in the growth, cohesion and development of Nigeria.

The National Question

National question in this study is a specific question or a set of questions arising from the relationship between different ethnic nationalities, regions and various identities in Nigeria (Komolafe, 2017) ^[32].

Insecurity Divide

As poverty does not know divide so insecurity. In Nigeria insecurity of the current threatening dimension is recent and an attempt shall be made to capture it. It shall be considered that the events and activities leading to the civil war, the war itself and its aftermath can be carefully quarantined within the structural organization and hostilities within the armed forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria even though oil cannot equally be excused from them. Such insecurities shall not be interrogated in this study. This study shall not also interrogate the stale Maitatsene riots of 1980s which was part of the early signs of Islamic fundamentalism in the north. In this study therefore, attempts shall be made to interrogate on-going insecurity issues in the north, west, east and the south-south solely in relation to oil and its (oil's) influences.

In the north, insecurity issues shall be constructed around insurgency and banditry foisted by Boko Haram and its related allies which seeks the establishment of the Islamic state of Nigeria and thus a form of separatist agitation. In the west the study shall be woven around the Yoruba Nation agitation of the Oduduwa Republic and the activities of the Odua Peoples' Congress, OPC. In the east attempt shall be made to construct the insecurity divide within IPOB's agitation for the restoration of the Republic of Biafra and its Eastern Security Network, ESN. And in the south-south an attempt shall be made to weave the insecurity divide around oil militancy and the agitation for resource control as foisted by MEND. The non-state actors propelling the insecurity divides in Nigeria are thus OPC, IPOB, MEND and BOKO HARAM corresponding with the four cardinal points of the country. How has oil influenced these insecurity structures and outfits whose aims are contrary to the aims of the Federal government?

Literature Review

Territorial Divide

The territorial divide is captured as the north and south

divide. It is a euphemism for ethnic divide. Ethnic conflicts have been at the core of the Nigerian deep divides. These ethnic conflicts are synonymous with inequality and economic and political factors are at their cores revolving on land and political posts (Irobi, 2005) ^[27]. The nation is in such simple terms classified as made up of the northern Hausa-Fulani group and the west-eastern Yoruba-Ibo group. While it is easy to reconstruct the affinity within the north (Hausa-Fulani) the affinity within Yoruba-Ibo in the south has not been sufficiently cemented due to the colonial cleavages between Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo in the Western House that made Dr. Azikiwe to move to the Eastern House of Assembly. Since then an alliance had been easier to form between the north and the west or between the east and the north than between the west and the east. It is not as if it had not been made or attempted, it had not been successfully done with ease at the level of formation of a national civil government with due exception to the Shagari-Ekwueme administration. It should however be added that the alliance had been difficult in coming to reality not mainly because of reasons fingered in the relationship between Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Chief Obafemi Awolowo but because of the mathematics that the population of the north alone is almost equal to that of the west and east put together.

For instance, in a Federation of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, the north has a total of 19 states and Abuja in its traditional territory while the west and the east has 17 states. At this level of elementary calculation, any alliance between the west and the east in the political power play is not of much impact compared to a political alliance that any of the west or the east would have with the north. It must therefore be emphasized that the supremacy of the north, the dominance of the north and the indispensability of the north comes from this wise. In land mass, the north is believed to be vast and equally outweighs the west and east put together. Moreover, in addition to the population and the size of the north against the west and the east put together, there appears to be, and this is real, a greater consensus within the north that can hardly be found in the west and the east put together. This consensus which the colonial state leveraged upon to build the colonial state of Nigeria still goes in favour of the north. The north was in a relatively organized and centralized nation state under the Caliphate and the Kanem Bornu Empire with a modern system of government under Islamic sovereignty before the arrival of the Europeans while on the part of the south, the west was suffering from the divisive Yoruba tribal wars of disintegration and the east largely under village democracies. The recent 2023 presidential election that pitched the eastern Peter Obi of the 'obidient movement' with the western Bola Tinubu of the 'emi lokan movement' has further driven the wedge of the divide deeper.

There is therefore a myth about the north which enables it to control and swing political power easily to its favour or that of its stooge in the Nigerian political terrain. This consensus has sometimes been called the northern agenda. The northern agenda is equally known often as the northern interest. Interrogating this agenda in his 'doom for the north' Jaja (2009) ^[29] argues that the north has been deceived by the British and co-opted into the neo-colonial agenda of milking the mineral resources of the south dry. The agenda whether north or British or both according to Jaja is aimed at controlling the south. And having been intoxicated by this

agenda as the south is intoxicated by oil resources the north has been blinded to its underdevelopment and illiteracy. Having been politically and militarily equipped by the British for the purpose of 'browbeating the south' into submission and subordination to 'one Nigeria agenda' the north is at the manipulative table of the British for the purpose of the southern oil; and as soon as the oil dries up it would be 'to your tents o' Israel'.

Jaja believes that by the time this reality comes about which, according to Aribisala is about 2050, or perhaps by the close of this century, say 3000, the north would become doomed as a landlocked country as there would be no basis for its continued marriage with the south, the oil which had been the economic gluing factor having dried up and the south having become robbed and disillusioned would raise a tariff and customs barricade against the north and the north and her sister territories of Chad and Niger shall have their pay-back time. Jaja and Aribisala are not alone in these divides. Several national questions are threatening to fracture Nigeria's sensitive north-south, Muslim-Christian divide and these fault lines have already started to breed internationally acclaimed sectarian conflicts claiming millions of lives and displacing citizens in their millions from their ancestral homes lands and even from their states of origin across the whole of the north and the west (Cocks, 2012)^[10]. The case of the east is also well documented. State sponsorship of terrorism in the east and across the other national spaces has been well confronted in journal literature (Okwelum, 2022).

Though the fact is difficult to demonstrate with empirical data, conventional wisdom links extremism and terrorism in the north with lack of education and poverty (Afzal, 2020)^[2]. The most significant point for the interrogation of the northern agenda is that it is fueled by poverty and poor leadership. The poverty rate in the north is 70 percent while that of the south is 60 percent (Emina, 2020)^[16]. The north east has the worse educational outcomes in Nigeria. As Dapel (2018)^[12] captures the poignancy of northern poverty, it is clear that the situation is largely self-induced: 'in Nigeria poverty wears a northern cap; if you are looking for a poor man get somebody wearing a northern cap.' What is behind the poverty divide between the north and the south is the relative refusal of the leadership of the north to create the enabling environment of social equality (induced by Islamic culture), quality education and health facilities, road infrastructure and electricity to enable the north feed Africa as Aribisala believes.

Dapel does not want to leave his readers in doubt as what breeds the condemnable level of poverty in the north and therefore suggests that the oil states in the south receives more revenue and monthly allocations from the Federal government making the southern states and households to spend more on their citizens and children than the northern states and their households. He argues further that the northern elite has focused so much attention on the control of the political machinery of the country in order to capture the Federal government and control and distribute an oil patrimony that ordinarily does not belong to it thereby losing grip of other critical issues of economic and social life. The consequential effects of the foregoing are that education is gaining traction in the south with a blossoming of private universities in addition to public ones while the north is lagging behind with undue emphasis on out-modeled Koranic education and attack on western education

as evil (Boko Haram).

As the north is de-emphasizing public western education it has continued to ignore its household size as against the south which has trimmed its family size to monogamy and four children per household as dictated by the policy of the Babangida military regime. The north has continually shunned birth control and family planning, snubbed girl-child education and early marriage, promoted insecurity of the worst genre in recent modern times and has allowed its spaces for Islamic insurgency and banditry. The number of out-of-school children and displaced persons and households is running into multiple and triple millions attracting the concern of International Agencies and Donors which are also being constantly fought off the north by Islamic fundamentalism. The northern control of the levers of the Federal might has not robbed off positively on its people. The north appears to be dragging itself and the country back into the dark ages of animal-driven locomotion while trying to pull off the resources of the south for conspicuous waste. The north has demonstrated that the early 50s Staple Economic Development theory of growth in which resource abundance was believed to be the road map for the development of developing nations like Nigeria was wrongly postulated. The reverse is now the case. Resource abundance solely is not a ticket to economic advancement (Oyefusi, 2007)^[59].

The north has also demonstrated the evidence that economic failures are largely induced by human factors, not environment, location and abundance of resources. Itumo (2017)^[28] believes that the economic impediment for the underdevelopment of Nigeria, which is applicable to Africa, is Nigerian leadership. For the north, it is the northern leadership. But poverty knows no divide. The general technical backwardness of the tropical world as a whole has been identified by Gourou (1980, p. 8)^[20] as the reason for the 'feeble development of industry in the south' and the north and not climatic conditions, lack of raw materials or the inability of the people to master the existing industrial techniques and improve on them.

The Relevant North

Interrogating the relevance of the north to the concept of Nigeria, Aribisala cautions that the south is intoxicated with the euphoria of finding of oil which is mere excrement of the devil that may be lost any time soon and may not last for another 50 years. He writes that oil is a wasting asset and that by the time of its extinction the nation would have to naturally go back to its vomit being agricultural resources canvassing (in the usual manner of speaking in superlatives that are not on ground in data) that if the agricultural north is mechanized, it can feed all of Africa. Yet, at the time he was writing the country was in the throes of importing 1.3 trillion naira worth of food and the north was suffering the birth pangs of irreverent Islamic insurgency. Citing Goldman Sachs Investment bank which had forecasted that by 2025 (two years from now) Nigeria would be the 20th largest economy in the world and that by 2050 she would be the 12th largest economy in the world, Aribisala goes on to cite Obama (an ex-President of the US) that Nigeria was to become the 'next economic giant of the world'.

What the north brings to the blessings of Nigeria is significant to note. It provides the population which adds to the market potentials and the economics of scale. Therefore, without the north, Nigeria cannot do but become an ordinary

country like Togo, Ghana or Cameroon believing that the north is the food basket of Nigeria and indeed Africa. Bringing up his postulations and forecasts to bear on his argument, Aribisala submits that because crude oil has been found in Cameroon, Chad and Niger Republic every indication is there that northern Nigeria has the potentials for commercial oil, and that states like Bornu, Yobe, Taraba, Sokoto and Zamfara shall soon join the league table of their nine sister states of the Niger delta being Imo, Edo, Ondo, Delta, Rivers, Cross River, Bayelsa, Akwa Ibom etc.

To give it to Aribisala, the out-going Buhari administration had to go through the thick and thin to ensure that the administration did not leave the north without commercial oil discovery when it announce commercial oil find in Nasarawa state and swiftly transformed the national oil company, NNPC into a limited liability company. The two developments were not only considered and they truly were historic watershed in the industry, it exited the north from the scurrillages of a barren and a leech. The Kolmani-Ebenyi –A Exploration Well located in the Middle Benue Trough in Obi Local Government Area of Nasarawa state has broken the northern jinx of lack of oil well (Premium Times, 2023).

However, the national narratives should be constructed in measured and dignifying language. To have stated that it was ‘ludicrous that there are noises coming out of the south for division or that Nigeria will be better without the north’ falls short of the threshold especially as Aribisala weighed in that the south was being ‘intoxicated by oil’ and that much of Nigerian water resources are in the north with Dangote as one of the richest man in the world. To have also described the agitations for self-determination in terms of ‘noises’ coming out of the south and that there was no way Nigeria could be divided into 350 countries tallying with her huge number of ethnic nationalities also gives credence to the fact that national commentators are uncharitable in their relationship with the Nigerian enterprise. To have also stated that the problem of the north was its leadership and nothing more is understandable but also a half of the moon analysis for the leadership of the south is in no way better than the north. Both leaderships have fed on the ignorance and the poverty of their peoples.

Boko Haram Divide

Violent extremism in the Lake Chad region at the intersection of Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon and Niger has naturally bred and resulted in Boko Haram which was founded by Muhammed Yusuf in 2002 whose world acclaimed attacks had been the bombing of the US Embassy in Abuja and the kidnap of the Chibok girls (Global Conflict Tracker, 2023)^[19]. Omenma (2020)^[53] is an authority on the argument that Boko Haram has economic implications in the oil and gas terrorism that has enveloped the north. The premises of the argument are based the attack it effectively inflicted on the Nigeria oil exploration team in the Lake Chad basin in July, 2017 leading to the death of 70 members of the team and the continued exploitation of oil and gas in the region by Chad, Niger and Cameroon and cessation by Nigeria. Relying on theoretical reasoning and closer look at the origins of the sect, Omenma concludes that oil and gas interests rather than religious fundamentalism (a cloak) is largely the impetus behind the divide Boko Haram is foisting in the region. This oil and gas hub covers Yobe, Borno, Nasarawa and Adamawa states in Nigeria

Avis (2020)^[7] also draws authority from Omenma in his study of the war economy of the north-west. He believes that Boko Haram is motivated by economic interest whether in the nature of oil and gas natural resources in the region or the control of informal trade routes in the Sahel and Sahara regions of which the Lake Chad is the convergence. It is believed that the control of the economic resources of the Lake Chad basin such as fishing, water resources, cross-border trade, oil and gas is augmented with the illicit finances that the sect gets from bank robberies cash in transit robberies, UN’s convoy attacks, assassination for hire; tracking illegal arms and drugs. A similar finding had earlier been reached by Asfura & McQuaid (2015)^[6]. It has long been thought that oil would also flow from northern Nigerian Lake Chad basin and even as Nasarawa on the Benue Trough has broken the record, Boko Haram considers the Nigerian state anti-Islamic and evil and since 1999, it has constituted itself as the gravest security challenge to the nation. It rejects Nigerian secularism and at the height of its ascendancy in 2009, it was controlling about 20 percent approximately 70,000 square miles of the Nigerian land mass with about 14 Local Government Areas in its kitty (Mutsvairo *et al*, 2017)^[38].

What has triggered the Boko Haram divide in the north is both local and largely international. Locally, Islamic fundamentalism has seen the fall of the Sokoto Caliphate and the establishment of western democracy in the Sahel Sudan (northern Nigeria) as a treat since the turn of the century. As such, the Nigerian state’s legitimacy is one of the weakest challenges to level up in the north. Islamic clerics see Nigerian state officials as the representatives of this illegitimate state that is anti-Islamic that is (boko) evil. The social contract in the space does not bind. Being dissatisfied and disenchanted with the status quo, Boko Haram harnesses this weakness and comingles it with widespread unemployment, state corruption, illiteracy and poverty to wipe up the sentiments of the north against the Nigerian state and finger the rhetoric of violence and jihad as the sole alternatives to the power matrix. This state of affairs is accentuated by a ‘shadowy economy’ that provides fertile spaces for illegal arms, illicit drugs and human traffic with poor demographics (Forest, 2012)^[18].

Internationally, Murphy (2017)^[37] has raised the true mission of France in the sub-continent. Being the ex-colonial master of Chad, Niger and Cameroon, the resource curse thesis is deployed by Murphy to argue that Boko Haram is the brainchild of ‘some powerful interests’ in this case, France, targeting the vast but untapped natural resources in the Lake Chad axis. Murphy believes that as France has not given up the obsession for the huge energy resources of the Saharan Sahel, it has a proposition to merge Mali, Algeria, Libya, Chad, and northern Nigeria, northern Cameroon, Central African Republic and Sudan into a re-colonization effort and this huge magnetic pool is creating the crucible of conflict that Boko Haram has come to represent. It is submitted that this grand design must have informed the July 2017 successful and swift attack against the Nigeria oil exploration team which was delivered with such a precision and effect of 70 casualties that ex-Minister for Petroleum, Ibe Kacikwu was so filled with shock that it brought a dramatic end to the expedition of the Nigeria state to the vicinity of the waters of Lake Chad until security was assured. In another report of the incident, 24 – 40 members of the team were killed while four members were kidnapped

and one died in their custody while three were screenshot and circulated in a viral video photograph all over the world (Campbell, 2017)^[8].

Furthermore, Murphy has cited the incident of the arrest of eight French national soldiers by Cameroon fighting with Boko Haram against the Nigerian forces and when they were handed over to France, nothing was heard of them since 2015 till date. While air drops of aids and supplies keep coming to Boko Haram troops, the regularity and the sophistication of the arms at the disposal of the sect only goes to prove that it has the international backing of a super power in the caliber of France and the trio of its ex-colonies (Niger, Chad and Cameroon) has smoothly and constantly declined from fighting and getting rid of the sect and each time the sect is heavily confronted by the Nigerian troops, it usually flee back into the French territories of the trio. This international ting is perhaps the strongest challenge to the divides that this study has interrogated as France is being suspected of creating a Syria or an Afghanistan type of oil conundrum in the Lake Chad space.

The Relevant South

For the south, there is no doubt multinational oil corporations have great 'command over finance, technology and access to establish and manage complex operations' and that they can hardly be challenged or overreached by indigenous technology of the southern creeks, but the Federal government has not looked towards indigenous techniques with simile (Commonwealth Paper...1977, p. 61 & Newell, 2002, p. 173)^[11, 42]. Multinational companies are critical players in delivery of sustainable development, exporting great improvements in technology although sometimes at the expense of communities and their environment. However, the legal policy instrument that the Federal government has adopted against the scourge of illegal refineries in the south has been coercion and confrontation rather than collaboration, nurture and registration (Heidenheimer *et al*, 1990, p. 310)^[23].

The Federal government has equally neglected to look towards the growing informal sector which it ought to have organized and regularized in the south. Federal agencies have denigrated it even as increasing number of studies are revealing how widespread and important it has become (Smilie, 1991, p. 96)^[65]. The development taking place in the southern creeks in the emergence of heightening levels of illegal refining has been 'a local, indigenous technology' beneath the phenomenon. 'The poor cannot afford complex and expensive technologies. They are often not interested in or do they care to bother with grandiose technology irrelevant to their existence.' Therefore, industrial projects and technologies for the south which is widely known to be poor and dependent on oil ought to be low cost, simple and appropriate. But the country is neither nurturing indigenous technology nor is it engaging in transfer or acquisition (Madeley, 1995, p. 122)^[33].

Thus, as the southern creek illegal refineries have started rearing an ugly indigenous technology which has been widely acknowledged as the mainstay of the south, the Federal government has neglected to cultivate and monitor them and chose, rather, to blow them up. This has negated Rahman's dictum (1993, p. 135) that development will not be brought about by statistics or machines but by the people themselves. In the peoples' collective self-determination for authentic development, the people would 'want to stand up,

take control over what they need to work with, to do things themselves in their own search for life, to move forward, supporting each other' with the state playing a regulatory role. This negation has yielded to one of the causes of under-development and poverty in the south: the 'non-fusion of indigenous technology with modern technology' and the non-fusion of the informal with the formal sector.

It has been widely canvassed that technology is the dividing line between the developed and the developing world. It decides whether a country is in the first, second or third world or no world at all (Momah (1999, p. 25)^[36]. A nation that is unable to develop the skill and knowledge of its citizens and utilize them effectively in the national economy will be unable to develop because 'the state of the world and the way its governments and institutions function and relate to one another has everything to do with the technologies they choose to solve their problems.' Thus the lapses in the south's technological development have resulted in oil doom than doom. In spite of resource abundance, inadequate energy for domestic and industrial use has been the country's lot even as committed as Obasanjo's administration had frittered over N60 trillion on the sector to no avail. This did not only slow down the industrial goals of all subsequent administrations which also do not have better score cards, it has impacted negatively on the technical potentials and structural ability of the nation to regulate the oil industry and checkmate the multinationals through value addition in the south (Jonathan, 2015, p. 288)^[30].

These inadequacies have predisposed the Federal government, citizens of the south and indeed other relevant indigenous stakeholders to the status of a huge nation with a huge potential fighting for commissions, renterism, prebendal contracts and joint ventures from multinationals which are actually in charge and control of the technology of the oil business and repatriating the profits abroad and making all the efforts of the Chilean postulation leading to the 1962 United Nation's declaration on permanent sovereignty over natural resources in favour of developing countries like Nigeria a huge joke in aftermath and impact after about six decades. The foreign companies have continued to ride the Nigerian state like cocks denying the Nigerian economy the capacity for backward or forward integration of the oil sector into the energy and agricultural sectors leaving the country prostrate.

Niger Delta Divide

For over 20 years the Niger delta has been one long-running hotbed of political divide and violence. Its struggles are currently into low intensity war and militarization of the region (Tonwe *et al*, 2011)^[66]. Serious attempts have been made by scholars to distinguish its nature of violent agitation from the Boko Haram insurgency in the north and the Ipob's agitation for self-determination and the restoration of the defunct Republic of Biafra in the east. Traceable back to the 1980s when the indigenous people of the space (particularly the Ogoni, Ijaw and Kalabri) began to notice that they were losing out from the United Nation's declaration on permanent sovereignty over natural resources, they began to institute structures to agitate for better resource sharing formula of oil accruing to the state.

When they became largely shortchanged, they began to seek international forum to ventilate the circumstances of their grievance and neglect and naturally strolled back to the same United Nations that had given permanent sovereignty

over their resources to the state. The colonial regimes and foreign investors that their state sought to extricate from granted them flag independence and continued in business with their state in joint ventures. Instead of coupling with their peoples in economic exploitation of the resources, the state formed a closer union with foreign investors to the chagrin of the people. When the MOSOP dramatic persona, Ken Saro Wiwa, was judicially murdered under Gen Sani Abacha's regime, the region swung into an offensive in violent militant agitation leading to the formation of a rainbow coalition, MEND.

Believed to be formed by Henry Okah (now imprisoned in South Africa) MEND later got Tompolo Government of (Gbaramatu) Ijaw to steer its activities until it was able to torment the economy of the Federal government of late President Musa Yar'Adua to standstill and amnesty was granted. Regime change and allegations of corrupt practices led to the arraignment of the scion of MEND before the Federal High Court in Lagos as a conspirator in NIMASA money laundering charges. Tompolo was declared wanted and his assets were seized. His father was raided in Warri and murdered under the Buhari administration in 2016. MEND transformed into Niger Delta Avengers NDA and with over 100,000 members swarming the 27,000 sq miles of the Niger delta, brought the economic essentials of the Federal government to standstill (losing 800,000 bpd and dropping output from 2.2 million bpd to 1.4 million bpd) again leading to fence mending between the militants and the Federal government and the subsequent award of the N48billion contract of the surveillance of the Trans Niger Truck Pipeline (TNTPL) covering 90 km to the militants under the auspices of Tompolo's company: Global West Vessels Specialists Ltd. (GWVSL).

However, oil militancy was triggered by the events following the declaration of the civil war. Oil had been barely found within a decade when the relationship between the ethnic nationalities deteriorated through the January coup and July counter-coup of 1966. In the bid to deny relevant actors in the war the resources to prosecute the it and to bring available oil resources into one federal pool, the Gowon administration decided to dust up and implement the Dina Committee report on centralization of oil revenue and took the Lion share through Decree No. 13 of 1970 and Decree No. 9 of 1971 and finally Decree No. 6 of 1975 nailed the coffin. The 1999 Constitution like its predecessors in 1979 and 1963, the Land Use Act of 1978 and the Nigerian Petroleum Industry Act 2021 like its predecessor, the Petroleum Act of 1968 all rooted for the universal provision of the United Nation's Resolution of 1962 on permanent sovereignty over natural resources and took absolute ownership oil resources. Since then, the country has troubled without measure. The legislations have erected more divides that cohesion in the journey to nationhood (Perouse de Montclos, 2023) ^[60].

Biafra Divide

Across Nigeria, no other divide is deeper than the Ibos' alienation from the Nigerian state. From its people, the expression is notable. While Chinua Achebe opined that all other Nigerians can irresistibly reach a consensus on the common resentment of the Ibos, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe opined that God had created the Ibo for discrimination in Nigeria because of Ibo's resolute will to survive (Obasi, 2017) ^[47]. They see the Federal arrangement as a 'forced and

flawed marriage' and believe that an unwilling people cannot be held hostage indefinitely (Chudi Offodile as cited in Maiangwa, 2021) ^[35] and that only the freedom to secede makes possible free and voluntary fusion between nations (Alumona) ^[4].

Their agitators believe that the eastern divide is not getting its due, fair share and recognition from Nigeria (Obasi, 2015) ^[46]. The feeling that they have been discriminated against by those in power is strong and substantiated (Immigration and Refugee Board...2016) by the power that be itself. For instance, while referring to the Ibos as a dot in a circle, outgoing President Buhari had argued that constituencies that gave him 97 percent votes cannot in all honesty be treated on equal footing on some issues with constituencies that gave him only five percent; consequently, the east was excluded from the national railway plan (Obasi, 2017) ^[47].

The discrimination and unequal treatment against the Ibos is a rejection that is consciously made by the state and it is resentment that the Ibos are consciously aware. As both parties are not in doubt of the existence of the divide, it is equally a rift not only against the state but also against Ibo leaders and their politicians who have colluded in shortchanging the Ibos across the divides. The Ibos are therefore disenchanting with the post-colonial Nigerian state and its exclusionary policies against them (Njoku, 2018 & Maiangwa, 2021) ^[43, 35]. Ibo's agitation for separatism is thus driven by grievances not only before but since after the war. The agitation is propelled by several non-state organizations like MASSOB; Biafra Zionist Movement later renamed Biafra Zionist Front and Voice of Biafra International. Of the various organizations in the actualization of Biafra, IPOB is the most influential with its militant wing: Eastern Security Network.

Clashes between the state and IPOB have led to the death of thousands of lives on the divides and many Police Stations, Correctional Centers, INEC and other government offices have been burnt down in the east with intensification than abatement (Igwe, 2021) ^[24] raising the evidence of declining national cohesion and the opinion that renewed agitation is indicative of the deteriorating material conditions of the Ibos, increased political marginalization and their right to self-determination within the Marxian revolutionary theory (Okaisabor, 2023 & Alumona) ^[50, 4] The response of the Nigerian state to the eastern agitation has been one of the worst in the history of the world. While agitators in the east have confined themselves to ultimatums, intimidation, threats of violence, declaration of illegal holidays, sit-at-home and such other legitimate instruments of separatist agitation, the state has employed, in reverse, the worst combative version of intolerance, brutality and violence of crushing the agitation militarily (Obasi, 2015; 2017 & Maiangwa, 2021) ^[46, 47, 35].

Although the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (2014) ^[26] believes that the eastern agitation is within the framework of the law, conforms with diplomatic credence and international rights activism a legion of hurdles have been raised against it leaving the future of the agitation unclear. The hurdles are so substantial that interrogating them is instructive. The stiffest obstacle raised by the International Crisis Group is the uncertainty about what the territory of the 'new Biafra' entails. While IPOB configures a territory that runs into the Niger delta and the Middle belt, there has been a vehement opposition and denial of such

inclusion from the regions.

Limiting the territory to the five Biafra states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo states has also drawn internal objections, rejection and disagreements from the Ibos themselves and same has also raised concern as to the size and the landlocked configuration for the economic survival and access to the sea of the 'new Biafra' state. Additionally, the crisis of relocation of Ibos who are over 11 million from across Nigeria and Diaspora back to the 'new Biafra' may equally give rise to the exit of many non-Ibos from the east which territory has only marginal natural resources and may be too small for such a national population. The attendant investments that Ibos have made outside the 'new Biafra' enclave and those made by non-Ibos within the 'new Biafra' could be also in jeopardy (Kolawole, 2021, Maiangwa, 2021 & Obasi, 2015) ^[31, 35, 46].

Where then does oil conflict slip into the Ibo divide? According to Onwuka in 2004, it was only a matter of time after oil was discovered in the east that politics began to revolve around the resource. But the separatist IPOB does not believe that it is oil that propels its separatism. Separatists believe that the recent discovery of crude oil in the north in Nasarawa state should certainly settle the forced unity it has imposed on the Nigerian political space if indeed the north is sincere in resolving the Nigerian deep divides. Nnamdi Kanu (as cited in Saharareporters, 2022) states, 'oil or no oil, Biafrans are not interested'. All the Ibos are interested in is a peaceful atmosphere to conduct their trade 'without fear of terrorists' at their door steps. 'Now that every component part of Nigeria has oil can we all go our separate ways and mind our own businesses?'

The disenchantment of the eastern divide from oil can be further buttressed by the comment of Emma Powerful (as cited in Eze, 2021) ^[17] when six oil workers of Lee Engineering Company contractors to Shell were ambushed and killed in Imo state. Emma Powerful, a notorious spokesperson of IPOB had stated, 'We have no hands in such barbarity. We are not bandits or terrorists that spill blood.' He proceeded to state, 'IPOB is a non-violent and peaceful movement whose agenda is the restoration of Biafra. Killing or maiming of innocent lives is not part of our agenda'. Further rebuttal of eastern agitation's connection with oil as the propeller of the divide in the east can be found from IPOB's policy guideline in dealing with the Niger delta militancy and issues connected with the N48 billion annual surveillance contract issued to Tompolo Government's Global West Vessel Specialists Ltd. IPOB warned it members and its militant wing, Eastern Security Network, to abstain from involvement in oil pipeline security engagement characterizing same as deceptive and dehumanizing. As a freedom fighting movement doing business with the Nigerian state as security guards to state pipelines is likened to working for the oppressor or a slave master (Nnachi, 2022) ^[45].

Oodua Peoples' Congress

Western region of Nigeria appears to be the least awash with violent militancy in connection with oil. Its militancy appears to be the most 'informed' with political cooperation and understanding. Even the 'wild west' as it is sometimes called was the result of internal political disagreements, riots and assassinations. The context in which this study is framed is recent and for this purpose, the organization which shall attract attention is OPC not even Amotekun which is a

state apparatus. From its website, '*Who we are about us*', OPC was founded in 1994 and derives its name from Oduduwa the founder of the Yoruba nation (<https://www.ooduapeoplescongress.ng>). It was formed to protect, defend and promote Yoruba interests, preserve its culture, heritage and royalty; its traditional institutions and advocate the restructuring of the 'jaundiced system of government in Nigeria'.

The OPC has an interesting contrast with all the other divides. It has a working relationship with the state and even the Federal government. For instance, while it states that its aim is political activism for the autonomy of the Yoruba people, Odunsi (2022) ^[48] believes that it supports South West Security Stakeholders Group (Amotekun) which is a state government police structure which the Federal government frowns at in legality as the Federal government queries the concept of 'a police within a police.' OPC states for itself the aim of 'clashing with other ethnic groups and engages in vigilante activities and crime fighting.' Like the Eastern Security Network which is the militant wing of IPOB, OPC has been involved in challenging violent herdsmen and bandits in the west.

A reading of Odunsi further depicts that OPC is apolitical. It states for instance, 'We are not in any coalition for any reason...our name should not be used for any political reasons.' If such lines are couched for precautionary reasons and to remain focused, it sounds contradictory to the avowed OPC's political position as couched by Guichaoua (2006) ^[21] that 'OPC demands self-determination and thus a threat to the Nigerian national unity'. Another close reading of Odunsi suggests that 'whether it is called restructuring or regionalism it (OPC's act) should be to save Nigeria from misdirection.' The literature on OPC is thus confusing. If OPC's activities are apolitical, how will its demand for political structuring become achieved?

Campbell (2021) ^[9] in his work, '*Yoruba debated "Restructuring" of Nigeria or "Autonomy,"*' has even depicted the confusing literature on OPC further. Citing Gani Adams, the current leader of OPC and the Aare Kakanfo of Yorubaland, he writes that the 'Yoruba have graduated from restructuring to self-determination and or autonomy in which 70 – 80 percent of political power is to be controlled by the regions. When they advocated for restructuring and when they advanced it to self-determination is not clear or does the literature on the matter substantiate. However, the touchstone of this study is how Nigerian oil (and or natural resources) has informed the emergence of militant and or violent groups and divides across the nation. On oil, the position of OPC also looks ambivalent, vague and unique.

Although a report by Badejo (2013) had clearly suggested that OPC had threatened to stage protests against Shell, Agip, Chevron, NDDC and the Ministry of Niger Delta over neglect of oil-bearing communities in Yoruba land (particularly in Ondo state) not much can be found on the involvement of OPC on oil issues. In fact, what exists is a clear disinterest and disenchantment of the organization on the issue of Nigerian oil. In Guichaoua's work, it is clearly espoused that 'despite Nigeria's oil wealth, greed for lootable national resources, in no way' does Nigerian oil constitute 'the impetus for the formation of the militia'. The OPC emerged 'largely as a response to the fiercest military dictatorship of Nigeria post-colonial history'. That dictatorship was Gen Sani Abacha's.

Tying Up the Divides

This study looks closely at the contrasts and the commonalities of the troubled divides and underscore how they are undergirded by Nigerian oil (Hallmark, 2017) ^[22]. Hallmark makes the fine distinction that oil militants on the Niger delta do not murder the innocent but targets critical national assets, oil installations and infrastructures aiming at stifling the economic potentials and foreign resources of the country in order to change the state ownership to communal ownership. While Boko Haram insurgency is murderous and actuated at overthrowing the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and instituting an Islamic theocracy all over the Nigerian political space. IPOB seeks to govern itself, Boko Haram seeks to govern itself and others. Niger delta militants seek to control the resources while under the Nigerian state. They are giving up political autonomy for economic control of their natural resources or in order to gain a fair share of the resources in their domain (Alumona) ^[4] and pay tax or make contribution to the federal state.

In the eyes of the Federal government, as at the outbreak of the Nigerian civil war, the Niger delta was considered as part of the eastern region (Onwuka, 2004) ^[55]. But currently, the Niger delta and Ibos as represented by the agitations of MEND (NDA) and IPOB are sharply divided. Though the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reached a conclusion in 2016 that IPOB supports the Niger Delta Avengers (which was a splinter group that arose after the death of Tompolo's father in the renewed agitation in the creeks after Tompolo was declared wanted by the Federal government and he went underground) the extent of the support or collaboration is unclear.

IPOB thrives on ethnic grievances and political, economic and social marginalization issues that date back to the pre-civil war years. IPOB seeks to break and take away the east from the Nigerian state but the Niger delta militants are driven by regional autonomy not only for the control of the region's petroleum resources but the determination of the uses to which the oil resources are put within the Nigerian state. This has been characterized as resource control. For Ikeji (2011) ^[25] those in support of this brand are also into self-determinism which is a variant of the eastern agitation divide; those opposed are 'parasitic agitators' who have long dominated the levers of political power in Nigeria. Sometimes, the resource control divide makes a case for the political restructure of the Nigerian state for fairness and equity (Osaretin, 2019) ^[58].

Conclusion

It seems clear that the role of the Nigerian oil resources in the proliferation of conflicts amongst the ethnic divides in Nigeria is potent. Where it is not oil, other natural resources have equally been in the background. In the case of Boko Haram in the northern region of the Lake Chad, the influence of France has been fingered though the evidence is not abundantly made out by the literature on the issue but the signs are eminently developing if not already well established. In dealing with that corridor, the country ought to look beyond Islamic fundamentalism that has the cloak of religion to the critical issue of France interest in the oil of the Lake Chad basin bearing in mind France's colonial dominance in all the four countries of Niger, Chad, Mali and Cameroon.

On all the divides, the agitations are largely propelled by

youths about 35 years old who constitute a significant percentage of the Nigerian active and productive population who have lost so much resolve in the country and its nationalism that they have created certain other derogatory acronyms for the country or its citizens such as 'Naija, Zoo, Yamiri Militants, Bandits, Terrorists' etc. Those who are not deeply committed in the physical street-struggle but are disenchanted by the conditions prevailing in the country and observing that the conditions cannot sustain their aspirations have found a way to exit the country to foreign lands in a process they call 'Jakpa'. In the prelude to the 2023 presidential campaigns and election they regarded themselves as 'Obidients' in a movement that sought to support the candidature of Peter Obi who ran as the aspirant of the Labour Party but was not declared the winner by INEC even though they (in the Obidient Movement) believed that he won the vote having heavily supported him.

Recommendations

- The critical mass of youths identified in the concluding part of this study should be recognized. All stakeholders and other international organizations interested in the survival of the Nigerian state should reach out to it in focused dialogue (Onubogu 2021) ^[54] to pull down the divides.
- The Nigerian state should look into illiteracy, poverty and leadership deficit issues in the north.
- The state should tone down its conspiratorial and belligerent disposition to the east and IPOB and engage them more in focused dialogue.
- The development of the indigenous technology of the south and its integration into the formal technology of the transnational oil companies should be looked into by the Nigerian state.

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