Nigeria, Afrocentrism, and Conflict Resolution: After Five Decades—How Far, How Well?

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Abstract: This article interrogates Nigeria's interventionist role in Africa over more than half century of independence by examining the interplay between Nigeria's Afrocentric foreign policy drive and its conflict interventionist role in Africa. The article further reviews the essential ingredients embedded in Nigeria's foreign policy articulation, including its "much publicized" shift to citizen diplomacy. And, it argues that, having being a major force for/of peace and stability in Africa, Nigeria should strive for a balance between its commitment to Afrocentrism, and the country's homegrown challenges; particularly, in the light of its declining socio-economic realities and the seemingly unending Boko Haram insurgency.

Introduction

Nigeria represents a major regional force in Africa, not only because of its size, but also because of its political and economic role on the continent. Apart from being the largest economy on the continent, it also ranks among the world's major producers of crude oil.[1] Similarly, its leaders have mediated conflicts in Africa, while its troops have played lead roles in the quest for peace and stability in troubled regions all around the globe.[2] Perhaps, a better testimony to Nigeria's commitment to the success of its peacekeeping endeavors is its ranking among the top five troop contributors to United Nations Peacekeeping missions.[3] Therefore, as Alli observes, Nigeria's approach to sub-regional security and conflict resolution in Africa is often seen as inextricably tied to its international role conception by its leaders.[4] This role conception has become the defining paradigm for the country's foreign policy engagement, and has conferred on it the role of a "natural leader" with a "manifest destiny" and the responsibility to promote and protect the interests of Africa.[5]

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It has equally been argued that the decision by Nigeria to make Africa the core of its foreign policy focus is also attributable to a number of other factors: a geo-political consideration that sees Nigeria strategically located within the West African sub- region; demographic explanations that credit the country as the most populous black nation in the world with an estimated population of over 170 million people; and economic arguments that view Nigeria accounting for more than 51 percent of the entire West African GDP with an estimated value of about $521.8 billion.[6] Others have contended that this decision also stems from the need to protect Nigeria's security, given its cultural, geographical, and historical experiences with other African states, and also because of transnational security concerns defined by the way Nigeria's security is affected by what happens around its contiguous states.[7]

Others have situated the argument along the camps of the prestige/national interest and the economic diplomacy/hegemonic schools of thought.[8] Proponents of the prestige/national interest school of thought argue that Nigeria's Africa-centered foreign policy concentration has been pursued without any specific regard to the country's domestic interests and economic woes. The economic diplomacy/hegemonic stability group on the other hand, maintain that Nigeria; by virtue of its huge socio-economic and military resources, has the responsibility to intervene in conflicts within its immediate sub-region (West Africa) and in Africa.[9] This group perceives Nigeria as a regional force on the continent, and as having a responsibility to lead in the promotion of peace, and in the championing of Africa's socio-economic and political development.[10] Such a perspective is perhaps what informs Ebohon and Obakhedo's observation that:

> Playing such a noble role in the economic construction and reconstruction of the region presents Nigeria with an opportunity to assert her dominant position in the region as a matter of prestige; analysts argue that if Nigeria fails to do so, other credible and contending regional challengers such as Ghana, Egypt, Cote d' Ivoire (formerly Ivory Coast) and South Africa would take on such responsibilities.[11]

Consequently, in examining Nigeria's role in conflict resolution in Africa, proponents of the economic diplomacy/hegemonic stability school of thought view the assumption of such a role as capable of contributing meaningfully towards ending the plethora of intra and interstate crises that have become the defining characteristics of most states in the West African sub-region and Africa.[12] Therefore, and in achieving this, Nigeria is expected to treat its sub-region as a natural base from which it is to project its national interests and by extension, further expand its regional influence.[13] It is in view of the forgoing that this article seeks to historicize and examine the nexus or otherwise between Nigeria's role in conflict resolution in Africa, and its foreign policy objectives; particularly, its principle of Afrocentrism over the last fifty plus years.

The article employs the interplay between regime type, and leadership orientation to explain Nigeria's commitment to its foreign policy principle of Afrocentrism, including an extant assessment of the country's purported gravitation towards citizen diplomacy in 2007. Furthermore, the article also undertakes an empirical analysis of Nigeria's rising home grown socio-economic and domestic realities, and it argues the need for the country to strike a balance between its conflict interventionist role in Africa, its competing domestic realities, and the

yearnings and aspirations of its citizenry. Together with this introduction, this article has five parts. The second part undertakes a conceptual debate on the interplay between conflicts, conflict resolution, and its nexus with Nigeria's interventionist role in Africa. The third explicates the essential issues embedded in Nigeria's foreign policy, while the fourth examines the interface between regime type, foreign policy orientation and Nigeria's commitment to Afrocentrism, including an assessment of the country's purported shift to citizen diplomacy. The article concludes with some empirical analyses as to why Nigeria should redefine its Afrocentric interventionist role in African conflicts This has become particularly necessary given the country's changing socio-economic realities, notwithstanding the recent rebasing of its economy which saw it overcoming that of South Africa as Africa's largest economy, and also in the light of the growing Boko Haram insurgency the country has been struggling to contain.

Conceptual Clarification: Conflict

A conflict, for the present purpose is "the existence of non-compatibility or disagreements between two actors (and this could either be individuals, groups, organizations or nations) in their interaction over issues of interests, values, beliefs, emotions, goals, space, positions and scarce resources."[14] Accordingly, and as similarly expounded by Golwa, a conflict resolution process revolves round the "the limitation, mitigation and containment of violent conflicts through the use of both forcible (coercive) and non-forcible (non-coercive) instruments to stop the occurrence/recurrence of humanitarian emergency situations."[15] Crucial to any conflict resolution process, therefore, is the identification and resolution of the underlying causes of conflicts, through the striking of balance between common interests, and the overarching goals. These goals are what Snodderly describes as: fostering of positive attitudes, the generation of trust through reconciliation initiatives, and the building or strengthening of institutions and processes through which warring parties can peacefully interact.[16]

Where a conflict has escalated beyond the capacity of the mediator, however, the application of a conflict management process then becomes inevitable. Wallenstein describes this process as "an attempt to bring a fighting to an end and/or the process of limiting the spread of a conflict through its containment."[17] In situations where a conflict is not responding positively to a non-violent resolution process, there may be the need for the application of some subtle force. Such force and its subsequent application are what Boutros Boutros-Ghali refers to as peacekeeping—a phenomenon that has been the crux of Nigeria's interventionist mechanism in Africa.[18] It therefore follows that in resolving conflicts different kinds of mechanisms are involved, including the use of diplomatic/military intervention. The point to note from the above is that any conflict that does not subscribe to a peaceful form of negotiation, or what Crocker calls diplomatic intervention, would have to be resolved through a military intervention, a phenomenon which has grown to becomes a central feature in Nigeria's conflicts interventionist role in Africa.[19]

Therefore, when located within the framework of the above elucidations, Nigeria's role in conflict resolution in Africa is often premised on the need to protect Nigeria's National interest, defined here in terms of Nigeria's commitment to its foreign policy principle of Afrocentrism; a doctrine often adduced as a basis for Nigeria's intervention in conflicts. It is however imperative to note that there are some other factors which further explains Nigeria's frontline

role in conflict resolution in Africa. These factors are what Aluko identifies as the centripetal and centrifugal determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy; a synopsis of which is provided below.[20]

Centripetal and Centrifugal Determinants of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Broadly speaking, the general idea behind classifying foreign policy into centripetal and centrifugal notions is rooted in the belief that there are domestic and external issues involved in any country's foreign policy formulation. In the case of Nigeria, the centripetal factors involved in its foreign policy formulation are generally built around its notion of four concentric circles of national interest. At the heart of this notion is the expectation that Nigeria in the course of its engagement with the international community must protect its own security, independence, and prosperity. As previously observed by Gambari, the essential arguments embedded in the first circle recognize the need for Nigeria to maintain a spirit of good neighborliness with its contiguous states—Benin, Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. The second concerns Nigeria's relations with its West African neighbors; the third emphasizes the country's commitment to continental issues relating to peace, development, and democratization; while the fourth circle spells out Nigeria's relations with organizations, institutions, and states outside of Africa.[21] This concept is vital to the formulation of what was later to become Nigeria's foreign policy thrust.

As similarly argued by Aluko, issues such as: the colonial heritage and the legacy the country inherited from the British, the leadership orientation of its successive governments, Nigeria's foreign policy machinery, its post-civil war experience, and the primacy of its national and economic interests have also been adduced as some of the centrifugal factors that have helped in shaping Nigeria's behavior towards its neighbors in Africa and the rest of the world.[22] Lending her voice to the discourse, Ogwu equally identified: political considerations, the Nigerian constitution, bureaucratic tendencies, economic variables, military interests, and the idiosyncratic elements of its leaders as other probable factors that have helped in shaping Nigeria's foreign policy direction over the years.[23] Commenting further on her interrogation of Nigeria's external relations, particularly with regards to the Western world, Ogwu noted that the ability of Nigeria to determine its productive forces and its very low reliance on foreign aid accounted for the robust state of its foreign policy between 1960 and 1980. She stated: "The improved state of Nigeria's economy bestowed on it a leverage which it did not possess in the first decade of independence. More significantly, perhaps was the government's ability to determine its own policies independent of external influences."[24]

The above reference was perhaps motivated by Aluko's observation of Nigeria's foreign policy vibrancy between 1960 and 1980, that:

> The phenomenal growth of the economy largely as a result of the oil boom has strengthened Nigeria's influence in Africa and indeed the rest of the world, such that neither of the superpowers (US or USSR) could make use of foreign aid as a political leverage on Nigeria…heavy American dependence on Nigeria's oil means that Nigeria is free not only to criticize the United States but also to put pressure on her.[25]

In line with these assessments, it is believed that a concise elucidation of the fundamental principles encapsulated in Nigeria's foreign policy objectives is crucial to understanding how

these objectives connect with Nigeria's Afro-centric drive; particularly its commitment to peace building and conflict resolution in Africa.

Fundamental Principles of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

A first glimpse of the shape that Nigeria's foreign policy would take was provided by Nigeria's first Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, on the occasion of his country's admittance to United Nations membership. In his acceptance speech, Balewa stated inter alia:

> It is the desire of Nigeria to remain on friendly terms with all the nations and to participate actively in the work of the United Nations Organizations. Nigeria, by virtue of being the most populous country in West Africa has absolutely no territorial or expansionist ambitions. We are committed to upholding the principles upon which the United Nations is founded. Nigeria hopes to work with other African countries for the progress of Africa and to also assist in bringing all African countries to a state of independence.[26]

Therefore, on October 1, 1960, Balewa upon becoming prime minister pronounced the following as the core principles of Nigeria's foreign policy: (1) Non-Alignment with any of the then existing ideological and military power blocs, especially NATO and the Warsaw Pact; (2) respect for the legal equality, political independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of all states; (3) respect for the doctrine of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states; (4) seeking membership of both continental and global multilateral organizations based on their functional importance to Nigeria; and (5) the recognition of Africa as the centerpiece of Nigeria's external relations.[27] These principles were later to be adopted into Section 19 of the country's 1960 independence constitution and have been reviewed and sustained over time in the 1999 constitution.

According to Section 19(1) of the 1999 constitution, the five essential foreign policy concerns of Nigeria are: (1) commitment to the principles of non-alignment; (2) respect for the legal equality, political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states; (3) respect for the principles of non-interference in the affairs of other states; (4) seeking membership of international organizations as a means of promoting functional cooperation; and (5) Africa as the center-piece of Nigeria's foreign policy.[28]

Expounding the Principles

Nigeria's Commitment to the Principles of Non-Alignment

This principle was informed by the bipolarity in world politics at the time of Nigeria's independence in 1960. As observed by Fawole, the world was precariously bifurcated into two antagonistic ideologies of capitalism, as supported by the United States, and communism which was championed by the former Soviet Union.[29] Mindful of this situation, and informed by the desire to protect its nascent independence, Nigeria opted to be nonpartisan in the power play between the Western and the Eastern blocs. However, some scholars have argued that this principle was respected more in theory than in practice. Fawole argued that "even the government of Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa, the progenitor of the idea did little to respect it." Balewa, he added was "so rabidly pro-British and concomitantly pro-Western."[30] He cited

Nigeria's signing of a bilateral defense pact with Britain (a staunch US ally) in 1960, which was intended to allow the British to establish a military base in Nigeria. The defense pact, he noted, was later abrogated in 1962 following the stiff parliamentary opposition mounted against it and the overwhelming disapproval of the pact by Nigerians.[31]

Respect for the Legal Equality, Political Independence, Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity of all States

This principle has been interpreted to mean the expression of Nigeria's willingness and readiness to conduct its external affairs with other states according to the civilized rules of international engagement and interaction.[32] The principle often enables Nigeria to affirm its belief in the United Nations as the legitimate supra-national authority capable of guaranteeing a just world order, through its respect for, and execution of the decisions reached by the UN. Therefore, Nigeria believed that abiding by and adhering to the dictates of international law and civilized rules of behavior is vital to guaranteeing the security of the newly independent but relatively weaker states within its sub-region in a world laden with intense competition between the eastern and the western powers.[33] Perhaps another motivating factor was Nigeria's desire to assure its contiguous states (Benin, Chad, Niger, and Cameroon) and other states in Africa that the country would not at any point in time impose its authority on any of its neighbors in Africa.

As Balewa put it: "We shall never impose ourselves upon any other country and shall treat every African territory, big or small, as our equal, because we honestly feel that it is only on that basis that peace can be maintained in our continent."[34] Balewa's assurances to Nigeria's neighbors and the rest of Africa appears to have been ostensibly intended to prevent any of these nations from falling into the embrace of the then power blocs and, more importantly, to protect its hard-won independence and that of its contemporaries from the overtures being made by Kwame Nkrumah through his Pan African movement. Balewa had argued that this idea would lead to a loss of sovereignty and as such return Africa to the pre-colonial age, noting further that "Nigeria was big enough and does not need to join others and that if others wish to join forces with the country; their legal standing and positions would be made clear to them in such a union."[35]

Respect for the Principles of Non-Interference in the Affairs of other States

The non-interference principle explains Nigeria's readiness and desire not to interfere in any domestic dispute that could arise in other African countries, although the principle has often been challenged by Nigeria's commitment to the protection of the national interest; a development which often compels the country to intervene in its quest to ensure peace amongst and within its contiguous states. However, Nigeria appears to justify its intervention in the affairs of other nations within the context of what Peen Rodt elucidates as an exercise of the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P).[36] This development has seen Nigeria getting involved in what would have been a negation of its policy of non-interference, although such interventions have been largely executed in its capacity as a non-state actor, as demonstrated in its peace-keeping missions, examples of which include its interventions in the Congo in 1960, its support for a number of southern Africa liberation movements between 1970 and 1994, and its role in the resolution of the Liberian (1990-2003), the Sierra Leonean civil wars (1998-2002), among others.

Seeking Membership in International Organizations as a Means of Promoting Functional Cooperation

Nigeria's subscription to this principle has been influenced by the overriding advantage that functional cooperation has over a subscription to an African political union which at that time could not guarantee a certain future for a newly independent country like Nigeria. Therefore, Nigeria had hoped that its commitment to working with other non-state actors would guarantee it protection, particularly given the bipolarity that existed at that time.[37] As a consequence of this principle, Nigeria over the past fifty plus years has demonstrated its support for, and commitment to, a host of international organizations, including the UN, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) among others.

Africa as the Centerpiece of Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Following the announcement of Nigeria's intention to make the African cause its top priority, made by Prime Minister Balewa at the UN General Assembly, the principle has over the years grown to become the cornerstone of Nigeria's foreign policy thrust. Nigeria's commitment to a radical Afro-centric policy focus from independence is seen more as a product of the psychological belief in and concurrence with what Nnamdi Azikwe called Nigeria's historic mission in Africa and its manifest destiny to rule and dominate the continent.[38] Long before its independence and the economic/oil boom of the early 1970s which catapulted Nigeria to an enviable economic height in Africa, its leaders have always believed that the country was pre-ordained to play an important and leading role in African affairs.

This notion did not only germinate in the minds of Nigerians; it was also believed and validated by the members of the international community who saw Nigeria as being capable of making a difference in the world on account of its vast potential.[39] Similarly it has been argued that from independence Nigeria's foreign policy has been fashioned to meet the requirement for political stability and development in Africa, and this perhaps explains why barely one month after the country's independence, "one of its first efforts was the dispatch of Nigerian troops to the Congo for peace keeping."[40] It is important to add, however, that the amalgam of this potential and the leadership aspirations of Nigeria's past and present leaders, to a large extent have helped in sustaining and securing the continuing pursuit of this cause.

Bearing the above in mind, a tabular illustration of Nigeria's involvement in peacekeeping and conflict resolution in Africa summarizes Nigeria's commitment to this Africa-centered ideology. As shown in Table 1 below, Nigeria has participated actively in a host of peace-keeping missions in Africa both under the auspices of the ECOWAS, AU and the UN.[41] While it could be argued that these interventions are believed to be in consonance with its adherence to Afrocentrism, there are other specific role(s) which variables such as regime type and leadership orientation play in Nigeria's commitment in conflict resolution in Africa. This is the lacuna which the succeeding explanation aims to fill.

TABLE 1: NIGERIA'S PARTICIPATION IN GLOBAL PEACE MISSIONS, 1960 – 2011

Country	Code Name	Operation	Start date	End date
Congo	ONUC	UN Operation in the Congo	July 1960	June 1964
West New Guinea	UNSF	UN Security Force in West New Guinea	October 1962	April 1963
Chad		OAU Peacekeeping Force, Chad	1979	1982
Angola	UNAVEM I	UN Angola Verification Mission I	January 1989	June 1991
Liberia	UNOMIL	UN Observer Mission in Liberia	Sep. 1991	Sep. 1997
Mozambique	ONUMOZ	UN Operation in Mozambique	Dec.1992	Dec. 1994
Rwanda	UNAMIR	UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda	October 1993	March 1996
Chad/Libya	UNASOG	UN Aouzou Strip Observer Group	May 1994	June 1994
Angola	UNAVEM III	UN Angola Verification Mission III	Feb. 1995	June 1997
Sierra Leone		ECOMOG Task Force in Sierra Leone	1997	1999
Sierra Leone	UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone	Oct. 1999	Dec. 2005
Congo	MONUC	UN Organization Mission in the DRC	Nov. 1999	June 2010
Liberia	UNMIL	UN Mission in Liberia	Sept. 2003	Ongoing
Sudan	AMIS	African Mission in Darfur	2004	2008
Sudan	UNAMID	AU-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur	July 2007	Ongoing
Sudan	UNMIS	UN Mission in the Sudan	March 2005	July 2011
Chad	MINURCAT	UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad	Sept. 2007	Dec. 2010
South Sudan	UNMISS	UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan	July 2011	Ongoing

Source: Compiled with references from the list of the United Nations Peace Keeping Operations from 1942-2012: http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/operationslist.pdf

Regime Type, Foreign Policy Orientation, and Commitment to Afrocentrism

As captured in the existing literature, the essential ingredients embedded in Nigeria's national interest includes: national self-preservation, defending national sovereignty and independence, protecting the socio-economic and political interests of Nigerians, ensuring the defense,

preservation and promotion of democratic norms and values, enhancing Nigeria's standing and status in Africa, and the promotion of world peace.[42] Similarly, it has also been argued that Nigeria's national interest is best considered from the perspective of its regional and continental leadership drives.[43] These ambitions represent the underpinning philosophy and overriding impetus which led to Nigeria's adoption of a policy of four concentric circles as espoused earlier. Prominent among Nigeria's achievements include its contribution to the formation of the OAU in 1963, and ECOWAS in 1975, the attainment of independence by Angola and Zimbabwe in 1975 and 1980 respectively, including Nigeria's participation in peacekeeping and conflict resolution in Africa and its role in the resolution of the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and in the eventual demise of apartheid in Namibia in 1988 and later in South Africa in 1994, among others.

Regardless of these successes, this Africa-centered foreign policy concentration has not been without flaws. These flaws were soon to become evident in the downturn experienced by the country in its hitherto strong and viable economy and in the neglect of its own domestic responsibilities, specifically the fulfillment of the social obligations expected of a government to its people. The resultant effect of this has been a steady decline in the nation's oil revenue owing to a culture of poor maintenance, corruption and the extensive projects executed by Nigeria in other African countries. For example, in Benin Republic, Nigeria, as noted by Osuntokun, was reported to have signed a trade agreement with the country in 1972. This was followed up with the granting of an interest-free loan worth approximately $1.2 million, to be repaid over a period of twenty-five years, and reconstructing the Idiroko-Porto Novo highway—a distance of twenty-four kilometers—uniting the two countries, for approximately $1.7 million. ALso, in 1989, Nigeria provided $2.5 million to Cotonou for the payment of the outstanding salaries owed public servants by the Béninois government.[44] This is besides the establishment of the two joint ventures in 1975: the Onigolo cement works and the Save sugar industry. These projects were undertaken at a time when the country was still reeling from the harsh economic effects and huge costs associated with the funding of the liberation movements in southern Africa and the cost of prosecuting its own civil war from 1967 to 1970. This earned the foreign policy of Gen. Yakubu Gowon the appellation of "Naira Spraying Diplomacy."[45] Similarly, the period between 1976 and 1978 saw Nigeria calling the bluff of US President Gerald Ford over US recognition of and support for the UNITA rebels in opposition to Nigerian support of the OAU's preference for the nationalist aspirations of the MPLA. Nigeria also nationalized some British interests in the country; a development that subsequently led to the transformation of Barclays Bank to Union Bank and British Petroleum to African Petroleum during the Obasanjo/ Sheu Yar' Adua regime of 1976 to 1979. The move was seen as a response to the infamous toothless dog insinuation ascribed to then British Prime Minister Margret Thatcher.[46]

Between 1985 and 1998 Nigeria's foreign policy history and practice was described as the beginning of ultra-nationalism, xenophobia, and the beginning of isolationism in Africa. However, the short lived Buhari regime (1984-1985) and that of Gen. Babangida (1985-1993), were noted for their radical ultra-nationalist and interventionist foreign policy disposition.[47] The Babangida regime was particularly noted for its "zero tolerance" for conflict in West Africa, a policy which Babangida executed through the instrumentality of the Economic Community of

West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) as evidenced in Nigeria's commanding role in the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone.[48]

The essential foreign policy thrust of the Babangida regime was anchored on the need to protect the national interest, commitment to Afrocentrism, ensuring good neighborliness among its contiguous states, and the pursuance of greater economic integration within the West African sub-region. Notable among the defining moments of that administration were the introduction of the Technical Aid Corps scheme under the supervision of Minister of Foreign Affairs Bolaji Akinyemi, the tactical adoption of economic diplomacy as the country's new foreign policy drive, and the renewed bite which the administration gave to the campaign against apartheid in South Africa, as well as the commencement of diplomatic ties with Israel and the overbearing role it played in the resolution of the Liberian crisis.

Nonetheless, the succeeding Abacha regime plunged Nigeria into what Osaghae and Fawole call "Nigeria's era of foreign policy isolationism;" a "feat" achieved courtesy of the dictatorial and totalitarian nature of regime.[49] Abacha's style of foreign policy administration was characterized by a high degree of inconsistency and incoherence judging by its ambivalence and quickness to react to international issues without taking cognizance of the cost implications of such decisions. For example, the junta expended a needless amount of energy on trying to maintain its monopoly on the country while fending off every attempt by the international community to categorize it as a pariah state. As observed by Osaghae, "Abacha saw it more as a 'struggle for survival' and the Nigerian state witnessed a foreign policy era in which 'isolationism' was the rule rather than the 'exception' thus seeing diplomacy being replaced by bull fighting, while the country was counting more enemies instead of making more friends."[50]

Following Abacha's death on 8 June 1998, Abdul-Salam Abubakar took over the reins of power, midwifed the country's return to civil rule, and also made an appreciable impact to restore sanity to both the domestic terrain and the country's external relations. On return to democracy on 29 May 1999, and that of Olusegun Obasanjo as presidents Nigeria's attempt to reposition its foreign policy focus towards citizen diplomacy did not fully come into play until the election into office of Musa Yar Adua and the subsequent appointment of Ojo Maduekwe as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Deconstructing Nigeria's Notion of Citizen Diplomacy: Political Rhetoric or a Call to Action?

Ojo Maduekwe, Nigeria's Minister for Foreign Affairs under the Yar Adua civilian administration, justified and explained the introduction of citizen diplomacy thus:

> "Our foreign policy has come of age and the age of innocence is over. We remain proud of our track record from Tafawa Balewa up till now. The country that is the largest Black Nation in the world could not have done otherwise. A world where one in every six black men in the world is a Nigerian could not have done otherwise, or where one in every four African is a Nigerian could not have done otherwise. We should ask ourselves some hard questions: to what extent has our foreign policy benefited Nigerians? To what extent has our foreign policy put food on our tables? In other words where is the citizen in our foreign policy?"[51]

Arguing further, Maduekwe noted that Nigeria carries an enormous burden which required it to be the symbol of the success of the black nation and that there could never be a black story "unless it is a Nigerian success story." Thus citizen diplomacy, according to Maduekwe, implies ensuring that Nigeria's foreign policy becomes the most powerful way to express who Nigeria and its people are.[52] Following this announcement, there has been a number of scholarly attempts to define the notion of citizen diplomacy as coined by Maduekwe. For example, Eze views citizen diplomacy as the act of being people oriented through the prioritization of the overall interest of Nigeria and its people over any other sub-regional or continental considerations.[53]

For Mbachu, the approach represents "a structured action that government takes in order to fast-track the foreign policy objectives of a state as set by policy makers."[54] Arguing further, he noted that these policy objectives must take into cognizance the wellbeing and aspirations of the people in whose interests they were established, and also portray a re-invigoration of Nigeria's foreign policy pursuit in a way that the people are made net beneficiaries of its end product.[55] In their contribution to the discourse, Okocha and Onwuka argue the central idea behind the concept of citizen diplomacy involves the protecting of the image, integrity, and interests of Nigeria and its people while also reacting against countries that are hostile to the Nigerian cause and that of its people, including those who brand Nigeria as corrupt.[56] Lending credence to this assertion, Ogunsanwo noted that for the approach to be successful it needs to be structured to prioritize the interest of Nigerians at home and abroad and used as a tool to further Nigeria's national interest in its engagement with the rest of the world.[57] Arguing further, he noted that any diplomacy that does not take this into consideration will be running contrary to the basic tenets of the concept. For Akinterinwa, the citizen diplomacy approach requires the Nigerian government to move beyond rhetoric by employing the policy to address problems such associated with the denial of entry visas to Nigerians with legitimate documentation and reasons for wanting to travel, the shabby treatment confronting Nigerians at home and abroad, and the need to ensure that Nigerian business entrepreneurs benefit from the country's regional and sub-regional peace-making and peace-building efforts.[58]

Inferring from these considerations, it seems apparent that at the heart of this citizen diplomacy drive is the overall prioritization of the interest of Nigerians in the country's interaction domestically and with the rest of the world. However, when situated within the context of governmental support and execution, it remains to be seen how well this policy has been brought to bear on the Nigeria's domestic and foreign policy. Perhaps, a better testimony to this assertion availed itself in 2007, when Ngozi Ugo, a career diplomat was nominated for the position of UN Ombudsman and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General in 2007.[59] As part of the requirement for the confirmation of her appointment, she was required to secure the diplomatic endorsement of her home government—Nigeria. Unfortunately, this was not to be, because both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Attorney-General kept dragging their feet until she eventually lost the position.

This event indeed calls into question the manner of citizen diplomacy Nigeria claims to be practicing when it cannot defend the interest of its citizens. As Mahmood observes:

> Dr. Ugo's presence in the UN System would have enhanced Nigeria's position
> for the UN permanent seat. Other more serious countries campaign for their

citizens and that is why the highest ranking African in the UN system is a Tanzanian woman. Go to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London you may think you are in India's Ministry of Foreign Affairs because of the number of Indians there. And this is where our own Chief Anyaoku served for almost four decades. When is Nigeria going to stand and recognize its own? It is sad, unfortunate and indeed painful![60]

Similarly, while commenting on what we argue as an exhibition of a charity of foreign policy diplomacy by Nigeria, Monday noted that even at the level of ECOWAS, an institution Nigeria hosts and substantially funds, and at the AU, were Nigeria was/is a founding and strong financial member, it remains to be seen how well the Nigerian government has protected the interest of its citizens, notwithstanding the advent of its much publicized citizen diplomacy drive.[61] The above scenario was succinctly captured thus:

Not only did the country . . . donate substantially towards ECOWAS, set up costs including the Secretariat, it regularity paid its annual contribution of approximately 32.5% of the Community's budget which was subsequently revised upwards to 40%. In the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice only 7% of the staff are Nigerians, and it is situated here in Abuja. At the African Union since 2003 when Obasanjo fielded two female candidates from Nigeria for the same post, making the country look unserious, no Nigerian has been elected in the AU Commission for the last six years. A nation that has the largest population in Africa is not represented in the African Union Commission. Burkina Faso defeated Nigeria in 2007! Really, what manner of citizen diplomacy is this when its citizens lack representation?[62]

A similar case in point is the plight of Nigerians who are still resident in the Bakassi Peninsula, an area which used to be part of Nigeria, but was ceded to Cameroon following the verdict of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) which awarded the oil rich region to Cameroon. Following this development, it has been reported in some quarters that some Nigerians who have not fully left the region are being treated by the Cameroonian authorities in a manner not befitting of a people whose government has been more than cooperative, particularly judging by the way it accepted the ruling of the ICJ.[63] These are just a few examples of the way the Nigerian government pursues its citizen diplomacy drive.

Equally, the Nigerian government's seeming lack of response over reported incidences of xenophobic attacks on Nigerians in South Africa in 2008 further calls into question the country's claim and subscription to a citizen diplomacy propelled foreign policy approach if it cannot use same to defend the interest of its people as earlier advanced by Maduekwe.[64] This scenario perhaps provides once more an opportunity for the Nigerian government to put to test its widely publicized citizen diplomacy. Evolving from these discourses, the article concludes with a consideration of some of the major social-economic challenges (poverty, unemployment, and Nigeria's spiraling debt profile) confronting the Nigerian state, including an analysis that further reinforces the need for the Nigerian government to strike a balance between its interventionist role in conflicts and the current state of its economy.

Nigeria's Changing Domestic and Socio-Economic Realities in Perspective

Drawing from the insights provided by a 2012 report conducted by Nigeria's House of Representatives Committee on Aid, Loans and Debt Management, it has been reported that between 2005 and 2012, the Nigerian government borrowed a total of $4.4 billion in external loans from the World Bank.[65] The report also notes that Nigeria has also risen to become the largest recipient of disbursements from the International Development Agency (IDA) between 2009 and 2012 and has the largest outstanding IDA portfolio in Africa, ahead of Kenya and Tanzania. These borrowings, according to the Debt Management Office, were ostensibly meant to finance capital projects and human capital development initiatives in the country. As shown in Table 2 below, Nigeria's lending rate as at April 2013 was estimated to be in the region of $715M as against the total sum of $1, 373.72B obtained as loans in 2012. If figures emanating from Nigeria's Debt Management Office is anything to go by, Nigeria's public debt profile appear to have taken a turn for the worse as evidenced in the 31 March, 2015 report of the country's Debt Management Office which puts Nigeria's external debt at over $ $9.4 trillion.[66] The anger these figures portend is a possibility of the 2016 figure exceeding the amount borrowed in 2015, if not effectively contained.

TABLE 2: NIGERIA'S BORROWING BY VOLUME (IN MILLIONS OF USD—JANUARY 2009 AND MAY 2013)
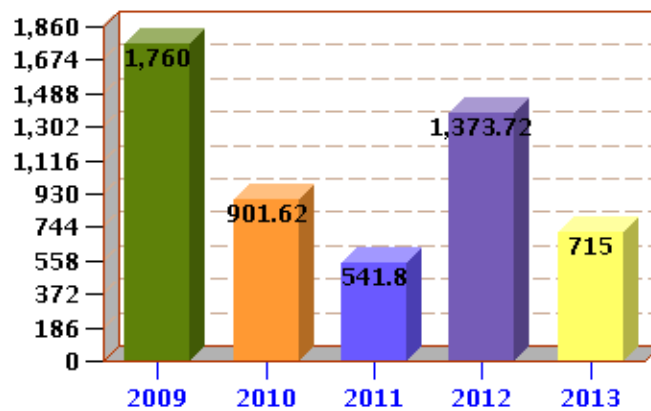

Source: World Bank Country statistics on Nigeria 2013 http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/nigeria

Deducing from the Table 2 above, it the economic analogy of borrowing to finance public expenditure ostensibly to stimulate growth and improvement in human capital development in Nigeria seems to defy logic. As evidenced in Table 2, notwithstanding the obtainment of a $1,760 million loan in 2009, the number of Nigerians living below poverty level between 2009 and 2010 still stood at 77.5 million, a development which further contradicts the basic logic of a corresponding relationship between human capital development and improvement in the standard of living of the people. This much was also evident in the Adult Equivalent (poverty) rate in Nigeria, which gives a far more alarming statistic. For example, between 2003 and 2004, as shown in Table 3 below, the adult equivalent of 60 million out of a per capita 80 million adults lived below the poverty line, while between 2009 and 2010, the figures were 77.5 million out of 100 million still living below thecpoverty line. This official poverty line as noted by Litwack is drawn on the basis of income sufficient for per capita consumption of 3000 calories a

day plus other essential non-food items. These statistics were obtained from the headcount data gathered from a comprehensive household survey conducted between 2003-2004 and 2009-2010.[67]

TABLE 3: NUMBER OF NIGERIANS LIVING IN POVERTY (2003-2010) ESTIMATES (IN MILLIONS)
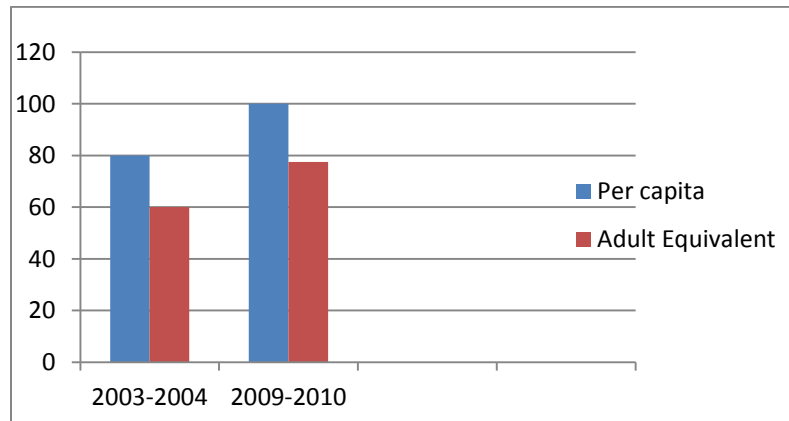
Source: Litwack, John. 2013. Nigeria's Economic Report'--No.1 Washington DC, World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/05/17708026/nigeria-economic-report

TABLE 4: UNEMPLOYMENT IN NIGERIA: 2006-2011 (PERCENT OF WORKING POPULATION)
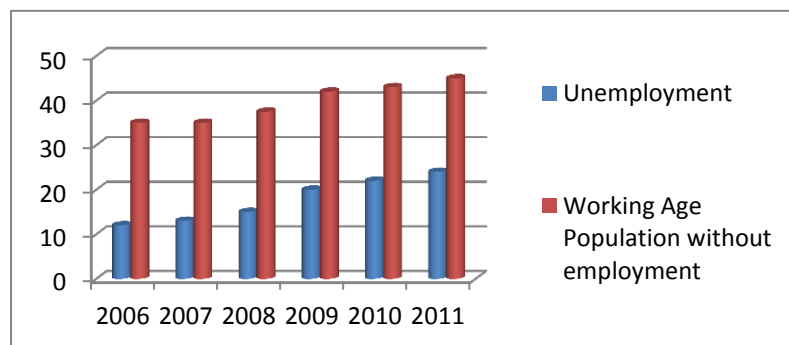
Source: Litwack, John. 2013. Nigeria's Economic Report'--No.1 Washington DC, World Bank. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/05/17708026/nigeria-economic-report

Similarly, Nigeria's unemployment statistics between 2006 and 2011 are by no means encouraging, as it represents a classic expression of the ailing nature of its economy and a perfect description of the internal dysfunctions confronting the Nigerian state. As depicted in Table 4 above, while the official percentage of unemployed persons in Nigeria was put at 12 percent of the working population, the actual percentage of the unemployed Nigerians within the working age population (18-65 years of age) stood at 33 percent of the entire population. This figure was soon to rise to a 22.5 percent unemployment rate and to 44 percent for those within the working age population in 2011.[68]

Perhaps, a more corroborating assertion to the declining state of human and social capital accessibility in Nigeria is the report released in May 2013 by the Statistician-General of Nigeria's

National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). This report according to him has put the official rate of unemployment at 23.9 percent.[69] This implies that one out of four Nigerians are unemployed and unemployment rates have been steadily increasing, from 12 percent in 2006 to close to 24 percent in 2011 while younger Nigerians are encountering increasing difficulty in finding gainful employment.[70] Also, the number of Nigerians living in poverty is said to be on the increase, thus revealing a sharp contrast between the nation's economic statistics on rapid economic growth and minimal welfare improvements for much of the population, particularly in rural areas.[71]

Similarly, and as noted in the United Nations Human Development Index for 2014, Nigeria presently occupies the 152nd position out of the 187 countries ranked in the survey with a life expectancy rate at birth put at 52.5 percent.[72] These alarming statistics no doubt reflect the changing realities of Nigeria's prevalent socio-economic anatomy, a fact which further reinforces the need for Nigeria to strike a balance between what the article argues as a charity of foreign policy diplomacy and the domestic needs of its people, particularly, its home grown domestic challenges. In fact, nothing more can be more compelling and justifiable for a rethinking of Nigeria's Africa-centered conflict interventionist approach other than the seemingly unending Boko Haram insurgency which appears to be threatening Nigeria's unity as a people, and its continuing survival as a state.[73]

Conclusion

This article has interrogated the essential issues that have influenced Nigeria's conflict resolution mechanism in Africa, particularly from the perspective of its foreign policy over a period of fifty years. The article also reveals an inextricable connection between Nigeria's foreign policy and its interventionist role in Africa. Besides the constitutional provision which recognizes Nigeria's Africa-centered ideology, the article also established that Nigeria's conflict interventionist role in Africa can be situated within the context of its leadership orientation and the political ideology of the individual in power. However, and notwithstanding Nigeria's commitment to peace keeping and conflict resolution in Africa, it remains to be seen how well this Afro-centric policy has helped in the protection of the interests of Nigerians both at home and abroad, particularly when located within the purview of the hate and disdain with which Nigerians are being confronted with in most of the countries that have benefited from the policy.

At the very best, what the government seems to have succeeded in achieving is a policy documentation rather than actual execution. Nigeria is encouraged to learn from the socio-economic and political considerations often attached to intervention by the likes of the US, the UK, France, and South Africa when intervening in conflicts. Given this development, this article argues the need for Nigeria to remain more proactive and responsive to the plight of its citizenry in the light of this supposed gravitation to a "people first approach" as exemplified in the cardinal objectives of its citizen diplomacy focus. More than anything else, Nigerians both at home and abroad need to be better assured that their welfare and well-being is of paramount concern to their government, both in theory and in practice.

Similarly, having spent the larger part of its more than five decades of independence, the article advocates for a major overhaul and/or expedited review of these Afrocentric objectives to

reflect the prevailing socio-economic and political aspirations of the Nigerian people as demonstrated above, through embracing a more citizen oriented and economically meaningful interventionist approach to conflict resolution. While it may be true that foreign policy gains are not usually susceptible to quantitative analysis, it is nevertheless imperative for foreign policy as US Secretary of State John Kerry noted, to reflect a continuation of a country's economic policy, and this according to Trotsky must have strong resonance with a nation's domestic policy.[74]

The article further submits that, given the mounting threat posed to Nigeria's stability by the Boko Haram insurgency, Nigeria needs to first reassure its citizenry of its capacity to protect their lives and property before focusing on securing the social, economic, and security challenges facing other African states, as its age-long Afro-centric policy seems to suggest. This much has become necessary given the fact that the Boko Haram group, as admitted by Nigeria's immediate past president, Goodluck Jonathan, "has so far claimed over twelve thousand lives, with more than 8,000 persons injured or maimed, not to mention the displacement of thousands of innocent Nigerians."[75] And, his figure may well be an undercount due to political considerations.

More specifically, since the first quarter of year 2014 Nigeria has witnessed a tremendous escalation in attacks mounted by the Boko Haram group. Its cruelest attack (since year 2009 when the sect commenced its terrorist operations) has been the April 2014 abduction of over 270 girls from Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State.[76] Other such fatal attacks on the Nigerian state are the bombings of a motor park (bus station) in Nyanya, located about eight kilometers south of Nigeria's capital city of Abuja, and on that city's busiest shopping mall, EMAB Plaza, located side by side with Banex Plaza.[77] If anything at all, these attacks have exposed the seeming incapacity of Nigeria's leadership to handle its home-grown security challenges, a development which has been further worsened by the emerging indicators of Boko Haram's international connections with other terrorist organizations.

Most notable among such speculations is the perceived involvement of Samantha Lewthwaite, a British-born Al-Shabab operative, in the Nyanya attack to avenge the killing of Al-Shabab's terror leader, Makaburi (aka Sheikh Abubakar Ahmed) by the Kenyan Anti-terror Police Unit. Also, there is the contention that members of the Somalia militant sect, Al-Shabab, aided Boko Haram militants in carrying out the attack on Nyanya Motor Park.[78] It has indeed been alleged that Al-Shabab, which has strong links with Al-Qaeda, has moved from providing technical assistance to Boko Haram to fighting alongside the insurgents in some parts of the North-East.[79] Indeed, this growing international linkage has the capacity to compound the challenge of defeating terrorism in Nigeria and also to limit further the country's capacity to provide regional leadership for other African states; a possibility which is already beginning to manifest following Nigeria's recent recall of some eight hundred of its troops from Darfur to assist the country in its ongoing war against the Boko Haram group.[80]

It perhaps bears mentioning that Boko Haram had also in March 2015 pledged its alliance to the Islamic State (ISIL or ISIS), furthered its attacks on the civilian population, and also raided a number of military formations, including the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) base located on the outskirts of Baga in Borno State.[81] Perhaps a major watershed for the Nigerian government in its campaign against Boko Haram and its often touted giant-like stature in Africa

is its resort to the black market, particularly between 14 February and 28 May 2015, for the procurement of arms, and its purported employment of South African mercenaries in the fight against Boko Haram.[82] At the time of writing this article, Nigeria has witnessed a change in leadership and government, with Muhammadu Buhari, a former military ruler, emerging as president.[83] While the foreign policy direction of his government remains too early to call, what is clear, however, is that the evolving socio-economic and security developments as contended in this article, particularly since its return to participatory democracy in May 1999, suggests that Nigeria is struggling with a plethora of home-grown systemic challenges. Inarguably, the country needs to do more to take care of these challenges, before all other considerations.

Notes

1   See Magnowski 2014; and http://www.tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/crude-oil-production (last accessed August 4, 2015).
2   Ploch 2013, p. 1.
3   Ibid.
4   Alli 2012.
5   Ibid.
6   See for instance, Aluko 1981, Abegunrin 2003, Fawole 2004, Gambari 2008, Adebajo 2008, and Osuntokun 2008 for factors motivating Nigeria's Africa-centered interventionist approach to African conflicts and Magnowski 2014 re Nigeria's economy overtaking South Africa's as the continent's largest.
7   Yoroms 2010, p. 27.
8   Idisi and Idise 1996, p. 171.
9   Ibid.
10   Ibid.
11   Ebohon and Obakhedo 2012, p. 163.
12   Ibid.
13   Ate 2011, p. 90.
14   Fink 1968, p. 456.
15   Golwa 2009, p. 279.
16   Snodderly 2011, p. 17.
17   Wallenstein 2002, p. 53.
18   Boutros-Ghali 1992.
19   Crocker 2001, p. 31.
20   For more explanations on the centrifugal and centripetal determinants of Nigeria's foreign policy, see introductory chapter, "The Determinant of the Foreign Policies of African States," in Aluko 1977.
21   Gambari 1989, p. 2.
22   Aluko 1977, p. 2.
23   Ogwu 1986 also noted these factors as central to the shaping of Nigeria's foreign policy articulation.

24   Ibid., p. 2.
25   See also Aluko 1981, p. 1 for more on this.
26   Balewa 1960, quoted in Aluko 1977, p. 2.
27   Fawole 2004, p. 42.
28   Constitution of Nigeria 1999, Section 19(1).
29   Fawole 2004, p. 42.
30   Ibid., p. 43.
31   Ibid.
32   See Idang 1973, Aluko 1977 and 1981, and Fawole 2004 for more on explanations on this
      foreign policy principle.
33   Fawole 2004, p. 44.
34   Balewa 1960, quoted in Fawole 2004, p. 42.
35   Ibid.
36   For more on this argument, see Peen Rodt 2011.
37   See Fawole 2004, p. 45, and Gambari 2008, p. 58 for more on this.
38   Fawole 2004, p. 47.
39   Ibid.
40   See Yoroms 2003, p. 2.
41   Oluyemi-Kusa, 2007, p. 140.
42   These scholars at different times have written on the major issues underpinning Nigeria's
      national interest: Aluko 1981, Akinyemi 1989, Abegunrin 2003, Fawole 2004, Adebajo 2008,
      Gambari 2008, Akinterinwa 2010, and Alli 2012.
43   For more on this argument see also the writings of Idang 1973, Ogunsanwo 1986, Fawole
      2004, Gambari 2008, and Adebajo 2008.
44   See Osuntokun 2008, p. 148 for more on Nigeria's response to correct what he described as
      the "Benin neglect."
45   See Gambari 1989 for more arguments on Gowon's foreign policy era of "Naira Spraying
      Diplomacy."
46   See also Fawole 2004 and Osuntokun 2008.
47   Fawole 2004, pp. 127-46.
48   See Osaghae 1998 and Adebajo and Mustapha 2008 for more on Babangida's approach to
      foreign policy issues and conflict related issues in West Africa during his regime.
49   Osaghae 1998, p. 194, and Fawole 2004, p. 27.
50   Osaghae 1998, p. 194.
51   Maduekwe, cited in Ogunsanwo, 2007, p. 2.
52   Ibid.
53   Eze 2007, p. 8.
54   Mbachu 2007, p. 9.
55   Ibid.
56   Okocha and Onwuka 2007, p. 3.
57   See Ogunsanwo 2007 for further analysis.

58   Akinterinwa 2010 provides a more comprehensive explanation.
59   Abba Mahmood 2009, "What Manner of Citizen Diplomacy?" (http://
     09.85.129.123/search?Q–cache: vikknolovt:www.leadershipnigeria.com/index.php/c.), cited
     in Monday 2010, p. 8.
60   Ibid.
61   Monday 2010, p. 8.
62   Ibid.
63   Babatola 2012, pp. 9-10.
64   Matunhu 2011.
65   *ThisDay*, 31 December 2012 (http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/nigeria-borrows-4-4bn-
     from-world-bank-in-seven-years/134968/; accessed 04 August 2015).
67   *Leadership*, 30 June 2015 (http://leadership.ng/business/443717/nigerias-external-debt-stock-
     stands-at-9-4trn-dmo; accessed 04 August 2015).
67   See Litwack 2013.
68   Ibid.
69   *ThisDay* 09 May 2013 (http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/nbs-puts-nigeria-s-
     unemployment-rate-at-23-9-per-cent/147135/; accessed 04 August 2015).
70   Ibid.
71   Ibid.
72   United Nations Human Developments Reports for 2013
     (http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-1-human-development-index-and-its-components;
     accessed 04 August 2015).
73   Boko-Haram is a Hausa language expression which literally translates to western
     education is forbidden. It is a name given to a radical Islamic sect cum jihadist terrorist
     organization was formed in 2001 by Mohammed Yusuf. The movement has been
     responsible for a series of destabilizing and debilitating attacks which has claimed many
     Nigerian lives, particularly in the Northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa.
74   See for instance Gordon 2013.
75   "Boko Haram has killed over 12,000 Nigerians, plans to take over country"
     (http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/160942-boko-haram-killed-12000-nigerians-plans-
     take-country-jonathan-says.html; accessed 04 August 2015).
76   See Onuoha 2014, p. 158; and "US experts join hunt for abducted Nigerian school girls"
     (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-27304441; accessed 04 August 2015).
77   Abrak and Eboh 2014, and *ThisDay*, 28 July 2014 (http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/uk-
     upp-condemn-abuja-blast-as-un-chief-urges-proactive-measures/182068/; accessed 04
     August 2015).
78   *ThisDay* 6 August 2015 (http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/uk-based-daily-star-links-
     samantha-lewthwaite-white-widow-to-abuja-bombing/176303/; accessed 04 August 2015).
79   Soriwei and Adepegba 2014.
80   See for Channels Television 2014, "800 Nigerian Soldiers Return To Boost War on Terror,
     available on http://www.channelstv.com/2014/08/01/800-nigerian-soldiers-return-to-boost-

war-on-terror/; accessed 04 August 2015).

81   BBC 7 March 2015 (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-31784538; accessed 04 August 2015); BBC 4 January 2015 (http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30672391; accessed 04 August 2015).

82   *The Telegraph* 10 May 2015 (http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/nigeria/11596210/South-African-mercenaries-secret-war-on-Boko-Haram.html; accessed 04 August 2015).

83   *ThisDay* 31 March 2015 (http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/jonathan-calls-buhari-concedes-defeat/205284/; accessed 4 August 2015).

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