

Nationalities, Identities and Terrorism The Nigerian Experience

Edited by

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3 Indigeneship and Citizenship Crisis: A Challenge to Nigeria's National Security

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Introduction

The crises of citizenship are a worldwide phenomenon. From Bosnia, Ireland and former Soviet Union to some Asian countries, citizenship crisis have been a recurring decimal. This citizenship crisis is more prevalent with ethnic identification thereby challenging the stability of the state. The state is challenged at the macro level by new levels of continental race consciousness and by old sacred solidarity and religion. (Mazrui, 1999). In Africa, the strategy for social exclusion and citizenship rights has been enacted in different ways in different countries. The scenario has the potential to destabilise the state, as the excluded groups often have valid fears of insecurity that usually prompt them to recruit, train, and organise their own "unofficial armies". This crisis becomes more acute as the boundaries between ethnic, citizenship and indigeneship identities tend to overlap. Thus, the scale of human tragedy that often accompanies citizenship- and indigeneship-based violence throughout the world is monumental. In the Nigerian context, national security has been threatened more by internal ethnic and politico-religious uprisings than external threats. Apart from the Nigerian-Cameroon border dispute, in which military option was contemplated (but which was later resolved

through international litigation), there has not been any major tension between the country and another one. In this context, discourses on national security in Nigeria tend to revolve around internal factors and forces that threaten national security.

In the Nigerian chequered history, the Kano Riot of 1953 has gone down in history as the first major political uprising that gravely threatened national security (Albert, 1993). It was followed by Tiv riots of the 1960s and *Operation Wetie* in the defunct Western Region in 1965. The first military coup de tat of January 15, 1966 was justified by its plotters as a way of saving the nation from total anarchy – which was a possible scenario – if breakdown of law and order in the Western Region had not been contained. In the contemporary Nigerian society, major occurrences of infractions are either ethnic or religious-based. At the base of these ethnic/religious skirmishes lies the burning issue of indigeneship. The Ife-Modakeke, Ijaw-Itsekiri, Jos and Fulani-Hausa pastoralists community versus Yoruba farmers community in Oke-Ogun, Oyo State, are classical case studies of violent conflict between indigenous communities and settler communities. Beyond generating crises with the attendant loss of human and material resources, more of which have not been satisfactorily resolved till the present time, the indigene-settler problem has called to question the basis of citizenship in Nigeria (Adesoji and Alao, 2009).

As a way of justifying the distinction between indigenes and settlers and reaping the gains, myths have been built while certain positions have been established by political notables among the host communities. These political actors deliberately fan the embers of ethnicity in order to secure political advantage. Crises that started purely on religious differences or because of intolerance were instantly given political colourations and interpretations by political entrepreneurs. Hence, the generated crises have defied all known logic till now; as shown in the recent Jos crisis. In this context, a telling manifestation of the unresolved issues of indigeneship and citizenship is the recent upsurge of ethnic and religious conflicts and attendant killings that have dogged the restoration of civil rule (Alubo, 2006) to the extent that the unresolved issues of indigeneship are recurring as ethnic and religious violence have come to occupy the centre stage of Nigerian politics. Considering these realities, this paper argues that an

eclectic, multi-institutional and dimensional approach should be instituted for the purpose of de-emphasising the notion of indigeneship while replacing it with the notion of citizenship in Nigeria. More crucial is the fact that an indigeneship and citizenship crisis, if unresolved, threatens Nigeria's democracy and its national security.

Conceptual and Research Agendas

This paper begins by reviewing key conceptual issues that have shaped much of the recent research on the changing dynamics of indigeneship, citizenship and national security in contemporary Nigeria. In justifying the dichotomy between indigenes and settlers, protagonists would easily contend that one is an indigene of a particular place. The argument is that one can only belong to a particular ethnic group and that by virtue of that, one might not be in a position to enjoy those benefits associated with settling in a place or among groups with a different history, culture and language (Adesoji and Alao, 2009: 153). In this context, indigeneship and citizenship form part of a matrix with questions of identity, nationality and ethnicity. It has been argued that there are fundamental differences between indigeneship and citizenship, both theoretically and practically. Whereas indigeneship is a natural link between a person and a geographical location (his ancestral home) where he traces his roots through a blood lineage and genealogy that put him in contact with his kin and kindred, citizenship is a man-made arrangement that seeks to confer a person certain rights that are enjoyed by all persons in a certain geographical location (Rinyom, 2012).

However, citizenship is seen by many as an important locus of the struggle for inclusion. Citizenship has both objective and subjective meanings. While the objective meaning, which is the most readily cited, shows citizens as those belonging to a political system by accident of birth, marriage, naturalisation and nationalisation, the subjective dimension locates the concept at the level of rights and obligations of an individual within the political system. These latter attributes, more than the former, make a citizen in the real sense of it (Olaniyan, 2007). At the same time, citizenship is conceived in a symbolic manner between the state and the individual. It is defined as a regime of rights, privileges and duties (Adejumobi, 2005). Rights belonging to citizens are generally

categorised into three: civil, political and social (Marshall, 1964). Civil rights consist of rights to life, freedom of speech, thought, conscience and religion; to personal liberty, fair hearing and to the dignity of the human person. Political rights include rights to take part in the affairs of the state through the rights to vote and be voted for. Social rights range from the rights to economic welfare and social security to right to education and to live the life of a civilised being (Marshall, 1964).

Turning to security, the two traditions in the conception of security are traditional or state-centric and human security. The traditional security paradigm refers to a realist construct of security in which the referent object of security is the State. For almost half a century, major world powers entrusted the security of their nation to a balance of power among states. In this sense international stability relied on the premise that if state security is maintained, then the security of citizens will necessarily follow. To be sure, the concept of national security is centered on state-centric paradigm.

The term national security means different things to different people. For Maniruzzaman (1982:2), "national security is the protection and preservation of minimum core values of any nation: political independence and territorial integrity". It has also been defined as the integrity of the national territory and its institutions" (Morgenthau, 1966), while Orwa (1984) sees national security as comprising "the protection of the national interests, including national values, political and economic ways of life, against internal and external threats and challenges" (p. 203): The measures adopted to ensure national security include: using plomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; maintaining effective armed forces; implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislation); ensuring the resilience and redundancy of critical infrastructure; using intelligence services to detect or avoid threats and espionage and to protect classified information; and using counter intelligence services or secret police to protect the nation from internal threats (Aondoakaa, 2008).

However, as Cold War tensions receded, it became clear that the security of citizens was threatened by hardships arising from internal state activities as well as external aggressors. Civil wars were increasingly common and compounded existing poverty, disease, hunger, violence

and human rights abuses. Traditional or state-centric security policies had effectively masked these underlying basic human needs in the face of state security. Through neglect of their constituents, nation-states had failed in their primary objective. Consequently, the traditional state-centric notion of security has been challenged by more holistic approaches to security, which is the perception of security from the human angle. This tradition seeks to acknowledge and address basic threats to human survival and safety. The justification for the human security approach is said to be that the traditional conception of security is no longer appropriate or effective in the highly interconnected and interdependent modern world in which global threats such as poverty, environmental degradation, and terrorism supersede the traditional security threats of interstate attack and warfare. The UNDP (1994) Human Development Report's definition of human security argues that the scope of global security should be expanded to include *threats in seven areas*:

- (1) *Economic Security*: Economic security requires an assured basic income for individuals, usually from productive and remunerative work or, as a last resort, from a publicly financed safety net. In this sense, only about a quarter of the world's people are presently economically secure. While the economic security problem may be more serious in developing countries, concern also arises in developed countries as well. Unemployment problems constitute an important factor underlying political tensions and ethnic violence.
- (2) *Food Security*: Food security requires that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. According to the United Nations, the overall availability of food is not a problem; rather the problem often is the poor distribution of food and a lack of purchasing power.
- (3) *Health Security*: Health Security aims to guarantee a minimum protection from diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.
- (4) *Environmental Security*: Environmental security aims to protect people from the short- and long-term ravages of nature, man-made threats in nature, and deterioration of the national environment.

- (5) *Personal Security*: Personal security aims to protect people from physical violence, whether from within the state or external states, or from violent individuals and sub-state actors like militia groups.
- (6) *Community Security*: Community security aims to protect people from the loss of traditional relationships and values and from sectarian and ethnic violence. Traditional communities, particularly minority ethnic groups, are often threatened. About half of the world's states have experienced some inter-ethnic strife. The United Nations declared 1993 the Year of Indigenous People to highlight the continuing vulnerability of the 300 million aboriginal people in 70 countries as they face a widening spiral of violence.
- (7) *Political Security*: Political security is concerned with whether or not people live in a society that honours their basic human rights.

Having said that, for a nation to be secured, it must have a strong military force (well trained, well equipped with home-made modern weapon systems, disciplined, and professional); a strong and buoyant economy; a contented and happy people; and a good government run by a patriotic and democratic leadership. It is from thoughts in the combined military, political and socio-economic factors that the new school on national security emerged (Nwolise, 2006). Thus, national security is about the protection and enhancement of values against those that seek to limit or destroy their realisation. From the foregoing, it can be said that national security (traditional) and human security are two sides of a coin – both co-exist and relate symbiotically. The point at issue is that both human and national securities reinforce each other. Without human security, traditional state security cannot be attained and vice-versa.

Indigeneship and Citizenship in Nigeria: The Interface and Conflictual Issues

Generally citizenship is seen as the relationship between an individual and a particular nation. Chapter III of the 1999 constitution specifies the process of acquiring Nigerian citizenship together with the rights

and obligations attached to citizenship. Section 25 (1), stipulates three bases upon which Nigerian citizenship can be obtained viz:

- (a) Every person born in Nigeria before the date of independence, either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents belongs or belonged to a community *indigenous* to Nigeria; provided that a person shall not become a citizen of Nigeria by virtue of this section if neither of his parents nor any of his grandparents was born in Nigeria.
- (b) Every person born in Nigeria after the date of independence either of whose parents or any of whose grandparents is a citizen of Nigeria; and
- (c) Every person born outside Nigeria either of whose parents is a citizen of Nigeria.

While the constitution is very clear on the rights and obligations of citizens, it is silent on the rights and obligations of indigenes of various ethnic communities in the country. At any rate, it seems the drafters of the constitution had anticipated the likelihood of tension between indigenous Nigerian citizens and settler citizens. It was for this reason that both *Sections 42, 43 and 44* of the constitution were entrenched in order to protect both the political and economic rights of settler communities in the country. To be sure, the sections are cited below:

Section 42

(1) A citizen of Nigeria of a particular community, ethnic group, place of origin, sex, religion or political opinion shall not, by reason only that he is such a person

(a) be subjected either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any executive or administrative action of the government, to disabilities or restrictions to which citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions are not made subject;

(b) be accorded either expressly by, or in the practical application of, any law in force in Nigeria or any such executive or administrative action, any privilege or advantage that is not accorded to citizens of Nigeria of other communities, ethnic groups, places of origin, sex, religious or political opinions.

- (2) No citizen of Nigeria shall be subjected to any disability or deprivation merely by reason of the circumstances of his birth.
- (3) Nothing in subsection (1) of this section shall invalidate any law by reason only that the law imposes restrictions with respect to the appointment of any person to any office under the state or as a member of the armed forces of the Federation or member of the Nigeria Police Force or to an office in the service of a body, corporate established directly by any law in force in Nigeria.

The political and legal implication of the above is that all Nigerians could exercise their citizenship rights in all parts of the country they are resident. The plain truth however, is that constitutional provisions do not correspond to reality. Nigerians who live in communities that are not indigenous to them or their forebears could not exercise their constitutional citizenship rights fully. For instance, they could vote freely but to stand for elective post may engender violent reaction from the host community, who would consider such a move an affront. In Jos, while the settler communities believed that nothing should prevent them from exercising their citizenship rights, the host community held the view that the only place they could claim their political rights is their place of origin. In the context of a modern nation it is not impossible for a settler to aspire to enjoy rights and attain positions ordinarily reserved for indigenes, particularly as citizens, irrespective of origin, place of birth or ethnicity. The Hausa-Fulani in Plateau State as in other parts of the country could have been emboldened by this understanding; hence the clamour for entitlements, rights and relevance in the places where they are located. But the problem associated with this development is the nature of successive Nigerian constitutions which emphasise what constitute indigeneship in a nation, and more importantly who is a citizen. This has led to distinguishing between national and local citizens, and more importantly, it has made it difficult to promote citizenship and constitutionally guarantee citizen rights particularly in the absence of any enforcement strategy or procedure (Adesoji and Alao, 2009).

Essentially, there are conflictual issues within the context of citizenship and indigeneship in Nigeria. Although in a juridical sense, the Nigerian constitution talks about a common national citizenship, the same constitution sanctions local rights through the notion of indigeneity. The consequences are that it becomes expedient to identify

and label “settlers” or “foreigners” as opposed to the “indigenes” or “natives”. In the same vein, in the urge to claim “indigeneity”, social histories are reconstructed and reinterpreted by different groups with the sole aim of appropriating “ownership” of the community (Adejumobi, 2005). This invariably leads to conflict, to the extent that groups are usually set in contestation with one another based on divisive social dichotomy of “indigenes” and “settlers”.

Similarly, indigeneship is well articulated in the context of the Federal Character Principle, which guided the framers of the 1999 constitution. The principle stipulates that appointment to federal agencies, institutions and corporations should ensure that the prospective appointees from each state of the federation belong to a community indigenous to a state or local government through their parents or grandparents, which in effect suggests membership of a local ethnic and linguistic community. Chapter 2 section 14 (3) of the 1999 constitution explains the reasoning behind the provision thus:

The composition of the government of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of person from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies (The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

This federal character is an ethnic formula for the allocation of public goods. Although this constitutional provision was designed as a political technique for managing Nigeria’s federal system of giving equal opportunities to all ethnic groups, in practice however, it is a policy that has proved to be largely counter-productive. In this context, it identifies ethnic identity as the primary identity for state entitlements and social rights. The effect is that it de-individualises citizenship and makes it more of a group phenomenon.

Effects and Challenges of Indigeneship/Citizenship Crises on Nigeria’s National Security

The major effect of citizenship and indigeneship crises on Nigeria’s

national security is that indigenes'/non-indigenes' violent eruption in any part of the country results in multiple deadly reprisal attacks in other parts of the country. For example, the February 2000 riots in Kaduna led to reprisal killings in the south-east. Also, the consequences of the violence in Jos were felt as far away as the south-east and some northern cities. According to Human Rights Watch Report (2001), in the town of Onitsha in southeastern Anambra State (an area predominantly inhabited by Igbos, with a small minority Hausas), some Igbo civilians attacked Hausas indiscriminately after Igbos fleeing the violence in Jos returned to Onitsha and brought back the bodies of Igbos killed in Jos. The Report also had it that violence, which was sparked off by news of killings of Igbos in Jos, was also in Akwa Ibom State, where four Hausas were reportedly killed and several others injured, apparently in revenge for the killings of Igbos in Jos.

More importantly, with limited space and terrain to achieve economic fulfillment, the contest has become fierce in the process of which universalistic criteria, including pan-regional consciousness, are replaced by the particularistic ones such as indigene, native, autochthon and aboriginal. In addition, some states in Nigeria issued certificates of indigenes in order to give indigenes privileges and opportunities (such as scholarships and employment), thereby denying others. In the same vein, the federal government uses indigeneity as the basis for determining *Federal Character*, a policy which, among others, provides that employment and other opportunities should reflect the diverse origins and in practice, gives opportunities to people who may have lower qualifications but are from educationally disadvantaged states (Alubo, 2006). This generates hatred and envy among the marginalised groups, which at times leads to civil disturbances, derailed development and threatens Nigeria's national security. However, the challenges posed by citizenship and indigeneship crises to Nigeria's national security can best be approached by examining three cases where the indigeneship tussle have been protracted. These are in Plateau, Kaduna and Delta States. They mirror cases in the interface between indigeneity, discrimination, inter-communal tension and violence.

Plateau State

Since 2001, Plateau State has been rocked by a succession of bloody

inter-communal clashes' with thousands of lives lost and property destroyed. The most destructive of these have pitted Jos and Yelwa's Hausa and Jarawa "settler" communities against their indigene neighbours. The plight of Hausa and Jarawa residents of the state who are treated as non-indigenes even though they cannot claim indigene status anywhere else in Nigeria has been attributed as the main cause of the bloody clashes (Jibo et al, 2001; Alubo, 2006).

Kaduna State

In Kaduna State, the indigeneity issue has become entangled with the state's existing inter-communal divisions and has made an already tense situation worse than it might otherwise be. The sad history of Zangon-Kataf in southern Kaduna is often cited as one of the clearest examples of the absurdities and divisiveness of the indigene-settler divide (Fwa, 2003; Suberu, 2001).

Delta State

Warri, a town in Delta State, was the theatre of bloody indigeneship-based conflict. The dispute was over Warri's rightful "ownership". This dispute is not merely a symbolic one; in large measure it is a struggle for control over scarce economic resources. Urhobo, Ijaw and Itsekiri communities were engaged in skirmishes that led to the death of many. All three of Warri's local government areas were under predominantly Itsekiri administrations. The Urhobo and Ijaw youth leaders violently resisted and sought to change the status quo. This was because their people were systematically and structurally excluded from access to jobs, educational opportunities, and even basic government services (Imobighe et al, 2002).

Strategies to Mitigate the Challenges of Indigeneship and Citizenship crises to Nigeria's National Security

The prospects for national integration and local autonomy depend on the emergence of a purposeful national leadership and proper political restructuring of the federation designed to generate a national image that has more appeal than the regional ones. In this context, the strategies

that are to be deployed to mitigate the challenges of indigeneship and citizenship crises to Nigeria's national security emanate from the following.

The first on the list is the constitutional amendment that will lead to the enactment of Residency Right. The Residency Right, if and when passed to law, would guarantee that a Nigerian citizen who has resided continuously for a period of five years in any state of the federation and performs his/her civic duties, including the payment of taxes, shall be entitled to all the rights and privileges of the state. Hence, this would be in accord with the practice in most federations and would strengthen the provisions in the constitution in addition to removing restriction on who can contest elections in different parts of the country (Ololade and Ikubaje, 2006). And whether twenty, ten or five years, what is being advocated and what is considered relevant is that residency rights be incorporated into the constitution.

In the context of the United States' "melting pot syndrome", Nigerian citizens should live and work anywhere in Nigeria. The melting pot idea, if applicable, will describe Nigeria as a whole, which does not necessarily mean that ethnic groups will give up their religions, languages, memories, custom, music and culture. Rather, it will strengthen and foster national unity/integration. Even more pertinent is the fact that the idea of citizenship has now assumed a new meaning and effect; hence, the concept of global citizenship. Embracing global citizenship will not only douse the "indigenes" and "settlers" tension, but also promote national development and strengthen Nigeria's national security.

Government should take action whenever there is a problem before it gets out of hand, and people should not take the law into their hands. In addition, there is a need to strengthen national institutions (including the security agencies) and programmes. There are some national institutions in the country, which express the Nigerian national idea of "one nation, one people and one destiny". In the same vein, there is a need for the residents in Nigeria, either "native" or "settler", to be tolerant and accommodating of other ethnic groups. This can be made possible through consistent public awareness campaigns by political, community and ethno-religious leaders. At the same time, government should provide employment for the youths. This is because most of the indigeneship

and citizenship crises were caused by unemployed youths with the support of elites. Therefore, every Nigerian citizen should be empowered economically at the national level. In addition, peace education should be incorporated into all levels of formal education in the country.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the challenges of indigeneship and citizenship crises to Nigeria's national security are multifarious; hence they require adequate security measures (military and non-military). While not denying the unending indigeneship and citizenship crises in Nigeria, it is imperative to note that the protection of Nigeria's national security cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the strategies identified for mitigating the challenges of indigeneship and citizenship crises to Nigeria's national security should be adhered to. Thus, engendering peace, security and stability is a task which must be accomplished by all Nigerians for the survival of democracy and sustainable development.

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