

# THE PLACE OF ILORIN EMIRATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

EDITED BY:

**O. Y. ABDUL-HAMID**

**M. A. ADEDIMEJI**

**A. L. AZEEZ**

**A. I. ABDULKABIR**

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## NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

**ABDULKABIR**, I. Asmau Ph.D. (Mrs) is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ABDULKAREEM**, Abdulrazzaq is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ABDULRAHEEM**, M. O. Ph.D. (Mrs), is a Lecturer in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ABDUL-YAKEEN**, Mufutau Ayinla Ph.D, is a Lecturer in the Department of Economics and Development Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences, Kwara State University, Malete, Nigeria.

**ABUBAKAR**, Shehu Ahmad Tijani is a Lecturer in the Department of Private and Property Law, Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ADEDIMEJI**, Mahfouz A. is a Professor of English in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, and Vice-Chancellor, Ahman Pategi University, Patigi, Kwara State, Nigeria and, Nigeria.

**ADEDOKUN-SHITTU**, N. A. Ph.D. (Mrs) is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Technology, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ADEPOJU**, Adewale Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**ADEYANJU**, Adewumi Raphael is a Lecturer in the Department of Languages and Linguistics, King's University, Ode Omu, Osun State, Nigeria.

**AJALA**, Adeola Oluwatoyosi Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of Languages and Linguistics, King's University, Ode Omu, Osun State, Nigeria.

**ALI**, Miqdad Ali is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, History and Heritage Studies, Kwara State University, Malete, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ALIYU**, Afolabi Yahyah is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Oro, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**AUDU**, Jamiu Kolawole is a Lecturer in the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, Nigeria.

**AYINDE**, Salihu Mosadioluwa is the Head of Product and Market Development, Nigerian Export Promotion Council Export Assistance Office, Ilorin, and President, United Citizens Forum for Social Reformation, an Ilorin-based Non-Governmental Organization (NGO).

**BABATUNDE**, Abosede O. Ph.D, is a Reader at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**BABATUNDE**, Layiwola Isiaka is of the Directorate of Corporate Affairs, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**IBRAHIM**, Erubu Lukman is a Ph.D. candidate at Katsina State University, Principal Cultural Officer and Head of Research and Documentation Unit, North West Zonal Office, at the National Institute for Cultural Orientation, Katsina, Nigeria.

**IDRIS**, Ridwan is a postgraduate student of History and International Relations, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**IMAM**, Abubakar is a Deputy Editor, *Unilorin Bulletin*, and staff member of the Directorate of Corporate Affairs, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**IMAM**, Ibrahim Ph.D. is a Reader in the Department of Public Law, Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**IMAM OMOLOSO**, Aisha Ph.D. (Mrs) is a Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**IMAM-TAMIM**, M. K. Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**ISHOWO-ISIAKA**, Abdullateef is of the African Centre for Peace Research, Empowerment and Documentation (ACPRED), Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**ISIAKA**, Atanda is an Independent Researcher and Private Legal Practitioner based in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**ISMAEL**, Funsho Yusuph Esq. is a Lecturer in the Department of Private and Property Law, Faculty of Law, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**JIMBA**, Abdulhameed Ishola is an Assistant Registrar at the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**KANKAWI**, Uthman Idrees Ph.D. is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Arabic, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin Nigeria.

**KANNIKE**, Uthman Mohammed Mustapha is a Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies, Federal University of Lafia, Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

**LA'ARO**, Oba Abdulkadir Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of Mass Communication, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**MUHAMMAD**, Nasiru Adeoye is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Islamic Studies, Kwara State College of Education, Oro, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**MUSTAPHA**, Adam Ishola is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**OGUNSAKIN**, Oluwasegun is of the Institute of Peace, Security and Governance, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

**OLAWALE**, Yemisi is a postgraduate student of History and International Relations, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**SALIHU**, Alabi Hammed is a Ph.D. candidate at the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**SALIU, HASSAN A.** is the President of the Nigerian Political Science Association of Nigeria and Professor of Political Science at the Department of Political Science, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

**SARAKI**, Akeem Aderayo is an Assistant Research Fellow I, Department of Politics and Governance, Faculty of Humanities, Management and Social Sciences, Kwara State University, Malete, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**SULEIMAN**, Yusuf is a Lecturer in the Department of Educational Management and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria.

**YAHYA**, Shaykh Ahmad is a Lecturer in the Department of Religions, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

**YUSUF**, Abdulqadir Aishat is a Lecturer in the Department of Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin, Nigeria.

## **MEMBERS OF THE BOOK PUBLICATION COMMITTEE**

- 1-Prof. O.Y. Abdul-Hamid
- 2- Prof. M. A. Adedimeji
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## FOREWORD

### THE PLACE OF ILORIN EMIRATE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIA

Ilorin Emirate, as a frontline socio-political structure, has been an important stakeholder in the Nigerian political system, contributing significantly to the development of Nigerian democracy through active involvement and participation of its sons and daughters in shaping the Nigerian polity. This book, *“The Place of Ilorin Emirate in the Development of Nigeria”*, the fifth in the book of readings series of the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin, is a wide, rigorous and intellectual interrogation of Ilorin Emirate’s political and socioeconomic activities as a crucial focal point of Nigeria politics and development. The essence of the book is to underscore Ilorin Emirate’s political history and socioeconomic dynamics within the context of Nigeria’s development. As it is established throughout the book, Ilorin Emirate’s unique composition, resulting from its cosmopolitan and multi-ethnic orientation, has produced many exemplary leaders that have contributed immensely to nation building in Nigeria. To this end, the Emirate has a history of active political participation that cannot be over-emphasized in its significance and role, particularly as it relates to the shaping of the sociopolitical history of the nation.

Whether we are talking about the unforgettable contest between the Northern Progressive Party (NPC) and the Action Group (AG) (that formed an alliance with the Talakapapapo Movement) or the catalytic role of Pakata dynasty in sprouting and building sons and daughters that enthusiastically partook in political process, Ilorin Emirate’s impact on the Nigerian political destiny cannot be ignored. Whether we are dissecting the activities of the Ilorin Emirate Development Union (IEDPU), as a hometown association, in bridging the gap between the government and the society or we are interrogating the impactful role of the Emirate’s traditional structure in building and maintaining social cohesion, and ultimately peaceful co-existence, we cannot underestimate the effect of the precepts or models that Ilorin Emirate offered as a panacea to the recurring ethno-religious violence being perpetrated by radical groups across Nigeria. Indeed, the influence of democratic engagements in Ilorin Emirate on the educational system in the Emirate cannot also be over-emphasized. All these and many other remarkable political issues or praxes, are critically presented and examined in this 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Centre for Ilorin Studies Book of Readings. The conclusion from the divergent examination and analyses in this book provides overwhelming and convincing corroboration to the fact that: the trajectory of democracy and the economy of Nigeria cannot be complete without full appreciation of the roles and active involvement of Ilorin Emirate.

The overarching question one of the authors of the chapters in this book asked is: what is the impact of both the dominance and visibility of Ilorin Emirate

on the political terrain of the country and level of development? Although the author aligned himself with the second perspective of the two opposing answers he offered for proper interrogation. I believe that the Emirate is highly regarded in the Nigerian political affairs; and, through its active political participation, it is getting its own fair share of national dividends. The gains might not yet be full and gratifying enough at the moment, there is every indication that the Emirate is not missing out. Nobody can deny the prestige and reputation of Ilorin Emirate in the political terrain, history, calculations, and schemes of this country. I agree with the author that there are great opportunities that have come on the way of the Emirate, which had not been adequately utilized for the good of the largest number of the people of the Emirate. Nonetheless, I believe that there are still many more opportunities that will accrue from the persistent involvement of the Emirate in the already deeply entrenched democratic process in the country. I do not have any doubt that the opportunities will be much more judiciously used for the greater development of the Emirate and for the greater good of the greatest number of the people in the Emirate.

If I were to choose one word to describe this 5<sup>th</sup> edition of the Centre for Ilorin Studies book series, it would definitely be 'awesome.' Editors of the book, headed by the Director of the Centre, Professor Oba Abdul-Hamid, have invested lavishly their personal, intellectual and professional resources to secure and edit this representative array of high-quality contributions. The authors of the chapters in this book, who are, indeed, intellectual path breakers and custodians of the evolution, history and dynamics of Ilorin Emirate, are also unselfish in crafting essays that have deepened our understanding of what makes Ilorin Emirate, unique, tick and progressive.

When calls were made for presentations at the Centre's 5<sup>th</sup> Biennial National Conference, it was envisaged that the 'outcome of the intellectual engagement will no doubt have far-reaching implications for the development of the Nigerian democracy and the understanding of the role of Ilorin Emirate in that developmental process.' It was also envisaged back then that 'the ideas, reflections and understanding that would result from the conference would go a long way in positioning Ilorin Emirate for self-assessment that would facilitate the consolidation of its gains of discovery or throw up the need to chart a new course of recovery and relevance.' It is, to me, incontestable that the chapters in this book have generously provided the anticipated concrete, authentic, profound scholarly reflections that have, indeed, satisfied our yearnings for a deeper intellectual understanding of the position and contribution of Ilorin Emirate in the political and economic spheres of our nation. This book is, therefore, a concrete manifestation of the continued efforts of the Centre for Ilorin Studies at enhancing academic endeavors aimed at understanding the unique history, potentials, setting, epistemic and spiritual preeminence of Ilorin Emirate.

I am highly excited to read in this book, many special contributions from intellectual giants across different fields. I am, indeed, pleased that our aspiration in establishing the Centre for Ilorin Studies in 2012 as a multidisciplinary centre is being fulfilled with the traversed ideas and information from different perspectives and paradigms that I have seen in this book. The special contributors are not only reputable researchers in their own different fields, but also sentinels of the history, values and heritages of Ilorin Emirate. I, therefore, appreciate them, especially for remaining engaged through the process that consummated this book of readings. I equally appreciate the reviewers who, through their rigorous review, feedback and guidance, immensely enhanced the quality of all the chapters in this book.

Most importantly, the editors of the book are highly commended. They must have gone through a rigorous process in ultimately making appropriate selections, out of the many other equally quality submissions, to constitute this invaluable Book. They are also commended for the painstaking editing works that had gone into this book to make its reading strikingly smooth and easy.

Undoubtedly, a good reading is in store for the potential readers and researchers, who should take advantage of the verified facts, information and data that dotted this book. I want to assure all readers, stakeholders and researchers, whose interest is passionately on the history and heritages of Ilorin Emirate, that the book series from the Centre for Ilorin Studies is permanently a tradition and an enduring symbol of the Centre's commitment to academic documentation of the trajectory of Ilorin Emirate. It will never die. Rather, it will continually grow or increase in quality year-in year-out.

Long live Ilorin Emirate and its heritage!

***Professor Sulyman Age Abdulkareem  
Vice-Chancellor,  
University of Ilorin,  
Ilorin, Nigeria,  
May 2022***

## PREFACE

A city of destiny, Ilorin has remained for many decades one of the iconic and amazing state capitals in Nigeria. Apart from its uniqueness as the geographical confluence of the northern and southern parts of the complex Nigerian state, the landmark achievements the city has recorded in all gamuts of national development have made it a reference point and standard bearer of no easy comparison.

In politics and education, scholarship and craft, diversity and harmonious coexistence, Ilorin is a city to beat and it is little wonder that it has been developing in geometric proportions as it continues to magnetise the best to itself. It is apposite to say that today, many topmost professionals and leaders of thought and industry have their educational and career roots in Ilorin. The distinction of Ilorin, its cultural vitality, religious dexterity, ethnic diversity and cosmopolitan identity have coalesced to make it a melting pot of sociopolitical dynamism and subject of academic enquiry.

This foregoing reality must have informed the thoughtfulness of the University of Ilorin in establishing the Centre for Ilorin Studies in 2011 during the tenure of Prof. Is-haq Oloyede as Vice-Chancellor. Under its successive Directors, from the mercurial Prof. A. G. A. S. Oladosu, who laid a solid foundation for the Centre at inception, through the astute leaderships provided by Prof. Zakariyau Oseni and Prof. Ibrahim Jawondo, to the dynamic Prof. Abdul-Hamid Oba, who is deepening the culture of excellence now, the Centre has blazed the trail in many areas and justified its establishment.

One of the areas in which the Centre has carved a niche for itself is the organisation of annual/biennial conferences for critically engaging in discourses that ignite value and subsequently publishing books that edify scholarship and learning. Of all the Centres in the university, the Centre for Ilorin Studies appears to be the most consistent in the publication of books, a legacy that should be sustained by future leaders of the Centre.

So unstoppable is the Centre in its avowed mission and impressive commitment to its ideals that the combined forces of COVID-19 lockdown and strike of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) could not stop it from planning and executing its conference project in 2020. The outcome of the innovative conference, one of the first of its kind in hybridising virtual and physical modes of presentation in the country as a response to the much-touted 'new normal', forms the bulk of this intellectually stimulating volume.

*The Place of Ilorin Emirate in the Development of Nigeria* is a rich collection of latest studies in the dynamics of politics, socioeconomics, history, education, religion, law and shariah, peaceful development, cultural and general affairs of Ilorin Emirate. Though the book thematises political and

socioeconomic components of development, it offers refreshing perspectives in allied areas that would enrich the researcher and excite the perceptive reader. It provides a window for viewing the Ilorin Emirate as a raving phenomenon in the Nigerian polity from multidisciplinary lenses while providing pathways out of our contemporary challenges.

Perhaps because Islam, which is dear to Ilorin Emirate, is a religion of five pillars and Muslims pray five times a day, it is stylistically important that the book is divided into five sections. Each section addresses a thematic area with relevant chapters devoted to interrogating the issues that propelled the intellectual curiosity of the authors. The expertise deployed to the preparation of the chapters is proportional to the adroitness of the scholars in handling their subject-matters, leaving different impressions and shades of colour in the psyche of careful readers.

As a result of its gainful multidisciplinary approach, since a society is not always monolithic, this book certainly offers something beneficial to everyone at the broadest level while it is particularly nourishing to researchers and scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences. Definitely, all those interested in the crosscurrents of history, culture and development of Ilorin Emirate both as ends in themselves and means to more ends will find the book an invaluable resource material.

While congratulating the Centre on yet another eye-popping achievement recorded through the publication of this book, one also salutes the 39 authors on the discipline, diligence and dedication that they invested in writing the papers. It is hoped that researchers in particular and the reading public in general will find the book relevant to the understanding of issues that undergird the preeminence of the “the frontier Emirate”, as Danmole (1980) aptly describes Ilorin Emirate, which this book highlights and preserves.

As a resource material of multidimensional benefits, this volume is not only good for scholars and students in various tertiary institutions in Nigeria but also beneficial to all sons and daughters of Ilorin Emirate and those who hold episteme dearly. It is educative, informative and functionally refreshing.

Happy reading and best wishes to the Centre and the University!

**Prof. Mahfouz A. Adedimeji, fspsp**  
**Vice-Chancellor,**  
**Ahman Pategi University, Patigi,**  
**May, 2022**

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## THE BOOK

*The Place of Ilorin Emirate in the Development of Nigeria* is a rich collection of latest studies in the dynamics of politics, socioeconomics, history, education, religion, law and shariah, peaceful development, cultural and general affairs of Ilorin Emirate. Though the book thematises political and socioeconomic components of development, it offers refreshing perspectives in allied areas that would enrich the researcher and excite the perceptive reader. It provides a window for viewing the Ilorin Emirate as a raving phenomenon in the Nigerian polity from multidisciplinary lenses while providing pathways out of our contemporary challenges....

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## THE EDITORS

**Prof. O.Y. Abdul-Hamid** is the Director of the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. A professor of Business Law, he is formerly the National Secretary of the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU).

**Prof. M. A. Adedimeji** is the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of Ahman Pategi University, Patigi, Kwara state. A professor of English, he is formerly the Director of the Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

**Prof. L. A. Azeez** is the Dean of Communication and Information Sciences, University of Ilorin. A professor of Mass Communication, he is formerly the Director of the Advancement Centre, University of Ilorin, Ilorin.

**Dr (Mrs) I. A. Abdulkabir** is a Research Fellow at the Centre for Ilorin Studies, University of Ilorin, and Secretary to the Technical Committee of the Centre.

## CHAPTER 16

### RADICALISED ARMED GROUPS AND THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION IN NIGERIA

ADEDIMEJI Mahfouz A., Ph.D.<sup>1</sup> & BABATUNDE Abosede O., Ph.D.<sup>2</sup>

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#### INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the motives, goals and aspirations of radicalised armed groups that have been unleashing lethal violence against the Nigerian state. The violent onslaught of these armed groups often poses a major threat to the country's security landscape and the quest for democratic consolidation. The chapter also explores how the excessive use of force by government as a measure to counter the violent confrontation by the radicalised armed groups, with little efforts to address the perceived grievances of the groups, has worsened the deadly atrocities of these groups against the citizens, infrastructure and security agencies that are the direct victims of their violent activities. The ineptitude of the state apparatus to address the insecurity undermines government's legitimacy due to its inability to safeguard the lives of its citizenry and poses a major threat to the sustainability of Nigeria's fledgling democracy. The Nigeria's fourth republic which commenced in 1999 is so far the longest period of democratic rule in the country's political history. Previous democratic experiences have been short-lived due to series of military coups and counter-coups that characterised Nigeria's political life since the attainment of independence in 1960.

In this present democratic rule, the rise and proliferation of radicalised armed groups linked to various ethno-religious groups such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Movement for the Sovereign state of Biafra (MASSOB), Oodua People Congress (OPC), *Arewa Peoples Congress* (APC), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), armed bandits and *Boko Haram* that are operating in both the southern and northern parts of the country constitute a challenge to the government's legitimacy and monopoly of the use of force.

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<sup>1</sup>Mahfouz A. Adedimeji is a Professor in the Department of English, Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin, Nigeria & Vice-Chancellor, Ahman Pategi University, Patigi, Kwara State, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Centre for Peace and Strategic Studies, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

Security analysts have shown that government responses to the violent confrontations of the radicalised armed groups have been characterised by excessive use of coercion, without meaningful efforts to address the perceived grievances of these groups (Onuoha, 2016a; Kendhammar and McCain, 2018; Tar, 2019). The Nigerian government's coercive responses to rebellion by non-state actors can be understood as a conflict containment strategy of an unresponsive state institution lacking the political will to undertake critical governance reform to tackle mounting systemic imbalances of social inequalities and injustice that provoke grievances among the citizens and manifest along ethno-religious lines. The excessive use of force has also been characterised by widespread allegations of human rights abuses by the security agencies, which undermined the rule of law and due process, vital to democratic consolidation (Walker, 2016; Brechenmacher, 2019). This study argues that the violent agitations of the radicalised armed groups are linked to the struggles among the diverse ethno-religious groups for access to political and economic resources. Apart from the ethno-religious dimension, the underlying motive, goals and aspiration of these armed groups. While these radicalised armed groups have linked their grievances to struggles for equity, fairness and social justice for their ethno-religious groups, these claims can be understood at the surface. It is important to probe beneath the surface to be able to decipher the underlying motives of these groups. Crucially, the nature of Nigeria's contentious intergroup relations has shown that the political elites and non-state actors championing the struggles of their ethnic groups for access to a share of the country's economic and political resources usually have self-serving personal motives (Ekanola, 2006; Mahmudat, 2010; Watts, 2017). These political gladiators camouflage as ethno-religious agitators, and capitalise on the weak governance structure of the Nigerian state to mobilise along ethno-religious lines, clamour for resistance against the State over poor access to public goods, infrastructure and other basic needs and services.

Nigeria contends with endemic poverty, unemployment, poor social amenities and infrastructure, with widespread disparity in the access to these vital resources among the ethno-religious groups in the country (Matfess, 2020). Studies have demonstrated that the political behaviour of the leaders of the ethno-religious groups claiming to be representative of their groups have cast serious doubts on their true motives (Varin, 2016; Watts, 2017; Babatunde, 2017). Their rhetoric, tactics and actions belie their claims of agitators for social justice for their ethno-religious groups, while it portrays their personal motives for self-enrichment. This poses pertinent questions about the motives, goals and aspiration of these radicalised armed groups. It also highlights the need for the government to rethink the strategy of conflict containment that is based on excessive use of force, characterised by widespread human rights abuses and weak institutional measures to address daunting systemic imbalances that they

are armed to champion their ethno-religious campaign of violence against the state.

In Nigeria, struggles for access to economic and political resources have been fiercely contentious among the diverse ethno-religious groups given the claims of exclusive control to these resources by the ethnic groups in power and their patronage network, while other ethnic groups are marginalised and deprived of benefiting from national resources (Osaghae and Suberu, 2005; Attoh and Soyombo, 2011). Nigeria is made of over two hundred and seventy ethnic groups, categorized as majority and minority ethnic groups with varying degrees of political status, with the existence of mainly three majority ethnic groups, referred to as the Hausa-Fulani, Ibo (Igbo) and Yoruba (Paden, 2008; Abiodun, 2012; Adedimeji, 2016). The other ethnic groups are regarded as the minority ethnic groups, and their minority status depends on their population strength. The ethnic diversity also manifests along religious line between the predominantly Muslim northern region populated by the Hausa/Fulani majority ethnic group and other minority groups and the predominantly Christian Southern Nigeria where the Yoruba and Ibo majority ethnic groups are located, apart from many other minority ethnic groups.

The intense competition among the various ethnic groups for political and economic resources is very fierce and vicious given the widespread disparity in the distribution of these resources. The data derived from the 2019/2020 Nigerian Living Standards Survey of the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics indicated that 82.9 million (40.1%) Nigerians are poor. From the data, it could be discerned that, there is disparity in the level of poverty in the North and South, with higher poverty rate experienced in the North than the South of Nigeria. The report of the Human Development Index (HDI) also projects a similar trend in which the Northeast recorded the lowest level of human development characterized by high levels of economic and infrastructural deprivation (Mustapha & Meagher, 2020). These data provide insights into the disparity in the distribution of socio-economic resources across the regions cohabited by diverse ethno-religious groups.

The low human development in the Northern region raises some posers when viewed in the context of the region's extended access to and control of political power at the Centre, more than any other ethno-religious group in the country's political history. The Northern political elite have controlled political power at the Centre for more than three decades out of the six decades since Nigeria's independence during the first, second the aborted third republic and series of military rules. At the same time, the persisting low human development in the northern region despite its access to and control of political and economic resources seems to buttress the argument that the ethno-religious agitators like the radicalized armed groups usually resorted to radicalising their ethno-religious groups based on their quest to gain access to political and economic resources, for

their personal self-preservation, rather than on the basis of any real desire for the protection of the interest and welfare of their social groups.

Following the introduction, the next section conceptualises democratic consolidation, highlighting the key principles that are essential to the promotion of democratic ideals, and how the Nigerian realities align with these ideals. This is followed by the narrative of the rise and proliferation of radicalised armed groups in Nigeria, providing insight into their motives, goals and aspirations. The subsequent section discusses the structural issues that intersect with the rise and proliferation of these radicalised armed groups in Nigeria's present democratic dispensation. In the following sections, the governance challenges that provide an enabling environment for the gestation of armed groups are explored. In addition, the government responses to counter the violent confrontations of the armed groups and the implications of the weak conflict management approaches are examined. The concluding section offers a critical analysis of the implications of the weak structure of the Nigerian governance system for the emergence and proliferation of radicalised armed groups and the significant challenge that they pose to the country's security landscape, and the sustainability of the fledgling democracy.

## CONCEPTUALISING DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION

Democracy is unthinkable in the absence of viable political parties. Parties are expected to participate in the political socialization of the electorate, contribute to the accumulation of political power, facilitate recruitment of political leadership, and serve as a unifying force in a divided polity (Omotola, 2010). Democratic consolidation entails the challenge of making new democracies secure, extending their life expectancy beyond the short term and making them immune against the threat of authoritarian regression and of building dams against eventual reverse waves (Azeez, 2006). Therefore, for democracy to be consolidated, it must satisfy certain conditions given as: Popular legitimization, diffusion of democratic values, neutralization of antisystem actors, civilian supremacy over the military, elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, organization of functional interest, stabilization of electoral rules, routinization of politics, decentralization of state power, introduction of mechanisms of direct democracy, judicial reform, alleviation of poverty and economic stabilization (Nwanegbo and Alumona, 2011 p.127).

Scholars' definitions of democratic consolidation are based on two conceptions of democracy. One is a "minimalist conception," emphasizing procedural or formal democracy. The other is a "maximalist conception," focusing on the outcomes of politics, such as institutionalization of political institutions, social justice, and economic equality (Lee, 2007). Schmitter defines the minimalist conception of a consolidated democratic regime as:

The process of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms, and contingent solutions that have emerged during the transition into relations of cooperation and competition that are reliably known, regularly practiced, and voluntarily accepted by those persons or collectives that participate in democratic governance (1992 p.424).

Linz (1978 p.158) asserts that a consolidated democracy is one in which “none of the major political actors, parties, or organized interests, forces, or institutions consider(s) that there is any alternative to the democratic process to gain power and that no political institutions or groups have a claim to veto the action of democratically elected decision makers.” To put it simply, democracy must be seen as ‘the only game in town’ while democratic consolidation is about regime maintenance and regarding the key political institutions as the only legitimate framework for political contestation and adherence to the democratic rules of the game (Ogundiya, 2009).

The violent activities of radicalised armed groups pose major threat to democratic consolidation because they challenge the legitimacy of state institutions in a way that can truncate the sustainability of the democratic process. The perceived grievances of the armed groups expose the weakness or fragility of state institutions which provide the breeding environments for the gestations of such armed groups. Complicating the situation is the seeming incapacity of the state institutions to demonstrate genuine commitment to addressing the perceived structural challenges in the governance system at the root of the armed groups’ rebellion (Babatunde, Adedimeji, Raji, Maweu & Githigaro (2022). The allegation of human rights abuses that trailed the coercive responses of the government’s security institutions and the lack of accountability for such human right violations undermined the ideals of democracy and its sustainability.

## **THE ADVENT OF RADICALISED ARMED GROUPS IN NIGERIA**

This section provides insight into the rise and proliferation of radicalised armed groups in Nigeria political history. From the period of independence, Nigeria has been contending with acts of rebellion by non-state armed groups over claims of perceived inequality and marginalisation. The first major armed group emerged in the oil-rich Niger Delta region in the southern part of the country. The Niger Delta is inhabited by the ethnic minority groups on whose land the oil resources that constitute the mainstay of the Nigerian economy are located. In the Niger Delta, the resistance against the control of the oil resources and the lopsided nature of revenue allocation formula that marginalised the region where the oil is located served as the background for the rise of radicalised armed group. As

Olurode (1999) explains, for the ethnic minority in the Niger Delta, the Nigeria's military rulers' promulgation of an obnoxious law that transferred the control of oil resources to the federal government heightened the fear of domination by the majority ethnic group in control of power, which persisted even after some of the half-hearted measures put in place such as the creation of development agencies tasked with the development of the region by the government. The ethnic minorities in the Niger Delta are aggrieved by the monopolising of their oil resources by the central government and the attendant environmental dislocation that erodes the sources of their livelihood, which derives from farming and fishing, thereby exposing the people to endemic poverty. This paradoxical situation of poverty in the midst of abundant oil wealth propelled a young Ijaw activist named Isaac Boro to form the first armed group, Niger Delta Volunteer Force, in 1966. His purpose was to challenge what he described as poor governance and economic deprivation of his people in the new Nigerian democratic experiment.

In the declaration of what is today known as seven days war, Boro stated thus:

*Economic development of the area is certainly the most appalling aspect. There is not even a single industry. The only fishery industry which ought to be situated in a properly riverine area is sited about 80 miles inland at Aba. The boatyard at Opobo had its headquarters at Enugu ... Personnel in these industries and also in the oil stations are predominantly non-Ijaw. Most of the youths were so frustrated with the general neglect that they were ready for any action led by an outstanding leader to gain liberty.... we were clenched in tyrannical chains and led through a dark alley of perpetual political and social deprivation. Strangers in our own country! Inevitably, therefore, the day would have to come for us to fight for our long-denied right to self-determination.*

Boro and others recruited young men to their cause under the umbrella of their organization, Niger Delta Volunteers Force (NDVF). They eventually set up a military camp at Taylor Creek where their recruits were trained on how to use firearms and explosives. On February 23, 1966, the militants moved out from their Touton Ban camp and attacked a police station at Yenagoa, raided the armoury and kidnapped some officers, including the police officer in command of the station. They also blew up oil pipelines, engaged the police in a gunfight and declared the Niger Delta an independent republic. That marked the beginning of the Niger Delta struggle and armed struggle against the Nigerian political entity.

*From the time of Boro till the return of democracy in 1999, the situation of things appeared to worsen especially with the ruthlessness of military regimes that dominated the period.* Nigerian political history is dominated by prolonged military rule during which no ethnic movements or radical Islamic group emerged to challenge its authority for fear of brutal repression. The Nigerian democratization experiments have midwived three republics. However, the crises which have rendered the Nigerian democracy palpable still persists (Babatunde, 2011).

*The return to democracy in 1999 actually gave a fillip to the emergence of many armed groups as the freedom provided by democracy allowed the setting up of various ethnic militias to drive home the real or perceived marginalization of their people.* Nigeria has been battling with ethnic, religious and communal conflicts since the return to civilian rule in 1999. It would seem that the transition to democratic rule which provided the citizens freedom to express their loyalties more openly became a threat to the central control of power.

Several militant groups emerged, such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF), Niger Delta Vigilante (NDV), Niger Delta People's Volunteers Force (NDPVF) and most recently, Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Most of the groups' main tool is oil bunkering and bombing of oil facilities, thereby causing massive short fall in the oil supply. In the South East, there is the resurgence of the separatist agitation of the Igbo under the auspice of the Movement of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and IPOB. These separatist sentiments and agitations of MASSOB and IPOB activists are premised on the presumption of their leaders that the Igbo can never realise their highest political aspirations of becoming the president within the Nigerian federation. The activities of these radicalised groups have permeated the Nigerian society to the extent that the violent campaigns continue to challenge the legitimacy of the state. Apart from those in the Niger Delta, Nigeria has also witnessed the emergence of radicalised armed groups like Oodua People's Congress in the Southwest and the extremely violent Boko Haram in the Northeast.

In the Niger Delta, one of the militant groups, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), claims to expose exploitation and oppression of the people of the Niger Delta and devastation of the natural environment by public-private partnerships between the Nigerian government and firms that explore oil in the region. *The Economist* has described the organization as one that "portrays itself as a political organization that wants a greater share of Nigeria's oil revenues to go to the impoverished region that sits atop the oil." Their stated goals are to localize the control of Nigeria's oil and to secure reparations from the federal government for pollution caused by the oil industry. In 2007, President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua granted amnesty to all the repentant militants and gave them compensation. Most of them embraced ceasefire or disbanded voluntarily. While this move was temporarily effective, it

will only take a matter of time before other militants emerge, unless proactive steps are taken to address the root cause of militancy, linked to poor governance. The motives, goals and aspirations of these radicalised armed groups remain contentious, given that those who have gained access to and control political and economic resources hardly utilise them for the betterment of their social groups. At the same time, these armed groups have exploited the weakness of state institutions that breed social inequalities and injustice to mobilise their groups for resistance against the state. Given the deep-rooted ethno-religious cleavages in Nigeria, many citizens identify first and foremost as their ethnic and religious groups where they put their loyalty against that of nationhood.

Indeed, the rise of radicalised armed groups over perceived grievance and marginalisation has resulted in an increase in the level of political violence and conflicts in which the government has not been able to effectively tackle but rather resort to coercive measures to suppress them. This situation undermines the rule of law and due process which are vital elements of democracy. The rise of radicalised armed groups in the guise of ethnic and religious organisations and militias constitutes a major security challenge and threatens the sustainability of Nigeria's fledgling democracy.

## **EXPLORING THE STRUCTURAL ISSUES THAT UNDER GIRD RADICALIZED ARMED GROUPS IN NIGERIA**

There are several reasons that can be attributed to the emergence and growth of radicalized armed groups in Nigeria. These include: High rate of unemployment, social and political marginalisation, environmental degradation, poverty, ignorance of the full teachings of religion, lack of good examples from political and religious leaders, neglect of citizens' welfare by government, misuse of religion by politicians, corruption and social injustice, manipulation of sentiments by extremist religious leaders, undue involvement in religious matters by the government, insensitivity to religious and cultural diversity, coercive approach of the Nigerian government to the activities of the armed militias.

Many of these factors have fueled the emergence of radicalized armed groups common across Nigeria. Political gladiators have been able to capitalise on the structural condition through political manipulation of religion, ethnicity, and disputes between supposed local groups and "settlers" over distribution of public resources, deep-seated economic and employment inequalities, which have all combined to further destabilize the country. Across Nigeria, people suffer from pervasive poverty and unequal distribution of public resources. The high poverty rate in the country in which the northern part is the worst hit largely explains the rise of the radicalised armed groups particularly those operating in the poorest areas in the North.

As far back as a decade ago, the Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics in January 2012 released a report showing that the percentage of Nigerians living in "absolute poverty" had increased nationwide from 55 to 61 percent between 2004 and 2010. The report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2013), ranked Nigeria 152<sup>nd</sup> out of 187 countries on the 2013 Human Development Index. It has been estimated that as many as 70% of Nigerians live beneath the poverty line, and the average life expectancy is less than 48 years. The report of the National Bureau of Statistics estimated that 22.6 million Nigerians were unemployed in 2014. In the 2019 human development index, Nigeria ranked among the countries with low human development with a score of 0.534 in 2018. These data indicate the trend in the structural conditions in the country which have continued to deteriorate over time. Therefore, one can begin to understand the magnitude of the governance challenges in the Nigeria.

This, perhaps, informed Majuk's (2012) contention that there is a strong relationship between mass poverty and Islamic radicalism in Northern Nigeria from the time of the nineteenth century jihad to the present Boko Haram phenomenon. According to him, whenever corruption, injustice and oppression become intense resulting in mass poverty and frustration, a fertile environment is created for the emergence of a radical form of Islam drawing support from the masses and targeted at the established authority. In Nigeria, despite the huge revenue generated from oil wealth, the governance deficit manifests in inability to provide the basic needs for the citizens, leading to endemic and widespread poverty, unemployment and human rights abuses. These structural conditions have provided a breeding ground for the emergence, rise and proliferation of radicalised armed groups which are using this situation to promote their self-serving agenda to corner part of the national resources for their personal uses.

This army of poor and unemployed youths would soon become easy tools to be exploited and recruited into any movement that promises improved living condition. Another consequence of the deepening poverty across the country is the growing crime rate which has manifested in kidnapping and other violent crimes especially in the impoverished Niger Delta region where various armed groups have emerged. This situation also permeates the northern region where the Boko Haram crisis, farmer-herder conflict and armed banditry have become rife. The government security agencies have been rendered incapable of tackling the mounting security challenges. Moreover, the media have also complicated the situation through sensational reportage and misinformation that could inflame ethnic and religious sentiments (Stroehlein, 2012; Varin, 2016). This situation poses risks not only to the country's fragile democracy but also to internal security, stability and development.

The elections which ushered in the democratic rule in 1999 also complicated the agitations of the radicalised armed groups and the quest for national unity and stability as a result of the massive electoral fraud and violence.

Nigeria has been battling the challenges of electoral malpractices and violence such that the 1999, 2003 and the 2007 elections were globally adjudged by local and international observers to be marred by electoral fraud and violence (International Crisis Group, 2007). While the 2011 election was adjudged by both local and international observers to have been fairly better than previous elections in Nigeria, the North loss of control of power at the Centre when Dr Goodluck Jonathan, a southerner from a minority ethnic group, was elected President. This led to intensified agitation by the Arewa Peoples Congress in the North and culminated in the violence that broke out in the region. Even after Jonathan assumed leadership and during his administration, Nigeria experienced intensified agitations from the ethnic nationalists in the North, which was heightened by the violent atrocities by the Boko Haram extremists (Matfess, 2020). This situation led to the political conspiracy which made some people to insinuate that the violent activities of Boko Haram were sponsored by the northern political elite to destabilise the Jonathan administration (Kendhammar and McCain, 2018). Worthy of note is the relative peace witnessed in the ethnic minority Niger Delta region where the activities of the armed militias abated during the Jonathan administrations (Watts, 2017). This has elicited debates among security analysts that the ensuing peace in the Niger Delta was due to the politics of amnesty programme for the youth militias through which economic reward was used to by the Jonathan administration (Watts, 2017). Despite the ensuing peace, it remains to be seen if Jonathan administration has tackled the structural challenges at the root of the ethnic agitation

In the build-up to the nationalelections of 2015, the pre-election violence that was rampant in the country heated ethno-religious tensions, capable of deepening the ethnic and religious cleavages in Nigeria thereby reversing the gains made by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in the electoral process and Nigeria's democracy. The situation was so dire that it raised fear among eminent Nigerians who quickly waded in before it escalated into a serious crisis. However, in spite of the high tension that preceded the 2015 elections, it was also adjudged by both local and international observers as a major improvement to previous elections in Nigeria and a further boost to the credibility of INEC and its determination to conduct free and fair elections. Remarkable was the peace initiatives of the National Peace Committee headed by General Abdulsalam Abubakar with other eminent Nigerians comprising retired military personnel, prominent traditional rulers, religious leaders, legal luminaries, renowned academics and representatives of the international community who significantly succeeded in dousing the ethno-religious crisis that would have accompanied the 2015 elections.

The inability of successive Nigerian governments to demonstrate political will power and commitment to tackle the widespread governance deficit that manifests in social inequalities and injustices along ethno-religious lines have been

the driving force behind the activities of the radicalized armed groups. Addressing ethno-religious rivalry through pro-active measures that is equitable, just and fair will lead to effective peace building. Democracy can only thrive and flourish in a free, calm, stable and peaceful environment where the actors in the political arena play their roles in a just and fair manner. The perennial ethno-religious crisis would have deepened; rather than mended the divisions in Nigerian society. The scope and scale of problems associated with ethnic and religious crisis exposed fundamental challenges confronting the Nigerian state which poses risks not only to the country's fragile democracy, but to Nigeria's national integration.

In the shift of power to the North through the election of President Buhari in 2015, there has been a threat of resurgence of violence by the ex-militants in the Niger Delta which has led to disruption in oil production and huge loss in revenues. Also, in the Southeast, the agitation by the Igbo through the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra recently resurfaced to an unprecedented dimension. As the country prepares for the 2023 election, there have been intensified ethnic agitations by the Odua Peoples Congress in the battle for supremacy among the ethnic groups for control of power in the next election. The intense agitations by the ethno-nationalist groups and the violent activities of the radicalised armed groups continue to heat up the polity and create a volatile security environment. The complexity of the challenge of radicalised armed group will require multifaceted and innovative approaches to its solution. There are numerous overlapping and interlinked issues that undergird the problem and create a vicious cycle of conflict and insecurity with far-reaching implications for the peaceful co-existence and unity of the Nigerian state.

## **GOVERNANCE AND THE SECURITY CRISIS**

Nigeria's governance crisis created the environment for the daunting threat posed by radicalized armed groups to the security landscape. The resurgence of hostility by the Niger Delta militants despite the Amnesty programme attests to the failure of successive government to demonstrate genuine commitment to tackle the grievance of armed groups. For instance, in the Niger Delta, a new militia, the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) publicly announced their existence in March 2016. The NDA bolstered their existence and relevance by carrying out series of attacks on oil-producing facilities in the Niger delta, causing the shutdown of oil terminals and a fall in Nigeria's oil production to its lowest level in twenty years. The attacks by NDA have caused Nigeria to fall behind Angola as Africa's largest oil producer while the reduced oil output has hampered the Nigerian economy. With Nigeria's revenue seemingly dependent on the oil industry, the NDA has given the nation cause to be on the edge. They are angry over what they consider the continued marginalization of the Niger Delta, the

unjust allocation of oil mining licenses to persons from non-oil producing areas and the hounding of officials and associates of the Jonathan administration, etc.

There is also some concern about environmental pollution, the scrapping of the Maritime University at Okerenkoko and undisguised discontent with the Buhari administration. While some had claimed that the former President, Goodluck Jonathan, formed the group himself, others have argued that the group emerged due to the failed re-election bid of the former president. Whatever the reason for their emergence, it is obvious that the root cause of the Niger Delta crisis is yet to be addressed. This root cause is no other than governance crisis. The several efforts to resolve the Niger Delta crisis has been cosmetic rather than serious and until government puts aside politics to tackle the problem, it is very unlikely that any efforts shall lead to permanent end to the Niger Delta struggle.

The government's seeming lack of determination, political will and weakness to contain violence activities of the radicalised armed groups constitute a dire threat to the positive trajectory of the democratic process. It is incontrovertible that the wave of violence by these armed groups is a daunting security challenge that typified the absence of the rule of law and weak institutions of governance in Nigeria (ICG, 2010). The ineffective efforts of the Nigerian security agencies in tackling the armed groups undermine the core values of democratic governance.

In addition, the accusation of human right abuses levelled against the security forces is a compromise on the rule of law and human rights. The institutions of government are collapsing as democracy in Nigeria has only ushered in election, not responsibility and accountability. By perpetuating a cycle of violence and brutality in the quest to stamp out the violent insurgency and extremism, the government is handing victory to the armed groups. The weakening of the institutions of the government and the loss of confidence in the state by the people are indications of the dismal state of the Nigerian nation.

The focus of the government on the use of military, while applying less of dialogue, in tackling the challenge is flawed. Rather, government should have applied a dual approach to decisively check the activities of the armed groups by reaching out to them so as to unravel the underlying interests that propel their acts of violence. This becomes imperative because the Nigerian government cannot afford to fold its arms given that the resolution of the armed insurrection is key to Nigeria's progress and democratic consolidation.

Therefore, given the weakening of the institution of government, there is a dire need for long term engagement and sustained efforts while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law for Nigeria to succeed in countering armed insurrection and the attendant threat to the fledging democratic process. Indeed, the government's focus on the military measures involving the militarisation of the affected states will not halt the threat posed by the armed groups as the present situation indicated. The coercive approach of the

government has further inflamed the armed groups such as the Boko Haram sect and the Niger Delta militants to continue the violence. For this reason, it is crucial to strengthen civilian's institutions and rule of law while addressing the underlying conditions that fuel insurrections (Babatunde, et. al., 2022).

The Government needs to summon the political will towards greater engagement with communities that are vulnerable to armed insurrections by addressing the underlying political and socioeconomic problems in the affected states and Nigeria as a whole. Economic reforms should be introduced to reduce poverty and create jobs for restive young school leavers and graduates who are readily mobilised as agents of political violence and electoral malfeasance. A lasting solution lies in genuine efforts to eliminate or at least drastically reduce poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. Issues such as the virtually collapsed northern economy, effective mechanisms for peaceful co-existence and integration, youth and women empowerment, ethnicity and indigene/settler syndrome, the almajiri syndrome and integration of Islamic and Western education systems, infrastructural deficits, other security challenges, rebuilding of the infrastructures destroyed in the violence as well as the entrenchment of democratic values should be urgently addressed.

The security agencies should be checked to prevent further human rights abuses and those found culpable should be sanctioned. The needed reform in the police in terms of recruitment, training and management is long overdue. The politicization of the security agencies should also be checkmated. Added to that, information sharing and synergy between security agencies seem to be limited and it is believed that intelligence is often withheld or fabricated to boost agencies' claims for greater slice of the budgetary pie. The media also has a role to play in giving an objective and conflict sensitive reportage that will serve to unite rather than accentuate the division in the society.

The issue of corruption has been widely identified as the bane of development in Nigeria. Government needs to be accountable and responsible enough to curb the rampant mismanagement of the oil wealth. One of the grievances which the Boko Haram exploited to solicit support from the many unemployed youth in the North is the corruption of the Nigerian elite. Corruption, sectionalism and bigotry are identified as the bane of national unity in Nigeria. Corruption is so entrenched in the country that it requires collective action in reducing the menace. Therefore, building of strong institutions is the only viable way to fight corruption and the political class must not interfere with the functions of such anti-graft institutions. Indeed, good governance is very vital to address not only the Boko Haram phenomenon but also the parlous state syndrome that is characteristic of Nigeria in this democratic dispensation.

Although Nigeria may have broken as a result of flawed and bad elections, the existing challenges need to be tackled in order to launch the country on the path of permanent and sustainable electoral change. The electoral process should

continue to be improved, and complaints and litigation should be resolved quickly. The proposals from the 2009 Uwais Electoral Reform Committee report should be widely published and reform efforts enhanced to make the system more inclusive. Nigeria has the resources and the capacity to entrench a culture of credible elections, as well as tackle the pervasive insecurity in the polity to guarantee a sustainable democracy which is attainable if the government can summon the political will to lead that effort. The signing into law of the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act, which guarantees the right of access of individuals and groups to information held by public institutions, would be an important step forward. Indeed, crucial reforms should be done with a more holistic, less piecemeal approach, with the full involvement of the Nigerian people, who have been at the receiving end of the security challenges.

It is, therefore, crucial for the government to address these core issues which are germane to a democratic response to the threat of armed insurrections, namely the protection of individuals and communities; the stabilization of existing conflicts and discontents; the countering of harmful and extremist ideologies; the deployment of adequate response to the economic and social insecurities that contribute to the growth of armed insurrection so that Nigeria's national instability and democratic challenges will not be fatally aggravated.

## PROACTIVE APPROACHES TO CURBING RADICALIZED ARMED GROUPS

The ineffective efforts of the Nigerian government to curb the violent activities of radicalised armed groups require that proactive solutions should be considered in addressing the challenge. One of such approaches is referred to as ***Marginalisation and isolation***: This approach is concerned with reducing the political and ideological influence of armed groups. The idea is to marginalise their world views and demands in public discourse and to isolate them – politically as well as physically – from actual or potential followers and their constituencies. For that scenario, a broad consensus is needed among political elites and societal groups not to deal with these actors and not to react to their violent provocations, but to continue an agreed political process. This approach is an option particularly for rather weak or already weakened actors such as smaller rebel groups, terrorists or marauders.

Another approach has to do with ***Enforcing splits and internal rivalry***: This option aims at fragmenting and splitting armed groups between more moderate forces and hardliners. This can be achieved by different means, be it the threat of using force indiscriminately, by offering secret deals to some key figures or by involving them in a political process, which would encourage them to leave their group or to transform it into a political movement. The strategy, however, can

result in the establishment of radical fringe and splinter groups, which may be even more extreme than the former unified group. Such fragmentation processes can often be observed with rebel or terrorist groups.

In addition, there is what is called ***Bribery and blackmail***: Members of armed groups being corrupted in a certain way – they may be forced or induced to cooperate or silenced through the offering of material incentives, i.e. economic resources or well-paid posts. In some cases, this may also involve attempts to blackmail or to intimidate leaders (e.g. threatening family members) in order to make them more likely to accept money or other offers. This strategy is politically and normatively questionable; however, in some cases it is indispensable for getting a peace process started in the first place. In particular, profit-driven actors, such as war lords or criminals have often been receptive to such a strategy.

## IMPLICATIONS OF ARMED GROUPS' ACTIVITIES

Nigeria's internal security has been significantly undermined by violent activities of armed non-state actors, largely made up of radicalised youth groups as foot soldiers. Prominent among these groups are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the 'Odua Peoples Congress (OPC), the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and more recently, Boko Haram, Ansaru, Kala-Kato, Ombatse and Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) among others.

While these groups have evolved over time and engaged in different forms of violent activities, what is common among them is the role of the youths as critical actors. In particular, Boko Haram has leveraged on the vulnerability of the Nigerian youths to deepen their process and drive for recruitment and radicalization. Many believe that the sympathizers of the group are mostly disaffected and unemployed youths who live in hostile environment, with challenges spanning economic, social, and political deprivations. The emergence of the Boko Haram has caused the climate of fear and insecurity.

Although the movement had incubated in Northern Nigeria since the early 2000s, it however attracted worldwide attention beginning from 26 July 2009, when it waged a violent anti-government uprising that killed over 800 people, including civilians, group members and security personnel. The revolt attracted one of the heaviest security crackdowns in Nigerian history. The five-day revolt ended on July 30, 2009 when Boko Haram's leader, Mohammed Yusuf, was captured and subsequently executed by the police while in their custody.

Since the 2009 uprising, the group's tactics have evolved from poorly planned open confrontations with state security forces to increasing use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted assassinations, ambush, drive-by shootings and suicide bombings (Onuoha 2012c). Although its operation focused

primarily on Maiduguri, Borno State, various depressing episodes of their attacks have also occurred in other states in the North East, like Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi and Adamawa. They have also been recorded in some states in the North West such as Kaduna and Kano and in Abuja, Niger, Kogi and Plateau States in the North Central. To date, exact statistics on the death toll resulting from their attacks is hard to count, however, it is claimed that violence linked to the group's insurgency had resulted in estimated 10,000 deaths between 2001 and 2013 (Odeh, 2014:22). The report of the 2015 Global Terrorism Index ranked Boko Haram as the most lethal and deadly extremist religious group that emerged in Nigeria. While the subsequent reports of the Global Terrorism Index, have shown a reduction in the number of fatalities attributed to the extremists, showing a decline from the peak of 11,519 in 2015, they also indicate that the number of violent events linked to Boko Haram increased from 417 in 2016 to 500 in 2017. The violent activities of the extremist have remained a major security challenge to the government, despite the hardline approach of the security agencies to the extremist onslaught which was not complemented with soft approach to address the grievance linked to structural imbalances that the extremists exploited to wage their violent agitations against the state. The extremist motives have been a subject of scholarly debates and have so far remained controversial, with the postulation that the group exploited the social inequalities and injustice that permeate the state to wage war against the citizens. This points to the imperative for the government to frontally tackle the structural imbalances that drive ethno-religious tensions which provide fertile grounds for the gestations of radical elements who continue to destabilise the polity, violently challenge the state, undermine the security of the citizen and derail the fledgling Nigerian democracy.

## CONCLUSION

It is vital that Nigeria should maintain the current work with other countries in order to make more progress against the radicalised armed groups, particularly the violent extremist Boko Haram, which is still showing capacity for havoc despite considerable progress by the Buhari administration in defeating it. The progress in the counter-extremism efforts have been undermined by the poor intelligence gathering and sharing, limited military cooperation, and the development of effective counter-terrorism measures based on soft power approaches that tackles the structural condition at the root of the grievance of the armed groups. This chapter has shown that the rise and proliferation of various armed groups in the country are linked to the governance deficit that breeds social inequalities and injustice that these groups exploited to mobilise along ethno-religious line and challenge the state. The concerted efforts of the government to tackle these government deficiencies and build social cohesion, ethno-religious unity will make it difficult for these armed groups to mobilise their ethno-religious

groups for their self-serving motives. The motives, goals and aspirations of these radicalised groups are far from being altruistic. Their interest borders on self-preservation and quest to corner the political and economic resources for themselves and the few patronage network while majority of their ethno-religious groups continue to wallow in social inequalities, and deprivation. Worse still, their violent activities heighten the structural conditions that they claimed are at the root of their grievance, further exposing their people to deteriorating socio-economic and security conditions. Checkmating the antecedents of the radicalised groups will of course require efforts to create a strengthened legitimate Nigerian government in order to deter its citizens from participation in such anti-government uprisings. The Nigerian government needs to move in a direction of learning and understanding the needs and interests of its citizens (Connell, 2012:92).

Also, Nigeria needs novel techniques targeted at restructuring and evolving effective security strategies that have robust human intelligence elements with sustainable developmental components. Such tactics must illustrate practicable and realistic engagement with the local population that are vulnerable to the armed groups radicalisation. Also, the underlying political and socioeconomic problems in the affected areas must be addressed as well as specific and holistic strategies on a short, medium and long-term with time frames for realisation. Government's brute force strategy and insufficient knowledge of the adversary have been counterproductive and have failed to reduce tension in the affected areas significantly (Amaraegbu, 2013:81). To curb youth radicalisation that is fuelling religious extremism in Nigeria will entail better monitoring and regulation of religious preaching. Also, creation of job opportunities for the Nigerian youth who have been exploited by the political elites to foment political violence in the country. In addition, government should embark on the design and delivery of robust programme for destitute children and enhanced provision of education and literacy programme, particularly in the Northern region which has the lowest literacy rate in the country. Equally vital is the promotion of peace education at all level of the institutions of governance.

As Adedimeji (2016b) suggests, curtailing the effects of radicalised groups require an umbrella system of military, political, diplomatic, strategic, educational, economic and public relations. This systemic solution requires a vibrant education system that essentially develops the head, the heart and the hands of young Nigerians. With functional education, dysfunctional thinking that eventually leads to negative and destructive actions will be curbed. It is also crucial to functionally engage the amorphous Nigerian media to put national interest above any interest that might warrant hare-brained sensationalism that typifies its vocal section.

Besides, without good governance and inclusive politics, there is every possibility for the aggrieved and the socially disadvantaged to resort to self-help. The more our politicians see politics as service, not an opportunity to self-

aggrandizement, the more they will inspire the rest of the populace towards positive action. Many years after their death, Nigerians still fondly remember our foremost nationalists for their sacrifices and legacies, which still impact on millions of people till today.

Lastly, since the basic needs of man are economic and all others are ancillary, in a situation where people find the basic needs of food, clothing and shelter a luxury, their sense of self-worth is diminished and they become vulnerable. Economic empowerment of youth is an antidote against radicalised armed agitation. Other components of defeating terrorism and violent agitations in Nigeria include building efficient and effective security architecture, creating a value-based social system that nullifies corruption and upholding the tenets of justice and equity in the polity.

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