

ARTIFICIAL CREATION OF THE STATE AND ENDURING CONFLICTS IN AFRICA: LEGACIES OF THE 'INDIRECT RULE' POLICY IN THE NORTHERN PARTS OF GHANA AND NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The growing literature on conflicts in Africa shows that there is a wide range of differing views. These divergent views stem in part from the manner in which conflict is analyzed. Conflict analysts tend to focus on narrow issues without relating them to the structural- historical evolution of the African continent and the wider systemic and global context. Using examples from northern Ghana and Nigeria, the paper posits that some of the hegemonic relations between different ethnic, socio-economic and political groups which tend to generate enduring conflicts in Africa today can be traced back to the infamous "indirect rule" policy which led to the systematic dispossession of some ethnic groups in Africa of their land during the process of institutionalizing the indirect rule system. The conclusion is that the failures of the post colonial state in Africa to address these hegemonic ethnic relations and the boundary question is a disturbing weakness of the African state that will affect the continent's stability for some time to come. On the basis of this conclusion, it is recommended that African governments, opinion leaders at all levels will have to devise means of addressing the deep seated conflicts emanating from these historical processes to pave the way for Africa's development.

KEY DESCRIPTORS: Conflicts, Ethnic Relation, Indirect Rule, Hegemony, Nation-building

INTRODUCTION

Shortly after African countries gained political independence from their colonial overlords, conflict became an endemic feature of the continent (Berry, 1993; Bening, 1999; Shah, 2003). Many uncountable lives have been lost and countless people displaced. According to Shah (2005) an estimated 9.5 million refugees and uncountable lives have been lost in these conflicts. In contrast, the efficiency of the traditional African political entrepreneurship can easily be measured by the large empires and stable states that were evolved and existed before colonization. So, the puzzling ques-

tion is why many modern African states have become so ungovernable and conflict ridden after independence? This central question is the basis of the mounting literature on conflict in Africa (Berry, 1993; Bening, 1999; Blanton et. al., 2001). An analysis of the growing literature on conflicts in Africa reveals a wide range of differing views (Bening, 1999; Shah, 2005).

Some commentators argue that the various imperial powers withdrew at a time when the newly independent African states were not sufficiently nurtured to handle the complex business of governance, hence the outburst of conflicts (Robins, 2002; Shah, 2005). This view tends to ignore the growing complex situations today where "our world, our lives are shaped by the conflicting trends of globalization and identity" (Castells, 1997: 1). Today, African conflicts are viewed more and more from the ethnic lens. Ethnic and religious diversity have been widely blamed for conflicts in Africa (Dion, 1997; Veney, 1997). Some of the recurrent explanations have tended to focus on one ethnic attribute or the other. Ethnic diversity and the tendency towards competition are believed to breed conflict. In his empirical study of competition and ethnic conflict, Dion (1997) concludes cautiously that the competition theory has the potential to increase the understanding of factors that can lead individuals to engage in ethnic conflicts and violence. Critics of the ethnic diversity and competition view argue that by focusing on ethnicity, the complexities of the African conflicts are over simplified (Berry, 1993; Veney, 1997; Suliman, 2000). Suliman (2000) also argues against the view that violent conflicts in Africa originate from ethnic, religious or cultural differences. Another aspect of the competition theory is that of political elite groups struggling for power and control of resources (Hannan, 1979; Rothschild, 1981; Olzak, 1983). "Competitive theories argue that as ethnic groups come to compete and increase their access to similar sets of political, economic and social resources, ethnic mobilization will occur" (Olzak, 1983: 362). For example, the protracted civil war in Angola which claimed over 500,000 lives and an estimated 3,000,000 refugees is explained in terms of the internal struggles between ethnic based political elite groups struggling over the control of the rich diamonds and off shore oil (Global Witness, 1998). Similarly, the ongoing struggles in the Democratic Republic of Congo are linked with the struggle by political factions from diverse ethnic groups over the vast resources of the country (Global Witness, 1998). But the puzzle still remains.

The puzzle has to do with the question, why a purely internal struggle involving political elite groups within the confines of the boundaries of a sovereign nation will draw in other nations such as Uganda, Angola, Burundi, Rwanda and Zambia and also involving cross border ethnic insurgence and counter insurgence? This view ignores the deep seated conflicts created by either the disparate lumping together of the diverse ethnic groups or the drawing of arbitrary boundaries that divide ethnic groups into different countries/states by Portugal, in the case of Angola, and Belgium in the case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Gann and Duignan, 1967, Boyd, 1979). Boyd (1979: 1) argues that "the artificial boundaries of Africa form the basis for conflicts". The complex conflict drama in Burundi, Rwanda, Democratic Repub-

lic of Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea which all have their roots in the manner in which the colonial power instituted these states support the argument that the ethnic competition theory of conflict in Africa is limited in the sense that it does not explain the root causes of the problem, but rather emphasizes the symptoms and the consequences of conflict. Africa is not the only continent with diverse ethnic, socio-economic and political elite groups. Besides the mere fact of diversity cannot be a cause of disruptive competition and conflict. There must be some deep seated fundamental causes responsible for people wanting to fight for their rights, in terms of economic, social and political inclusion (Global Witness, 1998).

Other writers tend to focus narrowly on boundaries or inter-state conflicts (Kapil, 1966; Emerson 1969; Boyd 1979, Zarmat, 1969, Suleiman 1997). Analyzing the geographic frameworks within which Africa political, economic and social systems are evolving, Zarmat (1969: cited in Boyd 1979:1) argues that "... any African state can have boundary problems if it wants. The newness of African states and the frequent irrelevance of their geographic frames to their economic, social, and political lives make the continent more potentially susceptible to territorial disputes than any other." This focus on the interstate boundaries and their impacts on ethnic conflicts tend also to neglect the internal boundaries and the conflicts they create (Bening, 1999). Bening (1999) argues that the structuring of the internal colonial boundaries are equally important in the explanation of the raging conflicts in Africa today, which have tended to shift more and more from interstate boundary issues to more of internal conflicts.

An examination of the growing literature on conflicts in Africa, therefore, shows that there is a wide range of differing views. These divergent views stem in part from the manner in which conflict is analyzed. Conflict analysts tend to focus on some narrow issues without relating them to the structural historical evolution of the African continent and the wider systemic and global context. This may be a result of the case by case approach to the study of conflict that usually laid emphasis on the immediate contested issues that have occasioned a particular conflict situation. Rather than this case based approach, this paper posits that the hegemonic relations between different ethnic, socio-economic and political groups which tend to generate conflicts in Africa today can be traced back to the infamous indirect rule policy which led to massive reorganizations of ethnic groups and the loss of their lands, group identity, sovereignty and dignity . In the African society, land is not just a physical life supporting asset. Land represents the total embodiment of history, culture, identity and the very survival of the ethnic group that lays claim to a particular piece of land. This paper explores this notion and argues that the systematic dispossession of some ethnic groups in Africa of their land during the process of institutionalizing the indirect rule policy is one major cause of the enduring inter-ethnic conflicts in most parts of Africa. The paper examines this notion in the Northern parts of Ghana and Nigeria where the 'indirect rule' system that was supposedly implemented, led to massive ethnic reorganization, enduring ethnic hegemony, contested resource claims and ram-

pant conflicts. Using a historical approach, the study draws on the accumulated archival material in both Ghana and Nigeria to generate information on conflicts that have occurred in the two study areas, the belligerents involved, and the causes.

The paper is organized into four parts. In the first part we review briefly the prevailing views and understandings of the causes of the growing African conflict leading to the definition of our focus. We then discuss the 'indirect rule' policy and how it was implemented in both the northern parts of Ghana and Nigeria and argue that the policy of indirect rule system in both areas was essentially a process of institutionalized ethnic hegemony with an unavoidable conflict potential. We then show in the third part of the paper concrete evidence of the historical trends of conflicts to prove that they have their roots in the hegemonic ethnic reorganization under the indirect rule policy. We conclude in the final part with the argument that the failure of the post colonial state in Africa to address this hegemonic ethnic relations and the boundary question is a disturbing weakness of the African state that will affect the continent's stability for some time to come.

THE 'INDIRECT RULE' POLICY

'Indirect rule' is simply a system of governance whereby the imperial power uses the original governing institutions of the conquered people to rule the people. The key elements of the structure of 'indirect rule' system are that the real authority or power rest with the representative of the imperial power who forms the apex of the administration. The traditional leaders are empowered and supported to rule their people as in the normal way while in reality, the orders and commands are actually issued from the top by the representative of the imperial power. In Northern Nigeria, Lord Fredrick Lugard was the architect of the 'indirect rule' system. In the British colonies in Africa the system was vigorously pursued by the respective Governors and their array of Provincial and District Commissioners. At the apex was the Governor while the Provincial and District Commissioners formed the second and third layers of the administrative structure. Each province as the case maybe, was then divided into traditional authority or administrative areas headed by African traditional leaders who were then empowered to deal directly with their people. Matters pertaining to the whole colony were handed down through the Provincial and District Commissioners (Residents and District Officers, in the case of Nigeria) to the traditional leaders for implementation. Similarly, issues of a provincial nature were handed down to the various District Commissioners/District Officers and then finally to the various traditional leaders or authorities. At the district level although, in principle each traditional area was autonomous, the ultimate decision-maker was the District Commissioner/District Officers while the paramount chiefs of the traditional authorities merely had some semblance of authority. This structure described so far, by itself, has not much problem. However, its practice was brutally applied in many parts of Africa, and was pursued by Lord Lugard in Northern Nigeria with outstanding rigor. At the local level, existing strong traditional rulers were identified and where they did not exist, they were created. The disparate ethnic groups were then regrouped under

these empowered leaders. These traditional leaders were given powers to: administer their local authority areas; administer justice on minor crimes; administer public land and forest within their areas of jurisdiction, and make by-laws (Bening, 2001; Bacho, 2005).

Many justifications, sometimes contradictory, have been put forward for the use of the 'indirect rule' system. The architects and implementers of the policy justified this practice as a 'noble' way of "developing the African society to participate in the life of the modern world as a community in its own right" (Slater, 1927: cited in Bouret, 1947: 47). Other apologists suggest that the British were, after all, not really interested in ruling their colonies. Bourret (1946: 47) argues that "one of the aims of the British Government is to rule, as far as possible, through the agency of indigenous institutions". It should be stated that attempts to label Colonial Rule as 'Indirect Rule' simply try to lend a moral basis to colonial rule, and try to inject colonial rule with a consistency and intellectual purpose that simply was not there. In fact, Lugard wanted to assure for himself a respectable position in history. Later British colonial officers tried to justify their own policies and to demonstrate that, somehow, British colonial rule was 'better' than French colonial rule.

The most instructive ways of looking at the history of the so-called 'Indirect Rule' system is, perhaps, to consider some of the critics of the system. On the occasion of Lugard's retirement, the Editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record*, wrote in February, 1919, on what Lugard called the Nigerian system: "The three basic principle necessary for the successful working of the Nigerian system are Ignorance, Fear, and Military Terrorism....Living in constant fear of jihad or holy war, Sir Frederick... practically charmed the (Emirs) into submission with the sop of princely salaries and with the allocation of 50% of the native treasury funds – derived chiefly from direct taxation..... whilst he humoured their vanity and love of display by the plausible fiction of Indirect Rule since the real authority lay in the hand of the British Residents" (*The Lagos Weekly Record*, 1919: 273-4 as Quoted in Shea, 1982'85:157). A British missionary, Bishop Tugwell, also criticised the system as follows: "Indirect Rule is direct rule by indirect means. The Emir's position and salary are secure. His sway, backed by British authority, is rendered absolute, while his people become his serfs, or those of British government. Their life is thus robbed of all initiative, or desire for progress – intellectual, social, moral, religious or political." (Cited in Shea, 1982/85:156). Berry (1993: 38) argues that in constructing the edifice of colonial administration on contested foundations, the practice of indirect rule both expressed and exacerbated the problematic basis of colonial authority in Africa, Strategies employed by the colonial officials to pursue the contradictory objectives of exploitation and social order with limited material resources created new sources of confusion over what constituted legitimate rules and who had the right to enforce them.

Indeed, the British did not delegate or abdicate their power, but responsibility. They frequently acted when it was in their own interests. The 'Indirect Rule' system was for the British to avoid responsibility for some of the harsher aspects of colonial life,

thereby putting the blame on its appointed African chiefs. Geary wrote in 1927 that, "A native ruler of the same colour and religion as the ruled is a convenient buffer for the Central Government and makes easier the enforcement of Law and Order by the Central Government". (Geary, 1927/1965: 272). In fact, it was very convenient because in many cases local disturbances were often directed against the African chiefs, tax gatherers, village heads, district heads or other surrogates of the British rather than against the British themselves. Although the 'Indirect Rule' could be said to be an idea or a goal, it was never really implemented. Lugard claimed that he had successfully established a system whereby the people of Northern Nigeria could be ruled by traditional authorities. But this was not totally true. In some Emirates like Daura and Katsina, the dynasty was changed by the British. In *all* Emirates the number of traditional authorities was reduced, and their functions were generally drastically reduced with the creation of the newly consolidated districts with resident district heads and with the creation of Native Authority Treasuries and the salary system, thus making them no longer 'traditional'. (Shea, 1982/85:160) In the end 'Indirect Rule' was not really a system, but simply Colonial Rule, in terms of domination and exploitation by outsiders.

The results of the profound ethnic reorganization that this policy brought have been contested claims of lands and other resources, ethnic identity crisis, issues of dominance and exclusion and the counter resistance by the affected groups (Suton, 1984, Berry, 1993; Blanton et. al., 2001). Blanton et. al. (2001: 473) observed that "European colonialism had profound, lasting, and wide-ranging effects on the development of contemporary African states. One of the most profound legacies of the colonial period has been ethnic conflict." Among some of the most affected parts in present day Ghana and Nigeria are the Northern parts of the two countries. Ironically, these two political divisions do not only share similar geo-physical characteristics, but also similar political experiences under the British colonization. The political, social and economic ramifications of this ethnic engineering occasioned by this policy will be shown in the two concrete cases in the ensuing sections.

Creation of the 'Indirect Rule' System and Enduring in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast

Northern Ghana today, comprising the two Upper Regions and Northern Region was the last part of what became the Gold Coast to be occupied by the British. Although the British did not really have any economic interests in the northern part of West Africa, the competition by the French and Germans to colonize more lands in this part made the British to advance to acquire more lands in the interior part (Der, 1975; Kimble, 1963; Ward 1969). In January 1902, the British promulgated a legislative instrument declaring its newly acquired area as the protectorate of the Northern Territories. The immediate challenge that confronted the British was how to govern this sprawling territory constituting about 40 per cent of the total area of the colony, Asante and the Northern Territories put together. One overriding consideration was the

unwillingness of the colonial administration to incur costs on the development and administration of this resource poor territory (Ward, 1969; Songsore and Denkabe, 1995; Der, 1995, Bening 2001).

Between 1889 and 1932, a skeletal military detachment and colonial administrative staff were posted to handle the affairs of the Northern Territories. Due to the paucity of staff, the Chief Commissioner and his District Commissioners relied on the traditional chiefs to mobilize labour to accomplish development tasks and to ensure law and order. In areas where traditional leaders were not willing to present themselves to the colonial officers, chiefs were created. As Bourret (1949:93) observed "when the white man came in demanding to see "the King" and expecting to be supplied with water, fire wood and carriers, these old priestly ruler aristocrats in their way, will remain aloof and thrust forward some unimportant person, often a slave or the descendant of a slave, as the supposed chief", and with time these men became known as the official chiefs by the colonial officers. This direct approach to governing the Northern Territories with the assistance of chiefs lasted till 1932, when Sir Ramsford Slater became the governor of the Gold Coast from 1927 to 1939, and decided to apply the 'indirect rule' model developed by Lord Lugard for Northern Nigeria which bore several similarities with the Northern Territories.

Between 1928 and 1932 Captain Rattray undertook his mandated study which he reported in two volumes popularly known as "Tribes of the Ashanti Hinterland" Rattray's major finding that was of immediate relevance for the re-organisation of the disparate ethnic groups was the assumption that there were only two types of traditional states: the cephalous and acephalous. "Before this study, it was generally believed that the Protectorate and surrounding territory was.... (made up of) ... Mamprusi, Dagomba and Gonja kingdoms" (Bourret, 1949) . Rattray's report set the stage for the continuing debate on how to group the various ethnic groups. Bourret (1949) observed that as a result of this investigation, it was suggested that, for the reorganisation of Native administration, which the government was contemplating from 1929-32, the chiefs of the Tendana class should certainly be retained since they were the true rulers. As for the second category, (those chiefs originally alien) - they too should be kept. The colonial administration then set about the task of reorganising the disparate ethnic groups from 1930-1932. Conferences¹ were organized for paramount chiefs and their ancillary of divisional chiefs of the Gonja, Mampurugu, and Dagomba. In the case of the Northern portion, the Dagara of the Lawra Traditional Area and the Issala around Tumu rejected the idea of coming under the Wala, and

¹The Gold Coast Annual Reports from 1927 to 1940 give details on the various processes and conferences on the Native Authorities in the Northern Territories as follows: Gonja conference (May 1930), Dagomba Conference (November 1930), Kusasi (1931), Wa (1933) Mampurugu Conference (December 1932),

were met separately. At these meetings, the colonial administration came to terms with chiefs on matters such as their traditional constitution, spheres of authority, allegiance of subordinate chiefs and their anticipated native administrative functions (Kimble, 1963; Gold Coast Government, 1930; Bourret, 1949; Bening, 1999).

Except for a few cases, such as Mampurugu, where the Konkomba, Kusasi, Bimoba were represented, in most cases the so called acephalous groups who were going to be affected by this profound reorganisation were neither represented nor their opinions sought. On the whole, these ethnic conferences were supported by the cephalous state as they saw it as an opportunity to wield power over those ethnic groups they have always struggled to subdue, such as in the case of the Konkomba and Dagomba and Gonja and Nchumuru, Nawuri and Konkomba².

With the support of some chiefs, the colonial administration set in motion the native authority ordinances. From 1932, the chief commissioner established several native authorities all over the Northern Territories. Under the Dagbong Overlord and King, the *Yaa Naa*, all the then independent Dagbong chiefs, Konkomba, Chokosi and other minor zongo immigrant groups were brought under the Dagomba Native Authority. Similarly, the Nawuri, Nchumuru, Kotokoli, Basaare, Konkomba, Vagla, Birifor, Sa-falba and Tampulma, among others, were brought under the Gonja Native Authority. In the case of Mampurugu, the Konkomba, Kusasi, Bimoba, Tampulma and Komba were also regrouped under the Mampurugu Native Authority. Due to the resistance of chiefs of the Dagara, Issala, Nankane, Nabdum, Talensi, Builsa and Gurunsi ethnic groups, separate Native Authorities were created: Lawra Native Authority, Tumu Native Authority and a separate one for the Builsa, Gurunsi, Nankane and Talensi. Wa also had a separate Native Authority.

The Native Authorities were under the chief commissioner and his array of commissioners and administrative staff; although they had enough powers to enable them subjugate the ethnic groups that were brought under them. In any case, it was the wish of the colonial administration to use African traditional leaders to suppress their own people in order to make them governable. The Native Authority ordinance was therefore passed to empower chiefs to: administer public land and forest (in addition to the traditionally owned lands) within their areas of jurisdiction; administer justice on minor crimes and make by-laws. This suppression was soon to generate resentment and rebellions from the subjugated ethnic groups as will be seen in the recurrent ethnic conflicts in the specific case of the Northern Region in the ensuing section.

Enduring Conflict in the Northern Region of Ghana

An analysis of the historical records in Table 1.1 depicts certain patterns.

² See Gold Coast Government, 1930-40 Annual Reports on the Northern Territories.

Table 1: Occurrence of conflicts by belligerents involved and causes

YEAR	BELIGERENTS	NATURE/CAUSE
1935	Gonja - Nchumuru	Resistance against subjugation under Gonja in the re-demarcated Native Authorities under the Indirect Rule.
1939	Konkomba - Dagomba	Protest over placement under Dagomba native Authority
1940	Konkomba - Dagomba	Contested land ownership, payment of Tributes
1945	Konkomba - Dagomba	Revolt by Konkomba against Collection of levies by Demon Divisional Chief for the running of the Native Authorities.
1946	Konkomba - Dagomba	Contested land ownership, payment of Tributes
Specific dates not available. Conflicts occurred several times between the 1960s to the present	Kusasi – Mamprusi in Bawku	Rejection of Mamprusi over lordship
1980	Vagla - Gonja	Rejection of Gonja over lordship
1981	Nanumba - Konkomba	Rejection of Nanumba over lordship and payment of land rents
1982	Mamprusi - Kusasi ³	Rejection of Mamprusi over lordship
1984	Bimoba-Konkomba	Contested land claims to farm lands
1986	Bimoba-Konkomba	Contested land claims to farm lands
1989	Bimoba-Konkomba	Contested land claims to farm lands
1990	Nawuri – Konkomba	Land conflicts
1991	<i>Nawuri-Gonja</i>	Rejection of Gonja over lordship, contested land ownership
1992	Nawuri (assisted by Konkomba, , Basaare) against Gonja	Rejection of Gonja over lordship, contested land ownership
1994/5	Konkomba (assisted by Nawuri, Kotokoli, Basaare) against Combined force of the Gonja, Nanumba and Dagomba	Rejection of Gonja, Nanumba and Dagomba over lordship, contested land ownership and fight for identity and self determination.
2002	Dagombas	Dynastic struggles between two royal family lineages (Andani and Abudu Gates)

Source: Derived from various historical records: Tamale Archives, Ghana.

³ Although the Kusasi are no longer in the Northern Region after the 1960 regional boundaries demarcation, the effects of the ethnic reorganization under the Native Authority system are still felt today.

The first observation is that conflict is recurrent and limited to specific parts of present day Northern Ghana. As can be seen from Table 1.1, out of the three northern regions (Upper West, Upper East and Northern), the Northern Region of Ghana today, is one of the most volatile and conflict ridden. Conflict statistics show that out of the 23 conflicts which occurred between 1980 and 2002, 17 of them occurred in the Northern Region (Ghana News Agency, 2005). Secondly, the conflicts occur always between the same ethnic groups, i.e. those ethnic groups which were brought under the bigger ethnic groups in the process of institutionalising the 'indirect rule' system tend to fight in resistance of the overlords. This has not been the case in the Upper West and Upper East regions where the various ethnic groups have always remained independent. Thirdly, the causes of the conflicts/wars are persistently the same, i.e. revolts against domination, fighting for land, payment of tributes and levies, ethnic identity and self determination.

One cannot, therefore, really understand these recurrent conflicts between these specific ethnic groups in the Northern Region without knowing the profound depth of ethnic reorganisation, under the indirect rule, dubbed Native Authority system in the Northern Territories of the Gold Coast from 1932 to 1956. The evidence provided here, therefore, negates the argument that conflicts in Africa are caused by mere differences in ethnicity and/or religions. Were that the case, the Upper East and West Regions, which are inhabited by varied ethnic groups would also have been engulfed in ethnic conflicts.

The Artificial Creation of Northern Nigeria and Emerging Conflicts

Before the British invasion, conquest and occupation, what became known as Nigeria had composed of diverse ethnic nationalities and groups (about 350) with different (though in some cases related/similar) political, economic, social, cultural, and even educational institutions. The political systems ranged from the Caliphate (Sokoto), States (Hausa), Kingdoms (Igala, Bini), Empires (Oyo, Borno), and non-centralized States like the Igbo. Before the advent of the colonial period, many of the ethnic groups had jealously guarded their independence against any external incursions. The different groups had interacted through trade, religion, ambassadorial exchanges, exchanges of gifts, and marriages. The respect these nationalities had for one another's sovereignty and inter-group relations was dramatically and effectively changed, altered and eroded by the imposition of British rule.

The British imperial and colonial design to acquire the Nigerian area started in the mid-nineteenth century. The occupation of the area and the incorporation of the various nationalities into a fragile whole were achieved through a combination of diplomacy, treaties, coercion and military conquests. After the annexation and the subsequent proclamation of Lagos as a Crown Colony of the British in 1861, the British systematically occupied more territories in the area. The end of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century, witnessed the incorporation of substantial areas in Yorubaland, Delta, Benin, Igboland, Hausaland and most part of the North and the

Middle Belt into the British Imperial Empire. By the end of the First World War, British colonial rule could be said to be underway in earnest in Nigeria.

The modern Nigeria state was undoubtedly a British creation for the export of capital and wealth of the area to Britain and Crown Colonies as well as the general economic exploitation of the area. The British, through their 60 years or so of colonial rule in Nigeria, had consistently tried to unite administration for convenient rule and economic exploitation. The road to the establishment of a fragile “modern” state of Nigeria gradually but systematically began in 1898 with the inauguration of Solborne or the Niger Committee by the British government to suggest an administrative restructuring of ‘Nigeria’. The report of the Committee was to form the basis for the administrative structure in the British colonial Nigeria. The process towards the amalgamation of the various units in Nigeria began in 1906 with the merging of the Lagos colony with the Protectorate of Southern Nigeria. The 1914 Amalgamation of the Southern and the Northern Protectorates brought the hitherto independent nationalities into a cohesive whole - Nigeria. On the eve of the Second World War in 1939, Nigeria was again administratively divided into three different regions: North, East and South. Although these actions were for administrative convenience and economic exploitation and expediency (for the British), Nigerians were not consulted before they were “merged together.” The regionalization of the country and of the national wealth as part of development policies and programs by the British (and the ‘independent’ government) has continued to breed fears of oppression, discrimination and ethnicity as well as ethnic and economic competition for power and resource control and in the end ethnic and economic conflicts and crises leading to the loss of lives.

In an attempt to achieve their economic goals, the British regrouped the people and created new population units. The regrouping and movements had led to greater and wider interactions among various groups with different ethnic, social, economic, religious, cultural and political traditions. The intensity of population movements and migrations across ethnic boundaries were evidence of a greater interaction and integration. However, while the integration of the economies was being intensively and vigorously pursued, the political cohesiveness was being intentionally complicated as evidenced by the spate of conflicts in Table 2. In fact, the British and particularly Lugard had continuously emphasized that their role in Nigeria was to unite administration and the people themselves. These actions of the British have generated conflicts and violence that have threatened the very foundation of the modern Nigerian state. These conflicts manifest in various ways. For example, very often, hosts tend to see new comers as ‘strangers’ and economic exploiters. The claim of indigeneship was manifested partly by the division of some urban cosmopolitan centres like Kano into ‘native’ and ‘stranger’ – sabon-gari (new town) settlements by the British. This element of inter-group hostilities has now become an unfortunate feature of modern Nigeria. The following Table: 2 indicate some of the long term conflicts arising from the British actions.

Table 2: Site/State, Belligerents and Causes or Nature of Conflict in Nigeria

YEAR	SITE/STATE	BELLIGERENTS	NATURE/CAUSE
1915	Otun District	Youths versus British	Merging of Otun District with florin Division
1932	Idoma District	Igbo/Tiv versus the Idoma	Inter-ethnic competition for land and resources
1981	Ife	Ife versus Modakeke	Boundary/land dispute
1981	Zango-Kataf	Kaje versus Fulani	Political 'domination' by Hausa 'settlers'
1987	Tingno-Waduku	Bachama versus Hausa	Alleged oppression by Hausa 'settlers'
1987	Mwaghavul-Ron	Mwaghavul versus Ron people	Land/boundary dispute
1993-94	Rivers State	Andoni versus Ogoni	Land/boundary dispute
1994-96	Rivers State	Ogoni versus Okirika	Land/boundary dispute
1995-99	Nassarawa State	Obi versus Toto	Border/land dispute
1996-99	Bayelsa State	Nembe versus Kalabari	Land/border dispute
1997-98	Bayelsa State	Bassambiri versus Ogbolomabiri	Land/boundary dispute
1999	Adamawa State	Yungur versus Fulani	Grazing land/land dispute
1999	Dume - Adamawa State	Farmers versus Nomads	Grazing land
1999	Gwoja - Borno State	Farmers versus Fulani nomads	Grazing land
1999	Taraba State	Tiv versus Fulani	Grazing land
1999	Taraba State	Kuteb-Jukun-Chamba	Ethnic, political and land conflict
1999	Taraba State	Jolle versus Shomo	Fishing pond
1999	Alaba International market, Lagos	Yoruba versus Igbo	Alleged taken over of the market by the Igbo
1999	Anambra State	Aguleri versus Umeuleri	Long drawn communal land dispute
1999	Ketu, Ojota, Mile 12 market, Lagos	Yoruba versus Hausa yam sellers	Disagreement over the collection of royalty
2000	Anambra State	Aguleri versus Omuleri	Land dispute
1999 - 2000	Kano Metropolis	Hausa versus Igbo/Yoruba	Ethnic and economic conflict
2000	Alaba market, Lagos	Yoruba versus Igbo	Control over the market
2000	Wuse, Pische, Mgontabo, Ganlang, Zangbang, Dadinkowa, Walnem in Plateau State	Tarok (Lantang) versus Hausa	Political control over chieftaincy; economic domination?
2000	Oyo North	Yoruba farmers versus Fulani herdsmen	Grazing land
2000	Taraba State	Karimjo versus Fulani	Grazing land
2000	Taraba State	Mambilla versus Fulani	Land dispute

2000	Taraba State	Mambilla versus Fulani	Land dispute
2000	Anambra State	Aguleri versus Umuleri	Long drawn land dispute
2000	Nassarawa State	Tiv versus local ethnic groups	Inter-ethnic rivalry Tiv 'settlers' and 'indigenes'
2001	Tafawa Balewa and Bogoro in Bauchi State	Safawa versus Hausa/ Fulani	Conflict over chiefdom for the Safawa
2001	Gombe State	Dadiya and Waja versus Hausa	Land dispute
2001	Damboa in Borno State	Farmers versus Nomads	Land dispute
2001	Numan in Adamawa State	Tigno versus Hausa	Farmland
2001 – 2004	Yelwa-Shendam in Plateau State	Local people versus Hausa	Alleged political and economic domination by the Hausa
2002	Wuse in Plateau State	Torak versus Hausa/ Fulani	Land and economic resources
2002	Ife-Modakeke	Ife versus Madakeke	Old dispute between 'settlers' and 'indigenes' claims
2002	Nassarawa State	Loku and Ugede versus Agatu	Access to the lake used by the Agatu for fishing
2002	Adamawa State	Numan versus Demsa	Long drawn dispute over boundary
2002	Adamawa State	'Indigenes' versus Fulani	Land dispute
2003	Song in Adamawa State	Yungur people versus Fulani	Grazing land
2003	Urauan in Ebonyi State	Ivin Ifeayong versus Mbiakong villages	Long drawn land dispute dating to 1910
2003	Edda in Ebonyi State	Ngazu Edda versus Ekoli Edda communities	Land dispute

CONCLUSION

Although conflicts are not new in Africa and for that matter in most regions of the world, the nature and frequency with which they occur in post colonial Africa has been the subject of intense discussions. More often than not commentators on African conflicts tend to narrow down the issues to merely ethnic, religious or political rivalry. This paper is a departure from this narrow way of looking at conflict. It argues that communal, economic and ethnic conflicts which have become more enduring, violent, widespread and destructive are indicators as well as the results of the destructive and divide and rule legacies left behind by the British and their abdication of responsibilities. Using a historical analysis of the 'indirect rule' policy that was implemented in the northern parts of Ghana and Nigeria it concludes that the artificial creation of local governance units, ethnic boundaries, and the rearrangement of ethnic groups have resulted in entrenched land disputes, revolts, and the fight for identity. The failures of the post independent governments to tackle and resolve these age-long problems of relationships between ethnic groups, identities, boundaries between communities, public safety, and the question of 'indigeneship' or 'citizenship'

have tended to aggravate the conflict situations that will affect the continent's stability for some time. On the basis of this conclusion, it is recommended that African governments and opinion leaders at all levels will work at devising means of addressing the deep-seated conflicts emanating from these historical processes to create a congenial environment for the continent's development.

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