

**ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN THE NIGERIAN LITERATURE: A STUDY OF Kaine
AGARY'S *YELLOW-YELLOW* AND Helon Habila'S *THE CHIBOK GIRLS: THE BOKO
HARAM KIDNAPPING AND ISLAMIST MILITANCY IN NIGERIA***

FLORENCE ONYEBUCHI ORABUEZE & IFEYINWA DAVID-OJUKWU

Department of English & Literary Studies
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study is anchored on Kaine Agary's Yellow-Yellow and Helon Habila's The Chibok Girls: the Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria, focusing on how ethnic identity, ethnic conflicts and terrorism are represented. Grounded in Primordialism, Instrumentalism, and Constructivism as the theoretical frameworks in dissecting the causes, manifestations, and consequences of ethnic tensions in Nigeria, the study holds that ethnic identities, although rooted in, descent, history, and cultural consciousness, are continually shaped by political manipulations, socioeconomic conditions and processes of social construction.

Keywords: Ethnic Conflicts, Terrorism, African Literature, Literary

Representation, Cultural Identity and Postcolonial Studies.

Introduction

Despite the centuries of denigration of Africa and Africans by Western historians, philosophers, cartographers, literary writers and critics in the past, they still believe today that it is a continent "without stone houses or clothes, except skins, without writing and so without history" (Perham 2). And before the history of Europeans in Africa, the rest is darkness, and darkness cannot be the subject of history (Trevor-Roper 1965). To further justify the blood and brutal conquest of Africa by European imperialists, Lord Leverhulme (cited in Crowder 3) said that Africans are immature and under-developed and must be treated like children, for they are people who indulge in "abhorrent practices such as human-sacrifices and cannibalism" (Crowder 11). However, African writers have been writing back at the empires, as they tell their own stories and their experiences to the world. For Achebe, the African writer has the task of re-education and regeneration of his own people to put away the

complexities of the years of denigration of self-abasement, which their contact with the Europeans had instilled in them (1975). Soyinka warns the African writer to distance himself from the fascination of the past, and to be the conscience of his society, record the mores and the experiences of his people, and “serve as the voice of vision in his own time,” but to do that he “has to acquire the prophetic insight into the evolution of that society” (20). Therefore, the role of the creative writer extends to his being the “voice for the individuals and communities, or institutions” (Izevbaye 212). To fulfill these onerous responsibilities to his society, he should bear in mind that for his text to be a work of literature, it must be the “bank of memory, of culture and of self-apprehension” (Layiwola 139), which Obafemi aptly describes as a reflection of the society, in the manner of a mirror (2021).

Having delineated some views on the role of literature and the literary writer in his society, particularly in Africa, this study appropriates qualitative research methodology that synthesizes the literatures from books – both primary and secondary sources – journal articles and online materials to examine, conceptualize, interrogate and investigate the thesis of the study: ethnic conflicts and terrorism in selected Nigerian literature. Of course, the three theories of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts would be used to unveil the presence of different types of ethnic identities, causes and consequences of ethnic conflicts, as well as the different strategies for their management and resolutions, in the fictive worlds of Kaine Agary’s *Yellow-Yellow* and Helon Habila’s *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria*.

The Theories of Ethnic Identities and Ethnic Conflicts

It is important to note that diversity is part of nature, whether in the Hebrew’s Myth of Creation, or in the ecosystem, or in the biosphere of the planetary Earth, where there are interactions and co-existence of living and non-living things. In the jungle, there is also diversity which is an immutable law of nature. The diversity in human beings may be as a result of race, class, ethnicity, social and economic status, the colours of the eyes and hair, geographical locations, differences in languages, sex and gender, religious affiliations, customs, etc. At times, the diversity in nature may result in peaceful relationship among the diverse groups, or it may be conflictual, and it can also lead to violence and war.

Ethnicity, which is part of diversity, has its origin from the Greek word, “ethos”, which describes a people or a community that descends from the same

ancestors, having certain cultural traits, which distinguish them from other categories of material and non-material cultural artifacts, and may share ethnic consciousness. However, since ethnicity, which Alba says, “no agreement exists in the definition of ethnicity” (840), and Cohen insists is an “ubiquitous presence... anthropologists use to adopt to “ethnic studies” dropping the terms like “tribe” (379) has been a significant factor in international, regional and national conflicts, with the worrisome armed conflicts and terrorism at the international level, like the Rwandan and Rohingya genocides, etc. At the regional level, Africa is ravaged by Ethiopian-Tigray War, the Somali Civil War, the civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the ethnic conflict in the Cameroon. In Nigeria, the country is not spared also the scourges of wars, after the Nigeria-Biafran Civil War of 1967-1970. Other inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic wars are also being waged in different parts of the country. In the North-East and North-West, there are the terrorist and guerrilla wars of Boko Haram, ISWAP and ISIS with the Nigerian government. In the North-Central, there are the incessant farmer-herder conflicts, which have resulted in the massacres of the indigenous population of the region. On the recent insurgent attacks in Yelewata, in Benue State, where more than two hundred people were killed, Ukuma Jonathan Angbianbee claims, “People were slaughtered. Corpses were scattered everywhere” (cited in Pontifex, 2025). Similar conflicts are also replicated in the South-West, and in the South-South, militancy and kidnappings and intermittent inter-ethnic conflicts between the Ijaw, the Urhobo and the Itsekiri over land, natural resources and collection of revenues take the centre stage. In the South-East, there are bitter complaints of marginalization and violent agitations for the separation of the region from the rest of the country. With all these inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts and wars, there is the need to examine their reflections in the Nigeria literature, after the examination of the three theories, which serve as a scaffold for this research.

After the ravages of the First and the Second World Wars, particularly after the Second World War, in which about 70-85 million people, or 3% of the 2.3 billion people on the Earth died, United Nations Organization (UNO) was formed in 1945 at San Francisco to ensure the atrocities of the war were not repeated. Despite the fact that the core mandate of the organization was to ensure the maintenance of international peace and security, and to protect human rights of peoples all over the world, conflicts and wars which are ethnic-related continue to rage in some parts of the world. And Timasheff has

argued that inter-ethnic relations will continue to play important role in national and international politics. He further suggests that the relationship may be peaceful, or it may be fraught with conflict processes (1944). His statement has been proved right, since despite scientific breakthroughs, reconstruction of societies, improved economic and political structures and the impact of globalization, ethnic identities are not obsolete (Comaroff and Stern 36), because the conflicts that are ethnic-based still rage in almost all parts of the world (Lake and Rothchild 41).

And the negative impact of these wars – the influx of refugees, the human and ecological devastations, the abuses of human rights of citizens and foreigners, the influx of asylum seekers into other countries, the huge negative impact on global and regional economy, the sheer human suffering and sexual violence that go with the violent conflicts – have forced social scientists to seek urgent solutions to the conflicts and also to find out their underlying causes. Three theoretical approaches on ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts are popular. For Chandra, ethnic identities are a subset of ethnic categories, whose membership and attributes are based on inheritance or place of origin or nationality, that is, the members have descent-based identity (2006). Besides, Cordell and Wolff claim that ethnic conflict is a situation where one or more of the actors in a conflict see the conflict as ethnic in nature, or it pursues conflicting ethnic goals (5).

From the definitions of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts, three of the most popular approaches would be examined and the issues they raised interrogated and appropriated in the analyses of ethnic conflicts in Nigerian literature. These theories are Primordialism, Instrumentalism and Constructivism. Primordialism is associated with Edward Shils, a sociologist, who used the term in 1957 for the description of the bond existing between family members. While Shils coined the term, it was Greetz who developed the concept further. The primordialists have argued that ethnic identities are inherent, natural, fixed and immutable, and they are biological attributes ascribed to the individual at birth (Isajiw 1993). Poata-Smith observes that ethnic identities are timeless, and they also have boundaries or residency (2013). To reinforce the argument of ethnic identities being biological and genetic, the research finding at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, with the comparison of genes of DNA tests of people of different races, shows that genetic factors or similarities are identity markers (Spielman and Cheung 2013). In Salter and Harpending's study of "J. H. Rushton's Theory

of Ethnic Nepotism”, they claim that humans give preferential treatments to people who resemble them genetically (2012).

Ethnic groups have ethnic consciousness, which is reinforced through language, symbols, rituals, history, etc., from generation to generation (Jesse and Williams 10). Ethnic consciousness is galvanized and used in time of conflicts with other groups to unleash violence on the out-group. Glazier also claims that ethnic conflict is as result of fear of domination, expulsion or past genocide levied on the ethnic group (429). However, the critics of primordialists point out the glaring fault lines in the group’s theory, as they emphasize the irrationality of ethnic violence (Turton 1997), and Weber claims that the fact that people descend from the same race or ethnic group does not necessarily imply that they have “common social relationship between them” (42). Winter shares the same view with Weber, when she states that “psychosocial and moral qualities cannot be derived from racial signifiers” (45). The anti-primordialists maintain that the explanations of the theory is very simplistic, as it does not give account of variations in the levels of conflict, and obviously omitted the fact that some ethnic groups willingly allow themselves to be assimilated by other ethnic groups, and they also adopt the symbols, customs and languages of the assimilating group. McKay faults the theory as it ignores the economic, social and political structures and processes that give rise to ethnic conflicts (303).

Another theory of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts is Instrumentalism, whose origin is traceable to the American philosopher, John Dewey, who used instrumentalist theory to develop his own brand of Pragmatism. The instrumentalists claim that ethnic identities are not biological, natural, fixed, inherent, and that ethnic differences are not conflictual. According to Fearon and Laitin, in their study of the Rwandan genocide, ethnic identities are labels which colonizers use to polarize, subjugate, conquer and rule the colonized territories (858). Chandra states that ethnic conflicts are not because of ethnic differences between ethnic groups, but that political actors and ethnic activists use ethnic differences as instruments or tools to organize, mobilize and execute ethnic violence on others, in order to achieve personal or group goals (2004). Hardin argues that it is easy to mobilize ethnic groups by ethnic entrepreneurs, because some of the members join the ethnic violence, when they see that others cooperate (1995). And Collier and Hoeffler insist that some participants to the ethnic violence join the others, because of the

prospects of the benefits that would accrue to them, like the share of loots, which are usually the consequences of ethnic violence (1998).

However, the theory of the instrumentalists has been eulogized by some social science theorists, for identifying the sources of ethnic conflicts as embedded in security issues (Posen 1993), competition for scarce resources and inequality (Gurr 1993) and greed (Collier and Hoeffler 2004), but it still needs to depend on the primordialist theory to explain the reason people easily mobilize and cooperate to execute ethnic violence. Of course, the instrumentalists must draw from the wisdom of the Primordialists' explanation that such is possible because of the sense of "common blood, a sense of shared values, shared interests, a sense of solidarity which has been theorized as the hallmark of primordialism (Che 2016). It is not also every time that the political actors succeed in mobilizing the people as they can weigh the consequences of the conflict and refuse to be mobilized.

The Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, is one of the first theorists to use the concept of Constructivism in his educational psychology of cognitive development. The constructivist theory of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts disclaims the primordialist model that ethnic identities are inherent and genetic, but they claim that they are socially constructed and reconstructed. Dawisha disclaims the position that physiological traits and psychological dispositions confer ethnic identities to ethnic groups (38). To Cerulo, ethnic identities are products of social construction, which are fabricated and re-fabricated (387). Wimmer also argues that ethnic identities can also be constructed and reconstructed through the processes of migration, colonization and conquest (2008). Chandra insists that ethnic identities are fluid, and not fixed, but can arise as a result of political, social and economic procedures. And individuals can have different ethnic identities (2004), and any of the ethnic identities may be activated, depending on the circumstances (Cerulo 389). Brass argues that ethnic violence can result from the inciting actions of political leaders on the public in order to grab power (1997). And in order to achieve the goal of ethnic violence, ethnic leaders also use language, rituals, symbols, history, etc, to instigate ethnic violence (Kaufman 2001).

However, the anti-constructivists dig out the lacunas in the theory. Jesse and Williams claim that the theory has not been able to explain the reason some ethnic groups with different identities live peacefully without indulging in ethnic violence (2011). They further argue that the constructivist theory has also failed because mass literacy ensures that ethnic identities are not reconstructed

(12). The anti-constructivists claim that, even though ethnic identities are socially constructed, it may not by itself explain violence (Fearon and Laitin 848). The inability of the constructivist theory to give explanations to the reason or reasons some ethnic identities still persist in some practices, even though they are harmful to the ethnic groups, have been pointed out by Jesse and Williams (12). Because no theory has been robust enough to explain the dynamics of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts, though each of them has significant contributions to the literatures (Williams 2015), some scholars have suggested a combination of both primordialist and constructivist theories in the study of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts. However, Posner (2004) claims that a combination of instrumentalist and constructivist theories should be used for the study. Some other scholars are of the view that in order to study ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts, a more integrated and holistic approach of using the three theories should be adopted, so that researcher would unfold the dynamics that ethnicity requires (Nigusie 38).

In this study on the ethnic conflicts in Nigerian Literature, the three theories are used to analyze the two novels – *Yellow-Yellow* and *The Chibok Girls* in order to unfold fully all the critical issues that are involved, since one or two of the theories would be inadequate to interrogate and investigate the issues of the ethnic identities and the ethnic conflicts and terrorism, which have plagued Nigeria for more than a century, represented in the novels.

Analyses of Ethnic Conflicts in the Worlds of the Two Nigerian Novels

The preceding pages of this study had examined the theories of ethnic identities, and ethnic conflicts to be used to unearth the ethnic conflicts, which may be intra-ethnic and/or inter-ethnic conflicts embedded in the novels. The wisdom of the English Romantic writer, Percy Bysshe Shelley, that “poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world” (1821) is applicable to the Nigerian novelists under study, as their texts have thematized the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts, which have ravaged Nigeria, for decades. However, their readers and the public do not recognize and acknowledge their contributions and impact on ethnic discourses and ethnic conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria. However, this narrative would change after the exploration into the different types of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts, the causes and consequences of ethnic conflicts, and the strategies for the management and resolution of ethnic conflicts and terrorism in the fictive worlds of the two novels.

Different Ethnic Identities and Types of Ethnic Conflicts in Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*

Kaine Agary's novel is an eco-fiction that has its historical setting in post-colonial Nigeria, in the 1990s, during the regime of General Sani Abacha, the dictatorial military head of state. The novel has its physical settings in Lagos, Port Harcourt and in an unnamed Ijaw village in the Niger Delta, which is symbolic of all the villages, where oil is explored and exploited in that region. This literature of environment calls for environmental justice in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, as it details hundreds of years of exploitations of the natural and human resources of the region, with consequential unpleasant results. The Niger Delta is a habitat for multi-ethnic groups, whose relationships are coloured by violent ethnic tensions and violent conflicts and the three theories of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts would be used, in the analysis of the novel.

Ethnic identities in the fictive world of the novel include the Ijaw ethnic group, which lives in the riverine undeveloped unnamed village as their traditional homeland, where oil is explored and exploited, by different oil companies. The Ijaw in the riverine area share the same ethnic consciousness with the Ijaw in Port Harcourt and Lagos who resent the ecological devastation of their ancestral homeland by different oil companies which exploit the resources of their land and waters with nothing left for them. The broadcasting of Ijaw problems outside the villages inspires the Ijaw youths in the homeland to engage in ethnic violence with their exploiters in the region. The other ethnic identity in the world of the novel is the Ogoni, whose environmental activists, like Ken Saro-Wiwa and Adaka Boro, and other environmentalists had been killed for their quest for environmental justice in the Niger Delta. The Kalabari ethnic group is not left out in the indigenous multi-ethnic groups that have their homelands and live in Niger Delta region, and these are the indigenous populations, usually the exploited in the world of the novel.

The other ethnic identity in the region are the Europeans, and other Westerners and Chinese, etc, and the exploitation of the region by this ethnic identity started in the 1800s with Royal Niger Company that engaged in oil palm trade, and now they are into the crude oil exploration and exploitation and logging of timber in the Delta region. This ethnic group has been described with the imagery of predation in their operations of their oil companies. Clarke claims, "Let us look at the Big Five one by one briefly. If you watch these animals

in the bush, they exhibit distinctive instincts and organizational features. The same is true for the corporate animals” (416).

This ethnic identity of these predatory exploiters are also joined with Nigerian business men and women, political leaders and oil workers, who do not share the same racial descent and the same cultural categories with the Europeans, but they belong to the same economic, social and political class, which exploits the human and natural resources of the region. Although some of them share the same descent with some of the indigenous ethnic groups in the region, they do not share their ideology and consciousness. For example, the Semokes live in Lagos, and they have their ancestral home in the unnamed Ijaw riverine village as Zilayefa, but they only come back to the village, during “one of those celebrations where many people came in from the city; maybe a burial, a wedding, or a chieftaincy installation” (17). The Semokes come back home to bury their eldest brother, after eight years they buried their fathers. They are not interested in the pains and sorrows and deprivations of their people and the destruction of the ecosystem in their unnamed Ijaw village.

There are also the local exploiters in the village, like the local government chairman and the Amananaowei, who “would afford a household generator” (22), while the other villagers live in total darkness at nights. The naïve narrator, who is an innocent eye, says that it is only once in a very long time that the Semokes and “their many friends from the city descended upon the village” (18), for one celebration or the other.

Finally, the other ethnic identity in the Niger Delta is the people of mixed-race, who are the products of the different racial groups who have come to exploit the resources of the Niger Delta for centuries. They are called the ‘yellows,’ and they include the old-time yellows, such as Sisi and her brother, who are the children of Portuguese and British palm oil traders with the local black women of the Niger Delta, and these are the first generation of the yellows. The second generation of the yellows is the products of the local women with “Syrian, Lebanese and Greek businessmen and sailors” (74). This group is lucky, because some of them, their fathers married their mothers; however, the rest of the yellows in the Niger Delta, which includes the narrator in the novel, Zilayefa:

...were **born-troways**, rejected by our fathers or, worse, nonexistent to them. Our crop of yellows is full of variety,

coloured by the Filipinos, the Chinese, the British and the Americans who worked in the oil sector (74).

The novel details the physical and spiritual journey of the main character, Zilayefa, who is called yellow, from her devastated unnamed Ijaw village to Port Harcourt and Lagos and the awareness that the journey gives her that there is the human and ecological devastation of the Niger Delta and the rejection of the mixed-race people by both their fathers and their mothers' indigenous ethnic groups, which inhabit the Niger Delta region. The other ethnic identity who shares the same black race with the mothers of the yellows see the yellows as "brats with conceited sensibilities" (75), and in the Niger Delta, people are judged by their colour, particularly the people of mixed-race, even before they know anything about them.

Furthermore, the novel x-rays the many ethnic identities in its Niger Delta setting, which engage in different violent ethnic conflicts, for various reasons, particularly for the purposes of oil exploration and exploitation. First, there is the intra-ethnic conflict between the leaders of the Ijaw ethnic identity in the unnamed Ijaw village where oil is explored and exploited and the unemployed and exploited youths of the village. When there is oil pollution of their land and water, they would complain to the traditional ruler and his council and, at times, the oil companies would refuse to pay, because they believe that the oil spillage is as a result of sabotage from the boys in the village. But there is an intra-ethnic tension within the Ijaw when, "young boys threatened to rough up the Amananaowei and his elders because rumors, probably true reached their ears that the Amananaowei and his elders had received monetary compensation, meant for the village, from the oil company and shared it among themselves" (40).

The images of violence between the boys and the traditional ruler, and his council, and the elders, and between the boys and the military that terrorize the boys, force Zilayefa to escape from the village, "from the conflicts, the violence, and the depression that characterized our villagelife" (21). Therefore, intra-ethnic conflicts that arise between the Ijaw youths and their leaders are not because of ethnic differences, but because of the economic exclusion of the youths from the shares of the compensation money from the oil companies, for oil spillages.

Apart from the intra-ethnic conflict in the Ijaw village over compensation money, there are also the outbreaks of inter-ethnic conflicts as a result of colonization, where more than two hundred and fifty ethnic groups were

violently yoked together by the British colonizers. The outcome, at the time of the military dictatorship of General Sani Abacha, is violent inter-ethnic conflicts in the fictive world of the novel between the northern and southern parts of the country. There are also conflicts everywhere as the "Ijaws and the Itsekiris were fighting each other, as were the Ifes and the Modakekes, the Kutebs and the Jukun-Chambas, and the Bassas and Ebiras" (109). The violent inter-ethnic conflicts between the different ethnic groups are as a result of land disputes, creation or review or relocation of local government headquarters, or over federal government distribution of funds from oil companies, or they could also be as a result of political insult.

However, people believe that the unprecedented number of violent ethnic conflicts in the country is as a result of the "land's unpredictable leader who was deliberately fanning the embers of ethnic conflict to shift focus from himself and his bid to succeed himself in the promised upcoming elections" (109). The conflicts between these ethnic groups are not necessarily as a result of ethnic differences, as they "had lived together in peace for hundreds of years" (109). The conflicts are as a result of a political actor galvanizing their ethnic differences and manipulating the differences to cause violent inter-ethnic conflicts. The conflicts again could be as a result of what Horowitz suggests that when the different ethnic groups in the Niger Delta and in Nigeria compare their economic, political and social situations with those of the other ethnic groups, they would feel the latter ethnic groups are better, and perceive those ethnic groups are threats to their existence, and would organize and mobilize their ethnic in-group to unleash inter-ethnic violence on the out-group.

In the novel, the Ijaw ethnic group also engages in inter-ethnic violent conflict with the white race or the ethnic identity that explores and exploits oil in the Niger Delta, particularly in their riverine villages. The sources of the inter-ethnic conflict are the oil pollution of the land and rivers and the oil companies' refusal to pay compensations to the people. Even though, according to the narrator, "The water that flowed with streaks of blue, purple, and red, as drops of oil escaped from the pipeline, was the same water I drank" (39). Ironically, the white expatriates who own the oil companies that destroy "our Niger Delta with impurity" (9), refuse to pay compensations to the villagers, because they can use the Nigerian military to terrorize and kill the boys for demanding for environmental justice. However, and ironically, the same "Whiteys were always the catch of the day, for the local girls. Whiteys gave a lot of money; bought gifts, rented flats for their girls" (37), whom they use as prostitutes, by sex

objectification of their bodies. The boys also engage in acts of terrorism for, “Some of them joined the boys from other villages to kidnap oil company executives or bar oil workers from doing their work” (9-10).

The inter-ethnic conflict between the two ethnic groups is definitely not because of cultural differences between them, even though they do not share the same descent or religion or customs, rituals, or history, etc, but as a result of social, political and economic processes that compel the Ijaw ethnic group to see them as exploiters who live at their backyard and exploit and oppress them, since the “Government was far away in Abuja, the oil companies and their pipelines were in our backyards. But, most importantly, “government had a heavy hand of justice” (138); therefore, there is no conflict between the different inter-ethnic identities in the riverine villages where oil is explored and exploited with the government, as the one that existed ended in the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other Ogoni leaders, killed by General Sani Abacha, for their quest for environmental justice in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Causes and Consequences of Ethnic Conflicts in the Novel

One of the most important causes of violent ethnic conflicts between the different ethnic identities in the Niger Delta is the pollution of oil from the oil pipelines that criss-cross the Niger Delta. The pollution which may be as a result of burst oil pipelines, out of old age, or as a result of sabotage from the youths of the region, has devastating toll on the Niger Delta ecosystem in the hinterlands. The novel starts with the story of the burst of one of the oil pipelines in Zilayefa’s village that “spilled oil over several hectares of land, my mother’s farm included” (3). The effects of the spill of oil has severe consequences on the environment, which include loss of farmland and the pollution of water, and the ecosystem is disturbed and distorted as, “The village had gradually lost, year after year, the creatures of the river to oil spills, and rain, gas flares, and who knows what else, according to the voices on the radio” (4). With the oil spill, naturally, there is loss of livelihood and economic power, as the people in the riverine villages can no longer carry their occupations of farming and fishing successfully, for the land becomes sterile, and the aquatic lives are either killed by the oil pollutions, or they flee to safer waters.

Another cause of ethnic conflict is seen in the presentation of the state as dysfunctional or failed state, where the head of state is a dictator, who wants to succeed himself as a civilian president. It is a country that produces crude oil for exportation; yet, all its refineries are not working, and the citizens

queue up at filling stations for days to buy fuel. It is a country with very corrupt police force, and its judiciary is also skewed. The corrupt nature of the people is seen in Damiete getting a driving license for Zilayefa for three thousand naira. Even though she cannot drive, on the payment of bribe money, "it took only a day to get my driver license" (86). Nigeria is further presented as a country without maintenance culture, as a public building like National Theatre, which is a national heritage that hosted FESTAC'77 is sinking, and in Broad Street, "touts could snatch necklace off your neck clearly and you would not feel anything" (87). A country which has a dysfunctional educational system, where teachers' salaries are not paid; students engage in examination malpractices, and there are cases of grades-for-sex syndrome, such a country is bound to breed violent conflicts as seen in the world of the novel.

Besides, the disempowerment of the villagers in the Niger Delta, as seen in the unnamed symbolic representation of the village in the Ijaw ethnic group in the novel, is part of the reason for the existence of violent intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region. Though it is from this riverine village, and others like it, that the wealth beneath their land is made, and the money goes into the pockets of the select few who rule Nigeria; yet, they are not provided with the basic infrastructure. There is no electricity, no pipe-borne water, no entertainment centres, like the clubs in Lagos, no libraries and books, the "educational scholarship for Niger Delta indigenes" (11) is only heard of, but no one has benefitted from it. Also, the skills-acquisition programmes organized by the government agencies and set up to address the developmental needs of the Niger Delta are never implemented in the villages where the oil that feeds the nation and enrich wealthy Nigerians and expatriates and their companies are produced. Again, the villagers' only means of transportation is by canoes, and cars are never seen in the village, except only when the wealthy natives, like the Semokes, come into the village, for one ceremony, or the other, but they rarely do so. The brutal exploitation of the villages that are kept undeveloped frustrates the villagers, particularly the young boys and girls, who resort to either militancy, as a way of addressing the Niger Delta exploitation, while the girls go into prostitution in Port Harcourt or Bonny or Warri, as a means of economic survival from the harsh realities of environmental injustice that is their everyday experience in the villages.

The economic marginalization of the people of the Niger Delta, particularly those who come from the villages where oil is exploited that gives the wealth that the expatriates and a few Nigerians enjoy is one of the

causes of violent ethnic conflicts and terrorism in the novel. What happens in the Niger Delta is what Craig Griffith, after his forty-year ethnographic research on racial and ethnic categories in the incorporation of parts of the world into the global economy, claims that “ethnic distinctions” serve to “allocate different categories of workers to rungs on the scale of labour markets, relegating stigmatized populations to the lower levels and insulating the higher echelons from competition from below” (71).

It is observed that in the novel, and in the labour market in the Niger Delta, the expatriates occupy the highest echelon and they earn more money than Nigerians, who are also working in the same oil companies. And the qualification of this group of Nigerians to be employed in the oil companies is that they must be educated to the university level. However, there are no opportunities for educational advancement for the villagers in the Niger Delta, so the boys end up being frustrated and engaged in criminal activities, like stealing and selling “the transformer for the village generator, so there was no electricity” (22), or kidnapping the oil workers, where “the police had caught and killed them” (10), or they can go to the city and pimp for prostitutes, or they get engaged in menial jobs in the villages. Also, for the girls in the village, they can stay in the village and breed children whose future is as bleak as their own, or like Zilayefa, they look out to “meet that special someone who would save me from my certain death in my claustrophobic village” (17). The options for the girls when they leave their villages are also as constricted as those of the boys, as they go into prostitution, or they are house girls to rich families in the cities, or learn a trade. So with the economic exploitation of the villagers in the riverine areas of the Niger Delta, who are deliberately frustrated from being employed in any job in the oil industry, there is naturally violent intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts among the various ethnic groups in the Niger Delta, and particularly, between them and the oil companies.

The ethnic conflicts and acts of terrorism are not actually because of the ethnic differences between the various ethnic groups, but because of the economic, political and social differences, which the ethnic activists manipulate, organize and mobilize their different groups to inflict ethnic violence and terrorism on the out-group, who they feel are a threat to them, as they presumably perceived themselves to be disadvantaged and played out from enjoying the resources of their land.

One of the consequences of the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic clashes in the multi-ethnic Niger Delta is the monumental loss of lives. For instance, in the

several clashes between the Ijaw and Itsekiri over resource control and the ownership of Warri, each side blames the other side for their inter-ethnic clashes. While the Itsekiri would go to the press and report that the “vicious, heartless Ijaws had killed hundreds of the kin” (157), the Ijaws would blame the Itsekiris who “started trouble and that the Isekiris had massacred hundreds of their own kin” (157). But one interesting thing about the viciousness of this inter-ethnic clashes, where even relations are not spared is that, “So many people of mixed Ijaw and Isekiri parentage had been killed in the conflicts” (157). It is just all senseless. In the ethnic conflicts in the novel, it is obvious that cultural or ethnic differences are not the cause of the violent conflicts but land dispute and the control of resources. In that case, “Who were the tenants?” (157), as the “youth groups had become well oil extortion machines all in the name of the struggle” (158).

Prostitution by the girls is one of the consequences of the economic exploitation, and the fall-out of the intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts in the Niger Delta, which principally centre on sex and gender conflict. From the eco-poetic reading of the novel, it is not out of the way to say that nature and women are exploited in the Nigeria Delta settings of the novel. It is the duty of the women to provide sustenance for their families, even in the olden days. Also, as the source of wealth changes from fishing and farming to working in the various oil companies in the present period of the narration of the story in the novel, the women from the village that produces the oil that is the source of the wealth of the nation are rarely educated, in order to be employed in the oil companies. Because of the lack of robust employment opportunities for the villagers from the village, after secondary school in the village, the dream of every girl is to leave the village, a dream which Zilayefa, the first-person naïve narrator, describes the village with the images of monotony, death and annihilation, because, “The sameness of life in the village would kill me if I did not escape” (10). As she tries desperately to cling onto Sergio, a Spanish businessman, who followed the Semokes to the village, for the burial of their eldest brother, leaves her unceremoniously. She is dejected that her escape from the village is frustrated for, “I knew every square inch of my village and I felt like a trapped animal” (31). And she is afraid that if she does not leave the village that is riddled with violence and criminality and monotony of life, she decides that, “I needed to go somewhere, do something besides the daily chores of village life that threatened to choke me to death” (33). And like Zilayefa, her mother, Binabi, before her, the choices of the girls are limited, as

they don't have much education and the oil labour market is not for them. They can only provide sexual pleasure to the different male oil workers, particularly the expatriate oil workers, the different white sailors, etc. And they would do everything and anything to get the white male customers, including bleaching their skins with chemicals, fighting off other girls who want to snatch their men, getting medicine men to prepare love potion for them to use to get and retain the men.

In order to survive in their competitive prostitution business in the cities, they also endure a lot. Some of them fall into the "hands of crazy whitey who beat them up or push objects like bottles into their privates as part of the 'fun'" (37). They are also beaten by the local black boys who would attack the shacks where they live and steal their money. Ironically, it is not only the expatriates, who patronize and exploit them as prostitutes, the local men also use them, as their sex-slaves. In the fictive world of the novel, there is the sexual objectification of the girls. For instance, Sisi who has a daughter for a white man is not married to the man, because the man's father objects to their marriage. Zilayefa's father, a Greek sailor, never marries the mother and abandons her, as a teenager, and sails away. Also, despite the effort by Lolo to be loved by Kamal, and she is ready to marry him despite her family's objection to their relationship, he never marries her, but abandons her, broken-hearted. Zilayefa who gets pregnant by a man old enough to be her father, Admiral, a retired naval officer, who is divorced with two children, also abandons her, when she tells him that she is pregnant for him. It then dawns on her that he loves his two children, who are living in Spain with his divorced wife, but, "The other children he was interested in were the ones who kept his bed warm" (174). Therefore, the woman's body becomes a site for degradation and exploitation, like the land and waters of the villages in the Niger Delta Region, where oil is explored and exploited, without any economic and social benefits to the indigenous ethnic identities that inhabit the region.

One harrowing experience of the prostitution in the Niger Delta cities and villages for more than three centuries is the traumatic existence of the people of mixed-race, the products of the sexual encounters between the various shades of white men and the indigent, uneducated and unemployed or under-employed local women that inhabit the various villages and cities of the Niger Delta, which the novel brings to the glare of the readers. Some of them, like Sisi, who is in her seventies, are successful and live mostly in cities. There are also a second group of yellows, and this group is lucky, because they know

their fathers, and their fathers send some of them to school abroad. The third group of yellows is the ones their fathers abandon, like Zilayefa, who does not know anything about her father, except that his is a Greek sailor, who has a brief affair with her mother and abandons her. Apart from the general discrimination of the women in the fictive world of the novel, the mixed-race people, without fathers, bear extra burden from the abandonment of their fathers. The different mothers' ethnic groups do not accept them, and they are also discriminated against. They are given such derisive names as "African-profits," "born-troways," "ashawo-pickins," "fathers-unknown," and there are more and more of her kind "running around the slums of Port Harcourt" (171). Because of the stigmatization of the children of the mixed-race, when she gets pregnant and is not sure whether Admiral is the father of the unborn child, or Sergio, whom she has a sexual fling with, she makes a resolution, "I could not bring Sergio's child into my world. I could not allow him a place in my heart" (173). Since she does not want a child that would go through her own harrowing experience, she decides to abort the foetus and have a "rebirth along with Nigeria" (177), whose dictatorial leader has suddenly died of heart attack.

Strategies for the Management and Resolution of Ethnic Conflicts in the Novel

It is obvious that the dictatorial government of General Sani Abacha, and benefitting oil companies, and the wealthy Nigerians, who eat out of the oil exploration and exploitation in the Niger Delta, never plan for any strategies for the management and resolution of the violent intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts that rage on in the Niger Delta. The government is not interested in whether the indigenes of the villages in the Niger Delta benefit from its educational scholarships meant for them or the skill acquisition programmes. It is not also interested in whether the oil companies mop up the polluted land, water and air environments they operate in, or is the government interested in whether they pay compensations to the villagers or not, after oil pollutions, or whether the compensations they pay reach every adult member in the villages.

Like the federal government, the military governor of the state is only interested in establishing social and cultural development committee to promote ethnic culture in Port Harcourt only. Though it starves the committee of funds, he does not find it necessary to establish the same in the villages, where such a thing would help the rural communities that lack modern facilities for entertainment. The novelist, therefore, portrays a country that has

experienced state failure, and the leaders are not keen on settling the various violent ethnic conflicts that besiege various parts of the country, including the Niger Delta Region. For instance, the inter-tribal clashes between the Isekiri and the Ijaw have claimed hundreds of lives, but the leaders lack the will to stop them. Even leaders from the Niger Delta, like Mrs West and Admiral, who are from the region, with the Semokes, do not show any interest in stopping the clashes that have claimed hundreds of lives of their youths, but their major interest is which of them would be appointed into political offices. To them, their children are not living in the villages, where the unemployed and poverty-ridden and frustrated youths engage in dangerous militancy, which claim their lives. And the various ethnic leaders who mobilize them do not mention their deaths in the radio programmes and in their debates on the Niger Delta issues. They live faraway with their children from the realities of the devastated and devastating experiences of the everyday life of the villagers.

It is also unfortunate that inter-ethnic marriages that would have helped to stop or ameliorate some of the ethnic tensions in the multi-ethnic region do not work, as they are as etiolated as the environment of the delta. For instance, Admiral is divorced from his wife, and he simply uses the young girls as his sex objects, and abandons them, particularly when he gets them pregnant, and looks for other sex toys to use. Even the educated girls from the wealthy families, like Lolo, are not also spared from the sexual objectification of women, like Zilayefa, who comes from the lower class of impoverished natives of the Niger Delta. Therefore, there is no mechanism to manage and resolve the violent intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic conflicts in the Niger Delta region in the world of the novel.

Different Ethnic Identities and Types of Ethnic Conflicts in Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnapping and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria*

Helon Habila's non-fiction novel is set in Northern Nigeria, particularly in Borno and Yobe States within the historical period of Boko Haram insurgency, which started in July, 2009, under Presidents Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, details the gory story of the bloodiest ethno-religious conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria, since after the Nigerian Civil War. The ethnic identities and the ethnic conflicts in the true-life story can better be explained and analyzed through the instrumentalist and constructivist theories of ethnic identities and ethnic conflicts. In the world of the *the Chibok Girls ...*, there are different ethnic identities, which inhabit the fictive settings. And it is within these different

ethnic identities, most of them having no inherent, biological and genealogical tie, which arise very violent ethno-religious and class conflicts. The first ethnic identity in the world of the novel is the Chibok people, a minority group in Borno State, with a population of 66,000. The mother tongue of the Chibok ethnic group is Kibaku, and it is an isolated, neglected and the poorest group with no modern infrastructure. However, it springs to media and public attention on April 14, 2014, after Boko Haram's "kidnapping of over 276 school girls" (13) at Government Secondary School, Chibok, in what should be seen as ethno-religious violent conflicts, terrorism, gender and class conflicts, which ravage North-East, North-West and North-Central parts of Nigeria till today.

The second ethnic identity in the novel is the Fulani herders, who presumably occupy the Sambisa Forest, and one of their women helps three of the escaped Chibok girls to get home, by providing them with clothing and taking them back to Chibok. This ethnic group, which comes in with the Islamic Jihadist, Uthman Dan Fodio, conquers the indigenous Hausa ethnic group, which inhabits Sokoto, and he establishes his Caliphate in Sokoto, from where they dislodge other groups, including the Jukun, that is then the dominant ethnic group in Gombe. The wars that Uthman Dan Fodio and his followers levy on the Northern parts of Nigeria, before they are stopped by the British imperialist quest, is not only out of religious zeal, but it also has the cloak of ethnic undertone: the quest to conquer and establish the Fulani Empire in Northern Nigeria. According to Toyin Falola, a renowned Nigerian historian, "Islam arrived in the Northern region, first in Kanem Borno and spreading west into Hausa territories by the fourteen century" (3). In other words, the Jihadist War of 1804 is a subterfuge for territorial conquest and territorial expansionist policy, because it is through the "series of holy war that saw the Fulani people that oust the Hausa from power" (*The Chibok Girls* 41).

The undertone of using religious wars by ethnic entrepreneurs to organize and execute a personal and group goal is seen in the fact that "A Fulani emir was installed over the mostly Hausa population" (41). It is, therefore, a continuation of the Jihadist enterprise, when Boko Haram attacks Chibok, carrying off their girls as a sign of the feminization of the Chibok men and Chibok ethnic group and their territory, an enterprise that started before British colonization and amalgamation of Nigeria, where, "The various clans and groups making up the Kibaku had been driven to the Chibok Hills by Fulani Jihadists and slave raiders in the nineteenth century" (19).

The other ethnic identity in the world of the novel is the Kanuri in Borno State, which is of the El Kanemi Empire, and had embraced Islam, before Uthman Fodio's Jihad, and was never conquered by Jihadists. It is the ethnic group that makes up the other twenty-six local government areas of Borno State, and they are Muslims, and in the majority in the state. In the Middle Belt or the North Central are the other ethnic identities, which are not conquered and Islamized by the Fulani Jihadists before 1914, but they are regarded as "Infidels" and "pagans" by the Sokoto Caliphate. And these communities of the Middle Belt, which provide slave labour to the agrarian economy of the Sokoto Caliphate, is described as, "The area became a virtual slave farm" (Falola cited in Habila 41). The other ethnic identity in the non-fiction novel in the Islamic fundamentalists, who do not have the same ethnic descent with the others, but they are people who use religious fundamentalism to struggle for political, social and economic inclusion in the country. These include the members of the 1980s Maitatsine whose members are naturalized immigrants from Cameroon, Niger and Chad. These naturalized immigrants or citizens also share the same ethnic identity with the Almajiri children, who roam the streets of the world of the novel, who are disempowered from their childhood by their religion. This group also shares the same ethnic identity with the Boko Haram insurgents who, because of the unbridled corruption that destroys Nigeria, have radical ideologies, which exclude Western influences – western education, western civilization and western modernization – from their lives. They also get their membership from prisoners they set free in jailbreaks and the men and boys they forcefully recruit, when they raid towns, villages and farms, etc.

The last ethnic identity in the world of *The Chibok Girls* is the members of the Armed Forces, who are made up of the soldiers who come from different ethnic groups and regions in Nigeria. One remarkable thing about them is that they don't speak the local languages with the people, for they are the JTF's "coalition of the different branches of the armed forces formed on an ad-hoc basis to fight the insurgency" (11). They are assisted by the local civilian vigilantes; they man the checkpoints and engage the insurgents in different war zones in the North-East, particularly in Borno and Yobe States. They all complain of non-payment of their salaries for months, their "friends are killed by Boko Haram" (12), and the roadblocks where they are supposed to enforce "traffic laws and ensure travellers' safety, in reality, are nothing but extortion points" (12).

The main type of violent conflict in Northern Nigeria is ethno-religious in nature, and it has been so from the time of Uthman Dan Fodio's Jihad in 1804 to the present time. There have been other violent conflicts fought as a result of political, social and economic processes that dispossess a majority of the people and cause a class conflict over territories. The ethnic identities, which are not inherent, fixed and biological and the violent inter-ethnic conflicts, which are not also because of ethnic and cultural differences, can be explained through both the theories of instrumentalism and constructivism as the Northern religious and political leaders organize and mobilize their ethnic and religious groups, using the different economic, political, social and class differences between them and other groups to organize and levy violent ethno-religious and class conflicts and terrorism on the Nigerian State and its people. For instance, the Maitatsine uprising is not strictly as a result of ethnic and religious differences, for its leader, Muhammadu Marwa, is a Cameroon immigrant, with its other members made of the "poor, the many unemployed immigrants from Niger, Chad and Cameroon, and the **almajiri**" fought a war with the Nigerian State in the 1980s.

The war which may be viewed as "the first mass religious uprising" (37) in post-independence Nigeria is neither strictly religious nor ethnic in nature, but a class-related conflict, which Toyin Falola rightly points out that it occurred "against a backdrop of declining revenues, high unemployment rates, political corruption and rivalries, government mismanagement, rampant materialism and serious popular concern about the erosion of moral and religious values" (cited in Habila 37). These religious leaders use religious fundamentalism to organize and mobilize the poor and the dispossessed excluded from political, social and economic processes in the country, to fight the war for the group's interests.

The same situation is observable in the present Boko Haram War that is ravaging the North-East and North-West of the country, where the monumental corruption in the country, extreme moral decadence and political turmoil in the country have forced Mohammed Yusuf, the founder of the Boko Haram, to establish a territory that is run exclusively on Islamic law, which excludes western influences, education and modernity. Therefore, the different ethnic identities in the north do not share the same ancestral descent or history or religions, customs, values, but they share the same language, Hausa, and the violent ethnic conflicts in the north may appear as ethno-religious wars, but underneath them, there are also class and gender conflicts. Though, the human

rights activist, Ogebe, may see the Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism in the north as Islamization agenda by the Muslims, and a “systematic plan to rid the region of all Christians” (62), and the philanthropist, Becky Gadzama, a Christian from Lassa, whose village has been overrun by the Boko Haram, may also see it as a gender conflict to “stop education, especially that of young girls,” (61), in reality, they are ethno-religious and class conflicts fought to achieve group interests. For instance, the descriptions of the Boko Haram and Maitatsine insurgents and their victims in Habila’s text are members of marginalized groups. Their victims are described as “ordinary girls” (67) from poor and neglected Chibok village, and their captors are “Boko Haram members, who were ordinary boys in dirty shirts and slippers, shooting at whoever they were told to shoot at by their handlers” (67). And the leader of the Maitatsine of the narrator’s childhood experience in the 1980s after Muhammadu Marwa has been captured and killed is not a picture of what he has expected to see, “a two-headed monster, but he was a middle-aged man with one bad eye and an emaciated body” (67).

Causes and Consequences of Ethnic Conflicts in the Novel

One of the consequences of ethnic conflicts and terrorism in Nigeria, which is depicted in the novel, is traceable to the warped political system in the country. There is the indictment of indirect rule of the British colonization process that yoked together more than “200 million people and over 400 ethnic groups, each speaking its own distinct language” (30), as a country, without any attempt whatsoever to unify them. And soon after independence in 1960, the ethnic, cultural and linguistic fault-lines emerge with ethnic disunity and disharmony, which ends in a genocidal civil war levied on the South-Eastern Nigeria, when the Igbo ethnic group tries to secede from the rest of the country, and the attempt “took over a million lives, most of them civilian” (30). What follows are a series of coups and counter-coups, unresolved political assassinations, electoral violence and thuggery, and rigging of elections. Nigeria, therefore, is presented as a failed state, where nothing works, even in Chibok, where the girls are kidnapped.

Again, the government of President Goodluck Jonathan is presented as being weak and clueless, and he is not interested in the rescue of the Chibok girls, when they are kidnapped initially. He erroneously sees the kidnap saga as the problem of the north. Also, President Muhammadu Buhari’s government which comes into power on 1st October, 2015, coasting to power on the back of the Chibok girls does not fair better in the effort to rescue and bring back the

kidnapped Chibok girls. Despite his meeting with their parents, the media hype, the involvement of the NGOs and the Nigerian security, the president who “had renewed his pledge to continue the search for the missing girls” (24) has been an unfulfilled and a fruitless effort. Up until today, it is obvious that the Nigerian leaders – military and civilian – who stepped into the shoes of the British colonizers are worse than the colonizers as they unleash unmitigated violence and mayhem on the people, and use “Ethnic and religious divisions, used so successfully by the British during the colonial era to divide the people” (42). Moreover, the state governments keep private armies for their re-election bids, as part of the state-sponsored violence on the people, as the conflicts degenerate further to the lower levels, where “students and the masses vent their frustrations in religious violence, kidnappings, and robberies” (31).

The degenerative economic contour of the country is also one of the crucial factors, which gives rise to the violent ethno-religious and class conflicts in the northern part of the country in the novel. Nigeria is presented in the non-fiction novel as a country that is riddled with corruption. The new inheritors of the British colonial rule corner the “state money and privilege for personal use became the norm” (42). During the oil boom era, immediately after the civil war in the 1970, which is regarded as the country’s golden era, the country is awash with petro-dollars, and the government doubles the salaries of public servants in those years of economic plenty, when “kleptocracy hadn’t yet taken root as a principle of governance” (42). The government gives scholarship to Nigerians from primary to university level, and every graduate is assured of job opportunity. However, and ironically, despite the stupendous wealth the country enjoys, “Nigeria missed the chance to establish a solid foundation for its economic future through industrialization” (42). There is obvious mismanagement of state funds, as seen in wasteful expenditures, like “the cement armada” of 1975, where the government imports twenty million tons of cement a year to Lagos port that could only hold one million tons of cement. And the corruption of every sector of the economy also cripples the country. The corruption in the country is visible and trickles down to the junior and young soldiers who man the numerous roadblocks in Nigeria. The evidence of mass corruption in the, “Name of the fight against terror is now beginning to emerge” (60). Not only that the then national security adviser of the Goodluck Jonathan’s government “allegedly misappropriated billions of dollars budgeted for purchasing weapons and helicopters for the fight against terror” (60), but also his former defence chief “has also been arrested and accused of having

skimmed over \$ 1.5 million every month from his men's salaries for years. Corruption must have even scuttled ransom negotiations for the girls" (60). It becomes very glaring that in a country where both the military and the civilian leaders siphon all the money in the national treasury, the ethnic identity that comprises the lower class of people uses religious fundamentalism or insurgency to fight for their group's goals or interests.

However, the proximate cause of the Boko Haram terrorism in July 2009 is the killing of the Boko Haram founder, Mohammed Yusuf. Even though there have been other religious fundamentalists in the northern parts of Nigeria, which includes Maitastine uprising of the 1980s, and the Kannama uprising in 2003. The latter group "attacked police station in Kannama. They also went to the neighboring city of Damaturu to carry out further attacks. They were repelled; some were killed, others arrested" (51). But for the recent insurgency of the Boko Haram, its leader wants to establish an Islamic State, "to create a parallel government run on strict Sharia Law, free from what he considered the corrupting influence of democracy, western education, and western ways of life" (51). With his declaration of war on the state, his followers start blowing up public buildings, burning churches and mosques, organizing jailbreaks, attacking police stations and military armories in order to get weapons with which to fight the insurgency. However, his "good fortunes ran out, and on July 11, 2009, he was killed by the security forces" (52). With his death, his second in command, Abubakar Shekau, takes over the leadership of Boko Haram, and wages an invidious war that has killed thousands of Nigerians, displaced millions of people, destroyed as many civilian and military infrastructures as the terrorist war continues to rage in Northern Nigeria. And for a man who has elevated the insurgency beyond a religious Jihad, when he states in one of his propaganda videos in 2012, "I enjoy killing anyone that God commands me to kill, the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams" (15). Therefore, Christians, Muslims, foreigners and soldiers have been slaughtered in the war, as well as the burning of churches, mosques, schools, markets, hotels, and other private and public buildings, as nothing is spared in the raging terrorist war in the country.

The consequences of the Boko Haram insurgency which have been part of this country for more than a decade and half years cannot be underestimated. It has caused havoc and ruination to Nigeria. With the scourge of Boko Haram terrorism, it is not out of the way to describe Nigeria as a "Hobbesian nightmare," and a state of widespread anarchy characterized by

wanton destruction of life and property” (Bassey 23). In *The Chibok Girls*, Habila presents a non-fictional world of reality, where lives are worthless and people can be killed, and no questions are asked, as the culprits walk away freely. In a state where the leader of a sect would publicly announce that part of its ideology is killing people like rams, human lives are wasted by the sect in order to maintain its religious ideology, and the government also kills the sect members like flies. For instance, the Boko Haram “suicide bombers struck a market in the town of Madagali in Adamawa State, killing more than twenty-five people. In neighbouring Maiduguri, several attacks from the sect killed more than thirty people and injured over a hundred” (15). In Kwaga village that is neighbour to Chibok, before the sect raids the school and abducts 276 girls, “one Sunday they killed over fifty Christians. In other neighbouring villages as well” (20). Boko Haram killings have no exception, for on February 2014, they raid Federal Government College, Buni Yadi, a co-educational secondary school, at night, and they set the girls free, “but fifty-nine boys were murdered in cold blood” (18). In the Boko Haram’s rampage in the North-East of Nigeria, it turns the state into killing fields, where “preachers had been slaughtered in front of their congregation and in their homes, sons had killed their fathers and had informed on their teachers, and neighbours had turned against neighbours” (47). But the government also engages the sect in a ferocious reprisal attacks. In its first confrontational attack with the Nigerian military, the sect loses more than a thousand of its members, as the military want to crush their insurrection. The violent conflict which “acts as a means to an end” (Ogbewe 19), which is Mohammed Yusuf’s attempt to establish an Islamic State within Borno State, is described by the narrator to be “the bloodiest conflict Nigeria had seen since the Biafran War in 1967” (48). The gory sight of human wastage and carnage during the 2009 uprising is described in such a heart-breaking manner in, “There were so many dead bodies in the streets they had brought by dumpster trucks to the mortuary, which overflowed and the dead were piled up in the yard. The decomposing bodies smelled so bad that people in the neighbourhood deserted their homes” (48).

Apart from the huge number of lives that is lost, which is an everyday experience of Nigerians in practically every part of the country today, the violent inter-ethnic conflicts and terrorism, “had and is still taking its toll on the development of the Nigerian nation” (Obizulike-Osuofia 56). The religious fundamentalist sect spares nothing in its ferocious and wanton terrorist attacks on the private and public infrastructures in the region. Its bombing spree targets

“hospitals, churches, mosques, and markets” (17), and in order to raise funds, “they raided banks, mostly in rural areas, hauling away millions of naira, which they used to sponsor their insurgency” (17).

In every war, without any exceptions, there are human rights abuses, and these are undeniably so with the Boko Haram insurgency. The violations of the human rights of the fighters – both the soldiers and the insurgents – are involved. The uprising of the sect intensifies when there is the extra-judicial killing of leader of the Boko Haram Sect, Mohammed Yusuf. When he is caught, there are videos of him surrounded by police men, and he is looking alert and confident, defending himself. However, “Hours later he would be dead – killed as he tried to escape, according to the government. There are pictures that show his bullet-riddled body, still in handcuffs” (49). His brutal killing, without court trial, which has been part of the country’s governance, sparks unprecedented terrorist attacks that the country has not been able to put out up until today. The violation of Yusuf’s right to fair hearing before a competent court in Nigeria also inspires the sect not to take the soldiers as prisoners of war, as they “relished capturing soldiers alive and slaughtering them like rams for propaganda videos” (14).

The civilian population in the war-torn region is not also spared the breaches of their human rights to life and right to live in dignity. At the several checkpoints the military mount on the roads, not only that they are described by the narrator as extortion points, and passengers in commercial vehicles have to get down from the vehicles and walk through the checkpoints on foot but, “Often male passengers had to take off their shirts and raise their hands as they passed the soldiers” (12). The Jonathan government in its attempt to hide its incompetence and its cluelessness in handling the Chibok girls’ kidnapping “had placed the town on lockdown” (13), and journalists, both foreign and local ones, are persona non grata in Chibok.

Again, the inept government, instead of investigating the conspiracy theory, where the principal of the school breaches security reports and ensures that the female students are locked up in the school compound until the insurgents come in the night and whisk them off; yet, no serious attempts have been made to bring back the girls from their captors. The government rather indulges in gross violations of the fundamental rights of the teachers in the school. Not only that since after the attacks, the school at Chibok has been closed down, and the teachers and administrators of the school are underemployed, but their rights to freedom of speech and movements have

been violated because, “Madu said he had strict instructions from the government not to talk to reporters. He wasn’t even allowed to travel outside Chibok without permission” (32).

The secrecy that surrounds the kidnap of the Chibok girls during Jonathan’s government also spreads a dark canvas on the presidency of Muhammadu Buhari, who succeeds President Jonathan, with a promise to find and release the girls from their terrorist abductors. Though the parents of the girls held a closed door meeting with him, when he came into office in 2015, riding on the wing of the inability of Jonathan’s government to bring back the girls, but “the parents had been asked not to talk about it” (24). So, the two governments have sacrificed the girls to Boko Haram insurgents as their sex-slaves or “wives”, who do not only assuage the libido of the terrorist fighters, but they are the vehicles for the procreation of future Boko Haram fighters. The two governments have also sacrificed the rights to education of the girls, their right to freedom from discrimination, their right and freedom from servitude and slavery in their gross negligence to bring back the girls. So out of the 276 girls abducted from Chibok Secondary School on 14th April, 2014, fifty-seven of the girls escaped on their own from their captors, “Nkeki is the only one of the 219 girls to be rescued to date” (63).

Even then, it is not through the deliberate act of the Nigerian government and military, but it is the JTF vigilantes that find her hiding in a village close to Sambisa Forest, “with her four-month-old baby and the man who claimed to be her husband – a captive, she said, forced to be a fighter, who was ordered by Boko Haram to marry Nkeki before escaping with her” (63). By the government’s neglect to curb the insurgency, the future of the children at the epicenter of Boko Haram attacks, Borno and Yobe States, are not assured, and they stay at checkpoints “selling water and food to travellers” (12).

One other negative consequences of the insurgency in the North-East and North-West of Nigeria is the influx of refugees and internally displaced persons in other countries close to Nigeria and in other northern states. The war has also spread into other sub-Saharan neighboring countries and has destabilized the region, as it also spreads to Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The epicenter of the war, which is the North-East, has “hundreds of such camps all over the northeast, Yola, Bauchi, Gombe, Damaturu, Kano, and of course Maiduguri” have influx of internally displaced persons who come from the villages Boko Haram fighters have attacked with the desire to establish their

territories there. These camps are not maintained by the government, but they are “run by churches and foreign organizations and individuals” (54).

Different camps are run for men, and for women, and also for repentant Boko Haram fighters, who signed up for their rehabilitation. In the camps, there are orphans whose parents have been killed. And for these children, the future is bleak for them in a country where there is leadership failure, for the “boys would end begging in the streets and the girls would likely become prostitutes” (53). There are also women who used to be the captured “wives” of the Boko Haram insurgents with their children. Those ones are rejected by their families and communities, and they live in the refugee camps. Besides, there are threats to the refugees in the camps, which may come from the outbreak of diseases, because of the filth in the camps, or from Boko Haram infiltrators. In Maiduguri, “a bomb exploded in one of the camps, killing twenty-four people. A week later, two female suicide bombers killed at least fifty-eight in a camp in Dikwa, some fifty-five miles from Maiduguri” (54). The workers in the camps also have to contain with female refugees, who suffer from Stockholm Syndrome. These are women who have been rescued from the Boko Haram enclaves, but they want to escape back to their Boko Haram husbands, because they “empathized so much with their kidnappers and their cause that they wanted to go back to them” (53).

The Strategies for the Management and Resolution of Ethnic Conflicts in the Novel

The story of the Chibok girls which is presented with the first-person narrative technique unveils Nigeria as a failed state, whose “continuous economic decline plays a major part in the conflict” (Ali 342). In the narrative, it is obvious that monumental corruption, apart from the ineptitude of the leaders, makes it impossible for the country to record meaningful success against the sect, which is not only sponsored by wealthy politicians, but also has allegiance to more deadly international terrorist organizations, like Al Qaeda and ISIS. There is also no meaningful effort, on the part of the government, to negotiate with the sect to end its vicious attacks on the North-East and North-West parts of the country. The negotiations for ransom to be paid to bring back the Chibok girls from captivity is scuttled by a top aid of President Jonathan’s government, Hassan Tukur, who embezzled the fund. Again, the effort of the federal government for the foreign negotiator, Stephen Davis, to negotiate with the Boko Haram fighters to surrender also ends in a fruitless effort, because “Davis said he

arrived hours late and by then no one was there" (59-60), at the planned place of the negotiation.

The government of President Jonathan is presented in the novel as being weak, unserious, clueless, and lacks empathy and cannot resolve the violent and unmitigated ethno-religious and class conflicts and terrorism, as they continue to rage on in the country for close to two decades. The Nigerian State also finds it impossible to manage the crises, including managing the refugees and IDPs generated by the conflicts. It is through the efforts of NGOs, religious groups, philanthropists and human rights activists that some of the girls are sent to schools in Jos and Katsina to continue with their secondary education, while some of the girls are helped to escape to the United States of America. It is through the advocacy of these girls in the United States, who grant interviews to print and electronic media and give testimonies before the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa that international and local pressures, and also through the persuasion of the Nobel Peace Laureate, Malala Yousafzai, that President Goodluck Jonathan is forced to visit Chibok to "meet the parents of the missing girls" (59). As at today, nobody has given any account of the missing Chibok girls; the leaders and the country have moved on, leaving only the parents of the girls, who at "least eighteen parents had died of stress-related illness like heart failure, stomach ulcers and hypertension" (58), while some of them have lost their minds. And "some of the parents walking in the village, it was as if there was no blood in their bodies" (58), while the sect which is suspected to be "sponsored by some powerful individuals" (50) continue to wreak havoc on the lives of common Nigerians and their property, without the state's plan to manage and resolve the violent conflict

Conclusion

A combination of primordialist, instrumentalist and constructivist theoretical model has been used in the analyses of the two Nigerian novels – Kaine Agary's *Yellow-Yellow* and Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria*. The novels which have been seen to deal with either the issues of environmental injustice, exploitation of women by oppressive patriarchal systems, and Islamic fundamentalism also raise the salient issues of violent class and ethno-religious conflicts and terrorism in the worlds of the texts, justifying the view that literary texts can yield to various different interpretations and meanings, not even contemplated by the authors.

However, the issues of the different ethnic identities and types of ethnic conflicts, the causes and consequences of the ethnic conflicts, as well as the

strategies for the management and resolutions of these intra-ethnic and violent inter-ethnic conflicts, which are nightmares in Nigeria today, have been largely ignored by the British colonizers and Nigerian, past and present, leaders. The literary critics of these Nigerian novels, the reading public, the British and other Westerners, have dismissively tagged the incessant ethnic conflicts in Nigeria, like in other African countries, as arising from the inherent, biological, barbaric and genetically-induced (Campbell 363) ethno-cultural and linguistic differences between the different ethnic groups in Nigeria. This research finding, however, has shown and proven falsehood to such claims. For instance, in the world of Agary's *Yellow-Yellow*, the ethnic groups that inhabit the world of the novel are heterogeneous, but there are intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic disruptive violent conflicts and militancy in the Niger Delta setting of the novel as a result of ethnic and linguistic differences, but they are caused oil pollution, resource control and economic exploitation of the indigenous population of the region.

Besides, the analysis of the post-independence novel of Helon Habila shows that the different ethnic identities and the ethnic and cultural differences between them are not actually the sources of conflicts and terrorism in the novels, but they are the tools or instruments which different post-colonial leaders – military and political – and other ethnic entrepreneurs or actors in the novels use to organize and mobilize their different ethnic groups to unleash violence on the other out-groups.

It is further submitted that the different violent ethnic conflicts, the coups and counter-coups of the 1960s to 1990s, the demand for secession and the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-1970 in the South-East, the ecological war and the militancy for environmental justice in the South-South that raged and are still raging in every part of the country today have their sources in British colonization and amalgamation of diverse ethnic groups with differences in cultures, religions, histories, values and languages. The British colonizers had used suppression, violence and divisions along ethnic and religious fault-lines to terrorize, subdue and rule the country, and the same tools and instruments and methods are still being used by different post-independent leaders, who inherited the leadership structure from the British and still act as their stooges, to rule the country, and the result is the conflagrations of intra-ethnic and inter-ethnic violence and wars in virtually all parts of the country. Besides, the ethnic identities which have been marginalized, and excluded from the political, social and economic processes in the country constitute a class that uses ethno-

religious and class differences to unleash mayhem on other ethnic out-groups, which they see as their dispossessors, which must be terrorized, as seen in Helon Habila's *The Chibok Girls*.

It is the final submission of this study that there has not been any serious evolution of strategies for the management and resolutions of these violent ethno-religious, class conflicts and terrorist acts in Nigeria, since the time of colonization to the present, as seen in the two Nigeria literature used for this study.

Works Cited

- Achebe, Chinua. "The Novelist as Teacher". *Morning Yet on Creation Day: Essays*. London: Heinemann, 1975: 42-45.
- Akwanya, A. N. and Virgy Anohu. *50 Years of the Nigerian Novel (1952- 2001)*. Nsukka: Fulladu, 2001.
- Alba, Richard D. "Ethnicity". *Encyclopedia of Sociology*, Vol. 2. (ed). Edgar F. Borgatta. New York: Macmillan, 2000.
- Alli, W.O. "The Impact of Globalization on Conflicts in Africa". *Introduction to Peace and Conflict Studies in Africa*. (ed). Shedrack Gaya Best. Abuja: Spectrum Books, 2021.
- Bassey, Celestine. "Security Challenges, System Failure and Community Policing in Nigeria". *Internal Security Crisis and Community Policing in Nigeria: Policy Options and Strategies*. (eds). Celestine Bassey and Maurice Ogbonnaya. Lagos: Concept Publishers, 2019. 23-38.
- Brass, Paul. *Theft of an Idol: Text and Context in the Representation of Collective*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 1997.
- Camaroff, John and Paul C. Stern. "New Perspectives on Nationalism and War". *Theory and Society*, 23.1 (1994): 35-45. JSTOR.
- Campbell, David. "Geopolitics and Visuality: Sighting the Dafur Conflicts." *Political Geography* 26.3 (2007): 357-382.
- Che, Afa'anwi Ma'abo. "Linking Instrumentalist with Primordialist Theories of Ethnic Conflict". *E- International Relations*. June1, 2016.
- Cerulo, Karen A. "Identity Construction: New Issues and New Directions". *Annual Review of Sociology*, 23 (1997): 385-409.
- Chandra, Kanchan. (ed). *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Chandra, Kanchan. "Cumulative Findings in the Study of Ethnic Politics." *APSA-CP*, 12.1 (2001):7 11.

- Chandra, Kanchan. *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Clarke, Duncan. *Africa: Crude Continent*. London: Profile Books, 2010.
- Cohen, Abner. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*. New York: Routledge, 1969.
- Cohen, Roland. "Ethnicity: Problem and Focus on Anthropology." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 7 (1978): 379-403.
- Collier, Paul and Anske Hoeffler. "On the Economic Causes of Civil War." *Oxford Economic Papers*, 50.4 (1998): 563-573.
- Cordell, Karl and Stefan Wolff. *Ethnic Conflicts: Causes, Consequences, and Responses*. Oxford: Polity, 2009.
- Crowder, Michael. *West Africa Under Colonial Rule*. London: Hutchinson, 1968.
- Dawisha, Adeed. "Nation and Nationalism: Historical Antecedents to Contemporary Debates." *International Studies Review* (2002): 3- 22.
- Falola, Toyin. "Introduction: Framing Nigerian History in the Twenty-First Century". *The Oxford Handbook of Nigerian History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. 1-15.
- Fearon, James D. and David Laitin. "Violence and the Social Construction of Identity". *International Organization*, Vol. 54, issue 4. (2000): 845-877.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- Glazer, Nathan. "Book Review; Understanding Ethnic Conflict: Ethnic Groups in Conflict". *Columbia Law Review*, 86.2 (1986): 427-432.
- Griffith, David Craig. s New York: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- Gurr, Robert. *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Conflict*. Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1913.
- Habila, Helon. *The Chibok Girls: The Boko Haram Kidnappings and Islamist Militancy in Nigeria*. New York: Columbia Global Reports, 2016.
- Hardin, R. *One for All*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Horowitz, Donald L. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Isajiw, Wsevolod W. "Definitions and Dimensions of Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework Statistics Canada & US Bureau of the Census". *Challenges of Measuring and Ethnic World: Science Politics and Reality*. Proceedings of the Joint Canada-United States Conference on Measurement of Ethnicity,

- April, 1-3, 1992, US Government Printing Office Washington, DC, 407-427.
- Izevbaye, Dan. "Key Themes in the History of Nigerian Creative Writing: A Readers' Review." *A Handbook for Nigerian Creative Writers*. (eds). Dan Izevbaye, Festus Adesanoye and Dele Layiwola. Nigeria Academy of Letters, 2013. 196- 220.
- Jesse, Neal G. and Kristen P. Williams. *Ethnic Conflict: A Systematic Approach to Cases of Conflict*. Washington: CQ Press, 2011.
- Kaufman, Stuart J. *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War*. New York: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Lake, David and Donald Rothchild. "Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict". *International Security*, 21.2(1996): 41-75.
- Layiwola, Dele. "The Writers' Imagination, Talent and Inherited Traditions". *A Handbook for Nigerian Creative Writers*, 2013. 134-153.
- Layiwola, Dele. "The Writer's Imagination' Talent and Inherited Traditions". *A Handbook for Nigerian Creative Writers*. (Eds). Dan Izevbaye, et al. Nigerian Academy of Letters, 2013.134-153.
- Madu, Jonathan. *Understanding Peace and Conflict*. Enugu: Madonna University Press, 2015.
- Mckay, Al. "The Study of Modern Inter-State War." *E-International Relations Online*, 2014.
- Nigusie, Alemu Asfawa. "An Integrated Approach to the Study of Ethnicity and its Relevant to Ethiopia." *International of Social Science Studies*, 6 (12): 38-46.
- Obafemi, Olu. "Descent from Humanism: Literature, Music and the Media". *Premium Times*, 26th August, 2021.
- Obizulike-Osuofia, M.C. *Peace and Conflict Studies*. Lagos: Cadmot Educational Associates, 2023.
- Ogbewe, Felix A. *A Handbook of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution*. Ibadan: Prime Publishers and Educational Services, 2021.
- Perham, Margery. *Native Administration in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press, 1937.
- Poata-Smith, Evan S. "Emergent Identities: The Changing Contours of Indigenous Identities in Aotearoa/ New Zealand". *The Politics of Identity*. (eds). M. Nakata, et al. Sydney: University of Technology Sydney E-Press (2013): 24-59.

- Pontifex, John. "Nigeria: Up to 200 dead in worst killing spree". *Aid to the Church in Need*. <https://https://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-up-to-200-dead-in-worst-killing-sprees/> 16 June, 2025.
- Posen, Barry. "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict". *Survival*, 35.1(1993):27-47.
- Posner, Daniel N. "The Political Salience of Cultural Differences: Why Chewas and Tumbukas are Allies in Zambia and Adversaries in Malawi". *The American Political Science Review*, 98.4 (2004): 529-545. JSTOR.
- Salter, Frank and Henry Harpending. "J.P. Rushton's Theory of Ethnic Nepotism". *Personality and individual Differences*, 55. (2012): 256-260.
- Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "A Defense of Poetry". *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 11. (eds). Frank Kermode, et al. New York: Oxford University Press, 1973. 744-762.
- Soyinka, Wole. "The Writer in Modern African State". *The Writer in Modern Africa*. (ed). Per Wastberg. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies 1968. 19-22.
- Spielman, Richard and Vivian G. Cheung. "Insight into Ethnic Differences". *Natural Institute of Health*. (ed).Harrison Wein. US Department of Health and Human Services, 2007.
- Timasheff, Nicholas S. "The Comparative Study of Inter-ethnic Relations". *The America Ethnic Sociological Review*, Vol.5. No.4 (Dec 1944): 224-237).
- Trevor-Roper, Hughes. *The Rise of Christian Europe*. London: HBJ, 1966.
- Turton, D. "War and Ethnicity: Global Communications and Local Violence in North-East Africa and former Yugoslavia." *Oxford Development Studies*, 25.1 (1997): 77-94.
- Van Evera, Stephen. "Primordialism Lives!" *APSA-CP*. (2001): 20-22.
- Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. (eds). G. Roth and C. Wittich, 1978.
- Williams, Dodeye Uduak "How Useful Are the Main Existing Theories of Ethnic Conflict?" *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 4.1 (2015): 147-152.
- Wimmer, Andreas, "The Making and Unmaking of Ethnic Boundaries: A Multi-level Process Theory". *America Journal of Sociology*, 113.4 (2008): 970-1022.
- Winter, Elke. "On Max Weber and Ethnicity in Times of Intellectual Decolonization. *Cambio*, Vol.10, number 20. (2021): 20-41.

- Wolf, Eric. *Europe and the People without History*. Berkeley:University of California Press. 1982.
- Zartman, I. W. "Guidelines for Preserving Peace in Africa." *Africa Conflict Resolution: The US Role in Peacemaking*. (eds) David Smock and Chester Crocker. Washington:United States Institute for Peace Press, 1995. 90-115.