THE CYBER-FRAMING OF NIGERIAN NATIONHOOD:
DIASPORA AND THE IMAGINED NATION

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Postings generated during 'natural' online interactions among geographically dispersed/ diasporic Nigerians contain ideas from different intellectual sources. A few of the ideas encapsulated within texts produced were brought to the fore, discussed, and analyzed. The consequent search for the presence of indigenous knowledge within the postings produced a promise not a substantial product that can be circulated within the discipline of new media studies.

The chosen method of analysis subjected online conversations and reflections to close readings aimed at extracting contextual and inter-textual meanings. This study also expands on the fundamental question raised by Misty Bastian in relation to how absence of physical constraints (and potential violence) is reflected in nationalist discourse. I argued that freedom from physical constraints and potential violence has been replaced by norms, novelties of virtual spaces, dominance of Western paradigms and epistemological shackles imposed by technology now act as the barriers to nationalist cyber-discourse. Textual analysis reveals that Nigerians draw extensively from a broad spectrum of ideas, but most significantly from notions emanating from Europe and America. In addition, Western notions like nationalism, nationhood, and state can hardly

be differentiated in the consciousness of some contributors. This study presents traces of hegemony of Western ideas in postings and conversations online. Nigeria's presence as a postcolonial nation (or nation space) is established online through various activities of citizens at home and in the diaspora. These communicative activities and political activism have led to a wide range of scholarly interrogations and interventions in media, communication and migration studies against the backdrop of globalization, democratization, and modernization theories. It has been amply documented that communication and social interaction produce ideas that can be evaluated along the lines of deliberative democracy. These approaches have produced outcomes without the benefit of the complex debates, dialogues, and disagreements that come with popular participation and creation of variegated knowledge by a collective.

I conclude that the concept of nationhood is not fixed but it a symbolic construct that evolves through unstructured conversations, sharing, and intense debates.

Acknowledgement and/or Dedication

This academic journey of a thousand miles brought tears to my eyes and took me to the depth of sorrow I pray never to experience again in my life. As I type this acknowledgement I am fighting back tears of frustrations and wondering why life must be this tough for some of us. But as it is written; in all things give thanks, so I wish to thank the almighty creator for making it possible that as I celebrate half a century on this earth, I am also completing a doctorate in media studies. There are so many people I will like to thank for their support and guidance. I would like to thank Professor John Pavlik, the chair of my committee and Professors Barbra Reed, Hartmut B. Mokros, and Toyin Falola, who served as committee members.

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This dissertation is dedicated to Nigerians who toil day and night on the various websites and home pages. It is also dedicated to Professor Carolyn A. Brown who did everything humanly possible to help me get sponsorship but could not.

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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Background and justification to the Study

When the words Nigeria and Internet are coupled together in an emerging statement;

the inadvertent associative word in the minds of many people may be scam or fraud[1].

According to Daniel Smith's anthropological account "the global expansion of the Internet

delivered evidence of Nigerian fraud to the e-mails in-boxes of millions of people around

the world, in the form of scam letters seeking bank account numbers and advance fees in

schemes that are premised on Nigeria's worldwide reputation for corruption" (2006, pg. 1).

It is on the record that the phrase "a nation of scammers" (French, 2004) is attributable to

General Collin Powell, a former Secretary of State of the United States. The

appropriateness of his pronouncement is not the interest of this dissertation but its recall

provides a canvass for the justification of this study. As perception of other nations goes[2],

the image of Nigeria may not be unjustified if the onlooker takes on an episodic reading of

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[1] These scams have come to be associated by the western media with Nigeria due to the massive proliferation of such confidence tricks from that country since the early 1990s, as well as the reputation of the country for corruption.

[2] Jeyifo, B. (2007) puts it succinctly in this article, "[p]art of what the world sees in us, or knows about us derives from the reports sent back to their home countries by the foreigners who either live among us or come for visits or short stays in our country. This is part of 'globalization'" (West Africa Review, online)

a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural nation-state like Nigeria[3]. By episodic reading I mean, a fragmentary and non-contextualized reading of events and happenings.

In this chapter, a comprehensive background to the study is presented followed by a discussion on issues of nationalism and networking involved in the research. Since Nigeria is the focus of the entire work, the geo-political space is reviewed bearing in mind the effect of colonialism and the present times when ethnic conflicts appear to be a permanent item on the news. In addition, various academic concepts within the study are elaborated upon. Finally, the chapter focuses on the theoretical framework on which the study is predicated. This study is neither in defense of the Nigerian online community nor the nation and her peoples but an attempt at re-directing attention to Nigeria's evolving cyber-presence as both a communicative space and a new media space for knowledge creation. Nigeria's presence is registered in almost all digital forms and formats ranging from online print versions of local newspapers, to radio and television stations, which webcast in real time, and electronic listservs/ websites where debates and conversations are constantly ongoing. It should be noted from the outset that the texts from these postings form ongoing conversations which are accepted not just for message/ information transmission but they are viewed as ways of coming together in "fellowship and commonality" (Carey, 1989, pg. 7). The study of conversations online or in print has received its fair share of attention from

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[3] How to rob a Bank and the Oprah Winfrey comments

scholars. Conversations that take place online reflect a bit of the different models listed by Dietram Scheufele (2000). He makes an academic distinction between talk and opinion exchange. There may not be much interest in mere exchange of opinions but talk and its sub-divisions into political talk and sociable conversation are referenced in the study of online interactions and conversations. This study shares the notion of James Carey's ritual approach to communication and the notion of "exchange of information that is relevant to the understanding of and participation in political processes" (Scheufele, 2000, pg. 728) as the conceptual frames for analyses of these media-induced online conversations. In each of the cases, news-media reports play a role in the fellowship, commonality, and the exchange of information that aids memory and understanding of ongoing socio-political events in the homeland and beyond.

My primary research interest is to uncover by making explicit, intellectual ideas, buried within texts that constitute a selection of postings generated during 'natural' online interactions among a group I have identified as geographically dispersed/ diasporic Nigerians. (Justification for selecting this group of Nigerians is discussed on page 11).The reference to ideas is both a scholarly search and an ideological pursuit. Clifford Geert made reference to "large ideas, casually inherited from Western philosophy and political theory" (2004, pg. 578) that must be reexamined. My interest also comes partially from the Marxists correlation of ideas of the ruling class transforming itself to the ruling ideas of an

epoch. There are also two Nigerian intellectuals who pointed attention to the place of ideas in the ordering of human life. Chinweizu states that "[i]deas rule the world; not only is one generation ruled by ideas from preceding generation, but some ideas rule for centuries" (Chinweizu, 2005, para. 2). Two years after Chinweizu's article was published in a national newspaper in Nigeria, a contributor to the Nigeria Village Square website narrowed down the importance of ideas to the actual basis of what he calls 'white power.' He argues that it is the wide-spread dissemination of ideologies that serve 'white' interests and, the acceptance by non-'white' elites of most (if not all) the components of these ideologies."(IsT,[4] 2007, para. 1). These contributions go to underscore the need to search for ideas by a particular group of people where ever those can be tracked and analyzed.

Since it is impossible to track every idea thus generated online I decided, during what Herzfeld (1997) refers to as ethnographic moments, to focus on the contextualization and meanings of inter-related concepts of nation, nationalism, and nationhood. The question can then be posed why I decided on the complex notion of nationhood of all the other issues discussed online; why these particular ones and not something else? I will attempt a more detailed response to the logical question above in the chapter on discussion and analysis of data but suffice to say for now, the concepts of nationhood, nationality, and nationalism demand deep reflection and a measure of intellection from contributors. These are issues that touch on collective identity, patriotism, and constant reconstruction of memory and

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[4] IsT is used instead of author's real names and this will be the case through-out this dissertation. For ethical reasons real names of the authors are avoided except when they appear in published documents.

reconfiguration of the future by those who live outside their countries. Zeleza is of the

opinion that "[n]ationalism is one of the great intellectual and ideological forces of modern

African history" (2008, pg. 37). Based on postulations such as this it becomes evident that

the choice to focus on the subject did not just appear in vacuum but through a series of

events online which lent themselves to the question of what is going on here. Zeleza states

further that "[c]ontemporary Africa is simply incomprehensible without understanding the

role and impact played by nationalism" (2008, pg. 37). In effect to understand Africa is to

understand nationalism in reality or as part of discourse.

Impact made by any idea is not an event but an unending process that reverberates

from the past to the present. There are events and actions which still resonate in the

present. These strings of observable events led my enquiry to question the sources of ideas

that influence thoughts generated in the online comments and contributions emanating from

Nigerians in the diaspora. This question bears resonance to Daniel Dayan's inquiry when

he sought to uncover "the particular type of knowledge mobilized in the construction of a

group's identity" (1998, pg. 103). Karl Mannheim posits that "knowledge is from the

beginning a co-operative process of group life, in which everyone unfolds his knowledge

within the framework of a common fate" (as cited by Harris-Lacewell, 2004, pg. xvii).

Provision of likely answers to such posers will not only make available pointers to group

identity formation/ definition, it may also provide a basis for constructing a tentative

Nigerian intellectual history online. The concept of a people's intellectual history provides

a window into how they think individually and collectively. Leo Spitzer asserts that "[i]ntellectual history, according to its broadest definition, deals with the history of thought" (1972, pg. 113). Thought, online, is reflected in text preserved in publicly accessible archives and other online resources that can be consulted. Apart from tracking the conversations and interpreting the ideas, this study contributes to the fast growing literature on nations and the Internet in the same way Anada's case study of Indians online (1998), Miller and Slater's presentation of the online presence of nationals of Trinidad and Tobago (2000), Brenda Chan's focus on how the Chinese imagine their nation online (2005), and Thomas Eriksen's reflection on nationalism and the Internet (2007).

The objective of tracking ideas of Nigerians online, supported with textual evidences, is to garner sufficient materials which can also be used in response to issues raised by Adebayo Williams' contention that "[n]o one is even sure whether there is an intellectual class on the continent that approximates the western notion of the term" (1998, pg. 287). A closer look at Adebayo's text, produced over a decade ago, brings out one of the many problems of African intellectuals. It is possible to point to a problem of limited circulation of their ideas globally. Aside from limited circulation of ideas, Raphael Njoku's position on how to classify the African intellectual class on the continent introduces another perspective to the issue. He argues that "[t]he distinctive feature of the African intelligentsia is that it is often difficult to differentiate between an individual who has merely received a Western education and one whose mental activities merit respect

reserved for those who assume the position of leader of thought" (2002, pg. 255). The term

intellectual as will be encountered in this dissertation is in reference to individuals who

devote time and mental energy to the production and dissemination of knowledge. African

intellectuals are in the same mold as Toyin Falola's (2001) exposé shows. However, unlike

Falola's blending of "the analysis of actions with the reflections that precede and

accompanied them" (2001, pg. xvii), the preoccupation of this study is with online texts,

which are contents of the postings made by participants during their online encounters.

There are a few instances when offline actions followed after such online conversations;

those may be mentioned but not focused upon in the main.

My close reading of the texts in the postings show that there are individuals who

can be referred to as Nigerian intellectuals who are making use of what Dayan refers to as

"particularistic media" (1998, pg. 103) or what is commonly known as alternative media

form (Spitulnik, 2002, pg. 177) to engage others in debates and discussions on various

issues. These online engagements crystallize into multitudes of ideas, they can be brought

together to produce a sort of "textual inscription" of a nation in the similar way as

Mudimbe-Boyi's reflection on where and how the African continent is recollected (2002).

In the case of particularistic media those who participate, according to Dayan, tie it to a

national center. "But this center is not necessarily political. Often it is more than a founding

myth, enshrined in collective memory"(Dayan, 1998, pg. 107). The founding myth takes

the form of various narratives that can be analyzed as products of intellectual minds

influenced from different geographic locations. In place of a founding myth which is mostly driven by the political elites there will be a discussion on foundational national myths in chapter 5 where the data collected will be scrutinized. with greater attention

This study carries the burden of posing a challenge to one of the conventional wisdoms and call to duty. It states "[m]ost African countries are built on ideas and ideals of yesterday's philosophies. We need today's thinkers for tomorrow's visions" (Oyakhilome, 2007, pg.16). If by yesterday's philosophies Oyakhilome means pre-modern or traditional ideas, the empirical data generated for this study is sufficient in providing an alternative viewpoint. That alternative viewpoint introduces, what I prefer to label as, a time-dimension on a third level if ideas are to be placed on a time scale. By third level time-dimension, I mean ideas that are neither solely of the past nor of the present but which are genuinely hybridized / transnational sets of ideas aided by the advantages of global flows of ideas, data, and people. In the questioning words of Mudimbe-Boyi "[h]ow can we articulate and re-conceptualize particular social and cultural identities in a time of global and cultural economy?" (2002, pg. xiii). A response to Mudimbe-Boyi's poser can be found in how marginalized people devise ways of circulating their views and ideas. Hwang, Scmierbach, Pack and Shah presented the findings of their study which showed that the more a people's worldview "differed from mainstream media portrayals, the more motivated they were to use the Internet as an information source and discussion channel" (2006, pg. 462).

If Oyakhilome's perspective is subjected to more careful reading, it will be

discovered that it imposes a pertinent question as to what constitutes the nature and

source(s) of ideas of Africans in general and Nigerians in particular. Understanding what

influenced a particular idea or sets of ideas gives a better grounding for the concept so

derived. For instance Roy Douglas (1973) traces Adam Smith's concept of non-interference

in economic activities to Smith's exposure to ideas of the Physiocrats of his days. In this

era of post-modernity and globalization is it possible to isolate the sources of ideas that

feed into the body of knowledge produced by a people? If not possible the search for an

answer no matter how tentative may lead to a possible understanding of how information

from different source form part of a people's knowledge base especially during what can be

said to be 'everyday talk'. In addition, it will be possible to seek answers to what influences

the ideas of Nigerians in the diaspora as it relates to the definition/ framing of nationhood at

a time Crawford Young avers that "the discursive energies mobilized by the struggle for

independence had dissipated, and that nationalist thought appeared moribund" (2004, pg.5).

Young should not be faulted for his casual observation of an apparent decline in public and

scholarly discourse on issues pertaining to nationhood, nationalism, and national identity.

What may not have been visible to him, and to other scholars whose sphere of interest/

attention does not include Internet research, is that the discourse on subjects like

nationalism is gradually shifting from purely academic conference halls into virtual

discussion groups and websites. Hwang et. al. attribute the increasing use of Internet for

expressing ones views to media alienation (2006, pg. 462). In the year 2004 and prior, the Internet, in its different manifestations, had been providing a 'home' for the discourse on various issues like nationalism, ethnicity, and group identity. According to Prividera and Howard, nationalism "is a communicative process in which citizens participate rather than a product behind which citizens rally" (2007, pg. 4). Citizens from various nations especially those in the diaspora have created such virtual spaces for themselves on the Internet.

Going back to Young's observation above, the year 2004 for Nigerians in the diaspora cannot be said to be a milestone year when compared with other years like May 1999 when the then military administration in Nigeria conducted an election that heralded another opportunity for the political class to experience democratic governance. In that year 2004, for instance, one of the sites (*Naijanet*), Internet savvy Nigerians frequent, recorded a total of 4,746 postings (an average of 13 postings per day). Another site *soc.culture.nigeria*, a google discussion group, recorded 1,103 postings that year. In truth, the number of postings tells us little. What will confirm or refute Young's observation is a textual review of the ideas within the corpus of texts produced online during that period and beyond. In deciding on duration of study of online communities, Emily Ignacio who studied identity formation of Filipino Cultural Community enjoins those interested "in meaning-making must rigorously analyze each conversation for lengthy periods of time, pick out recurring threads, and make note of the contexts in which threads recur" (2005, pg.

11). On that premise this study chose a time frame of May 1999 to May 2009 as its general period of interest. In line with the concept of ethnographic moments attention will be paid to specific dates which have significance to the study. These specific dates are focused upon because of the nature of discussions that occurred or the significance of the date to the interest of this study.

Apart from duration and object of study this research operates within multi-disciplinary parameters. In a bid to make meaning of the activities of Nigerians online, it became logical to situate this study within the interlocking universe of a number of disciplines. Among which are the following; communication, sociology, political economy, and cultural studies. The province of new media studies provides the canvass on which this study is drawn out. Tangential but pertinent issues of politics of technology and its effect on "promoting freedom and changing social and political norms" (Mazarr, 2002, pg. 1) were also engaged. Perspectives in phenomenology helped shape the research design and choice of pertinent methods. According to Creswell (1994), (quoting Dukes and Oiler), phenomenological studies "involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement to develop patterns and relationship of meaning" (1994, pg.12). Once data were collected and analyzed, the task of making sense and drawing reasonable conclusions benefited from cultural studies' set of analytic principles, especially Stuart Hall's (1980) concept of encoding-decoding textual materials. Hall's model, helped create a "margin of understanding." In effect the search for meaning is accorded prominence and

the social location as well as economic background of the interpreters must be factored into

the analysis.

As a Nigerian who lives and presently works outside of Nigeria, it should be stated

from the outset that I am immersed in this subject and object of study, but I endeavored[5] to

be both an objective observer (of text and context of conversations) and a participant who

maintained a critical public distance in ongoing online conversations about the geo-political

space called Nigeria. I aligned myself with one of anthropology's field principles of

accepting "knowledge not preconfigured in one's starting paradigms" (Brunt, 1992, pg.

71). I had to sacrifice my Western preconception of what a nation is and how it should be

represented in text. The ethnographic observer-participant technique was adopted and

deployed in this study for the purpose of understanding a specific concept; nationhood

outside of the non-Eurocentric perspective as a possible way out of not falling prey to "the

European/ American model as the best or the touchstone by which everything is judged"

(Ojaide, 2007, pg. 5). During the study, it was imperative to give accommodation to the

point of view enunciated by Tomaselli that "cultural studies provides a way of not only

analyzing power but engaging it for democratic outcomes" (1998, pg. 395). The democratic

outcome possible in this study is the recovery of Nigerian voices and another image of

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[5] There were a few times I slipped, especially in one of my responses to the contributor who wrote an article titled"How to build a nation"

Nigeria on the Internet different from Daniel Smith's account of Nigeria as "a bastion of bribery, venality and deceit" (2006, pg. 1).

In essence dipping this study into the fount of cultural studies provides an outcome that will eventual be of service to the producers/ consumers of the corpus of text under study. In no way will the end-result generalize what diasporic Nigerians as a whole think about nationhood, but how this particular group at a point in time, frames and imagines (or refuses to imagine) nationhood and to what ends such frame is deployed in other areas of everyday living. Online communities have been known for their social networking capabilities but hardly framed as sites for vigorous intellection where different kinds of ideas are generated, circulated, and codified. Wilson and Peterson submit that "the Internet has facilitated the rapid emergence of online interactions of dispersed groups of people with shared interests" (2002, pg. 449). What appears to be left is how to harness the outcome of online interactions. The section below discusses Nigeria in the context of a postcolonial nation-state including its present geographic structure.

Structure of Nigeria, representation and types of nationalism

"Nigeria is a centralized federation with thirty-six multiethnic states together serving at least three regions and dozens of prominent peoples who display distinct, often conflicting, interests (Rotberg,2004, pp.4-5). The thirty-six states are further sub-divided into 774 local government councils for ease of development and growth. Since socio-

economic development cannot be evenly attained, disparities and inadequacies often lead to tension and conflicts. These conflicts have played out in religion, politics, and even into a civil war. As it is expected, the roots of these conflicts have a history which pre-dates Nigeria as a nation. The colonial legacy and the intervention of the military in the affairs of the country are two very important historical factors which are held responsible for the present situation of the country. On that premise, any historical contextualization of postcolonial nation-states can only partially address the complex issue of a nation's identity. Hannerz argues that the growing national identity can be read as a function of time. He posits that some postcolonial nations "have become more nation-like, and at least some of the varied currents of meaning flowing through their social structures, and hardly insignificant ones, can now well be described as national" (1987, pg. 548). Apart from time spent together as a nation, Billig, (1995) identifies national languages (which he refers to as vernaculars) and territorial factors that facilitate social relationships as key elements in nation-building. The social relationships that ensue are not so explicit in that "the construction of national identities takes place through seemingly banal processes that constantly re-inscribe in people's consciousness their national belonging" (Boczkowski, 1999, pg. 93). To capture the essence of this perspective, Billig, introduces the term "banal nationalism" (1995). The term covers "those unnoticed, routine practices, ideological habits, beliefs and representations which make the daily reproduction of nations in the established states of the West possible" (Yumul and Ozkirimli, 2000, pg. 788). This term

will be extrapolated to a fragile state like Nigeria since the concept of nationhood is driven

by representation of sorts.

The issue of representation brings to the fore whom among the many competing

social actors has the legitimacy to re-imagine the nation and/or by what means the nation can

be (re)imagined. According to Yumul and Ozkirimli, (2000), the political class in most

nations is pivotal in the reproduction of nations and its national identity. Since the political

class is no more location-specific, those outside the country will have to be included in the

process of national identity formation. Geographically dispersed citizens who take more than

a passing interest in what is going on in their countries have been said to practice "long

distance nationalism" (Anderson 1983) which at times could be dangerous to their home-

countries. Certain roles of those in the diaspora have been known to hurt their homelands

while in other cases their contributions have led to positive political changes. One such

example cited by Smith, is the case of "Mexican communities abroad in changing the

political culture of contemporary Mexico" (2003, pg. 16). The process of the changes

credited to social movements and their networks still have to be studied in more detail. Such

studies become more difficult when states are factored into the change-resistance equation.

The state with all its resources is at an advantage to circulate its ideas through

educational institutions, socio-political and cultural institutions. The state apparatuses of

ideology and coercion seem to take charge of official narrations which circulate within the

geopolitical space where such forces have direct influence. Buruma avers "[a] nation, in the

modern political sense, not only needs common institutions of government but common mass media, where issues of shared interest are reported and discussed freely in a democracy, or as a form of indoctrination in a dictatorship" (1999, pg. 10). Buruma's perspective is in line with Anderson's concept of "in the minds of each lives the image of the communion" (1991, pg. 6). Government controlled media have been ready instruments for national mobilization. In addition to the state controlled apparatuses, social institutions like the private media, in alliance with local or transnational corporations also contribute effectively to the re-imagination of national communities sometimes to the exclusion of the toiling majority. Private media have been accused of laying emphasis on entertainment to the detriment of political communication. Political communication has implication for the society. According to Docharaigh "forms of communication have played [a] central role in the formation of national identities and national consciousness" (2001, pg. 1).

The central role of communication has been further accentuated with the arrival of cheap and effective ways of networking. The effectiveness of the online interaction translates into a form of bonding and transnational solidarity among geographically dispersed citizens who share a common language, culture and history. Hiller and Franz identified three types of online relationships among diasporic people which lead to "developing new ties, nourishing old ties and rediscovering lost ties" (2004, pg. 731). Each of these ties will be negotiated over time online or offline. Another consequence of improved information and communication technologies is the ease by which states and the media are being constantly challenged from

within and beyond the national space. Kahn and Kellner address how the use of new

information and communication technologies have aided "oppositional cultural and political

movements and provided possibilities for the sort of progressive socio-political change and

struggle that is an important dimension of contemporary cultural politics" (2005, pg. 76). The

challenge or opposition often revolves around issues of political economy, ecology, and

ethnic repression and domination. These are co-determinant issues that shape how a nation is

perceived or imagined. One such group actively participating in circulation of ideas on

various issues is a non-institutionalized group of geographically dispersed Nigerians who

will be interchangeably referred to as Nigerians in the diaspora. The term diaspora has been

institutionalized in various non-governmental organizations. One of such organizations is

Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization (NIDO). The section below briefly discusses issues

of nationalism and other ancillary ideas in relation to this study of how geographically

dispersed Nigerians discuss the issues of nation, nationhood and nationalism during their

online interactions.

<u>Issues of nationalism and networking involved in this research</u>

The issue of how nationhood is constructed or negotiated by citizens of a

country like Nigeria cannot and should not be studied outside of how the nation's

intellectuals and the media produce and reproduce representations of a nation's past, its

present, and possibly future projections using various frames and perspectives. The

justification for selecting intellectuals (a term used in its loose connotation) as the arrow head of this study is both historical and sociological. Looking at the past, there are evidences to show that "[d]iaspora intellectuals have often played prominent roles in the formation of national revival and independent movements" (Kostantaras, 2008, pg. 700). Mkandawire presents a vivid interconnection between intellectuals and pan-Africanism on one hand and nationalism struggles on another. He states that "[t]he relationship between African intellectuals and pan-Africanism and nationalism has been both symbiotic and a fraught one" (2005, pg. 1). Apart from Mkandawire's activist linkage of African intellectuals to the struggle for independence and integration of the various nationalities on the continent, Obi a Nigerian scholar ascribes a more cerebral role to intellectuals. According to Obi, intellectuals have "always played critical roles in the construction of nationalism(s)."According to him, "[i]t is the intellectuals who have control of the architecture of the ideology of national resistance, and the construction of a political-territorial space of refuge hinged upon a national identity" (2004, pg. 1). Though I would argue that the ready access intellectuals enjoy, in articulating their views in print makes them come across as architects of ideologies when compared to the rest of society. It is documented that those who are literate in most societies contribute more to the content of newspapers than those who cannot read or write in the official languages of their countries. In this regard present day intellectuals can be likened to those Lonsdale, identified as

"communicators of political ideas between organizations wider than the locality and the people" (1968, pg. 120).

Furthermore, to properly situate the real geographical location attached to the virtual sites mentioned in this study, a dynamic profile which represents the situation of the geopolitical entity attached to the study is essential. More so for a country like Nigeria that has a poor representation in the global press. Nigeria as a geo-political space should not be studied using only current global and local images in circulation; other qualitative data sets must be sought and pressed into service. The one-dimensional portrayal by the Western press regularly frames Nigeria as a multiethnic, conflict-ridden nation, approaching either disintegration or collapse (Maier, 2000).This framing, is generally articulated without context (Wu, 2000, pg.110) or a deep appreciation of the multiple factors that shape single events. It has been established that invisible causes for conflict are rooted in historical, cultural, economic, and political conditions in most developing economies which are at a disadvantage in the global commons. These implicit reasons carry the burden of properly situating the fragile and conflict-ridden nature of post-colonial nation-states as part of the discontents of global capitalism.

The scholar Hannerz observes that "Nigeria comes across as an artifact of British colonialism, with inevitable conflicts among its heterogeneous population" (1987, pg. 548). What he fails to take into consideration is that the conflicts are not just based on expansionist tendencies nor on ethnic intolerance but on deep economic polarities

exacerbated by white supremacy and globalization. A reading of the history of Europe in

the nineteenth century shows that ethnic struggles and conflicts are not unique to Africa or

Nigeria. Indeed a cursory look at the literature of nation formation clearly suggests

otherwise. Ali Mazuri submits that "the consolidation of the sovereignty of European

States, too, was forged partly in the fire of inter-European conflicts" (1998, pg. 4). On the

same subject of conflict before stabilization, Francis identified three phases of European

history. He mentions a time when "ethnic nationalism aiming at the inclusion of each major

ethnic society into one state of its own" (1968, pg. 338). According to Calhoun "claims to

nationalism are often rooted in a rhetoric of pre-existing ethnicity" (1993, pg. 214). Since it

is possible to deduce from literature that ethnicity obstructs national identity it should be

possible to track elements of this proposition in relation to online discourse.

There are various schools of thought on the root causes of ethnic conflicts

on the African continent in general and in Nigeria specifically. On the one hand, accounts

illustrate that previously independent city-states, ethnic groups, and nationalities who

nursed no intention of forming a union were cobbled together like bricks to co-exist within

the same geopolitical space (Soyinka, 1996; Martin and Meara, 1995). This perspective is

challenged by Ade-Ajayi who posits that "Nigeria is a product of history, not of the artifice

of colonial rulers" (1994, pg. 66).Ade-Ajayi supports his uncommon position by arguing

that the country Nigeria would have still been founded despite the British or any colonial

interventions. This position is supported by Baum who asserts that "[n]ations, like other

communities, are historically constructed" (2001, pg. 114). If taken together these two assertions raise fundamental questions about who writes a nation's history and from which sources the writers depend upon in the reconstruction and representation of the textual product. In response to these issues, Bjork's work provides two possible contenders as writers of a nation's past (1994, pg. 13). He points to professional historians and the general public, leaving out professional information managers like journalists, filmmakers and artistes. The omission revalidates the position of media scholars who see the media as part of the large pool of sources available to professional historians and sections of the general public who engage in reconstruction and re-presentations. It is the role citizens play in the framing of nationhood, national identity and national history that is the interest of this study. According to Anderson (1991), both mass communication in its local and global variants and mass migration are factors that shape nationhood and the politics of nationalists. Ananda Mitra expresses it succinctly when he asserts that "nations are produced and represented by media and there emerge specific media formations which can be called national media because they represent the principal cultural practices of the nation" (1996, pg.45).

To better understand how the local and the global interact in Nigeria's situation and what Hannerz refers to as the "interplay between imported and indigenous cultures" (1987, pg. 546), it is necessary to reevaluate the history of social engineering embarked upon by colonial powers and its effect on the "national conception of history"

(Bjork, 1994, pg. 11) by intellectuals, the national media, and other Nigerians. It will not be a surprise that each group defines and imagines the nation differently. The professional historian is said to "try and simplify findings from newly ventured and highly specialized areas of historical research" (Bjork, 1994, pg.13). Journalists, as representatives of the media, have been known to use different discursive devices in the process of constructing reality in print and visuals. Kitzinger makes allusion to the use of "media templates" (2000, pg. 61) which help readers and writers make sense of news reports. Unlike the professional historian and journalist, the general public, especially immigrant Nigerians, are yet to be categorized in terms of their framing strategies.

The conception of a nation's history has been documented to have fundamental implications for ethnicity, national identity, and the developmental progress of post-colonial nation-states, especially in an information age. To some scholars the information age connotes a period when transnational capital, labor, and ideas readily cross borders (Evans, 2000; Weber 2002) without recourse to national restrictions. For instance, a scholar posits that the present advancement in capitalism owes much to the rapid development of communication and information technologies (Castells, 1996). In addition, during this historical moment, knowledge co-mingles with power in the reformulation of socioeconomic relations. Santana rightly observes that "this new era not only places knowledge at the forefront of economic competitiveness, but also calls for a whole new model of production and management" (1997, online document).   The new mode of

production demands for new kinds of workers and encourages constant movements of labor aided by innovative transport and communication technologies in unprecedented and unpredictable ways. Some of those attracted to the world's thriving industrial centers come from developing economies where their services and resources are also needed. Their arrival, settlement and integration present different issues of loyalties, security, identity and relevance in their host countries. Most migrant workers also seek to be relevant in the politics of their homeland (Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003) but have to deal with shifting meanings of nationality, identity, up-to-date information and politics of culture.

Apart from playing a role in politics Zeleza argues that "African academic diaspora in the United States plays and can play [a role] in African knowledge production" (2004, pg. 261). By extension it implies that Nigerian intellectuals do have roles to play in the generation and distribution of knowledge. The question is what kind of knowledge do they collectively or individually generate? Is the knowledge linked in any way to "the debate over the nature and history of the nation" (Ranger, 2002, pg. 670) which Terence Ranger (2002) terms the key debate in contemporary politics. This debate also resonates in fields such as media studies to the extent that scholars are interested in how the media represents national identity and nationhood.

<u>Concepts within the title of the study</u>

In the term "cyber-framing", the prefix before "framing" connotes a practice or action which takes place in cyberspace. Cyber-framing in this sense implies a multi-

mediated practice that conflates media and audience frames as if both were one and the same. This unity of communicator and message according to Robert Wicks helps a researcher to "understand the dynamics that take place when citizens process and interpret media" (2001, pg.90). However, when framing is approached from the different sides of production it will be appreciated that media framing, as a standalone, has the propensity of "getting beneath the surface of news coverage and exposing the hidden assumption" (Tankard, 2001, pg.96). Media frames have both cognitive and affective effects on the audience in ways different from what a biased news report can have on their reception of the news. Audience framing depends on prior knowledge during the construction of meaning. Synthesizing different definitions in literature Entman defines framing as "selecting and highlighting facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/ or solution" (2004, pg. 5). At a first reading it might appear as if framing is carried out sans agency. As will be seen framing can be a procedural process done by individuals or by agents of institutions. Scheufele evolves four key processes for the identification of framing processes; "frame building, frame setting, individual level processes of framing, and feedback loop from audience to journalists" (1999, p. 103). If framing is defined as a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events/processes and from there to the development of a core issue (London. 1993 online document; Pavlik, 2001), it means that the operative search will

be for the sources of organizing ideas and how sense-making is assisted. Framing according to Entman (2004) resides in the text and not in the mind of the consumer of text.

One conceptual problem inherent in framing is in understanding the concept individuals use in prioritizing events and issues which when applied make one issue or event relevant and another less so. Some scholars are of the view that news stories do not have any inherent characteristics that allow one to be framed differently from the other. The important instrument of identifying frames lies in the universe of interpretation and not the province of information. Frames provide "a broader, interpretative answer or definition to 'what is going on' or should be going on'" (Benford and Snow, 2000, pg. 611). In the case of news, London asserts that "[t]o identify frames, the informational content of news reports is less important than the interpretative commentary that attends it" (1993 online document). If this is true, it implies that the Internet offers a fertile ground for the harvesting of interpretations written by readers, who also double as writers. Cyber-framing, therefore, provides the possibility for capturing the cognitive processes of individuals whose information-seeking behavior is above average and who possesses the time to comment on materials read, as they share their thoughts. Individuals who post comments and articles on the Internet play up innocuous cues and reference points found in news stories, using their own interpretive tools and schemes as they make sense of events, issues or values. In an information age, events being commented upon could be local while reports about the events are accessible globally, thereby separating writers from readers. For frames

to be meaningful, it is assumed that both writers and readers are more likely to be located within the same geographical space. When readers and writers are located in different parts of the world, differences in interpretation and opinions are more likely to arise. Some scholars will argue that it is not differences in location that account for differences in interpretation, but lack of exposure to shared knowledge and ideas that drive differences of opinion and interpretation.

To examine the source of political knowledge and subsequently the interpretation given to the text, I have chosen the text-driven heaven of the Internet as my sphere of study and specifically selected the construction of Nigeria's nationhood as the particular theme of interest. The section below provides a historical lens through which I and others 'read' Nigeria in relation to public sphere and rational discourse. This phenomenon allows one to ask if the online exchanges created and maintained by Nigerians can be analyzed as a normative public sphere where rational discourse occurs.

Theoretical Framework

Media system dependency theory

Seeking to understand why peoples in the diaspora turn to various media outlets for information can be helped by applying the uses and gratifications theory (Katz 1959). But this may not totally explain the complexities of transition from an anomalous state of knowledge (Belkin, 1980) to a transient assured state of knowledge constructed from a staple of media forms. There are researches who point

attention to the relationship between gratifications derived and the active choice of

media made by individuals (Herzog, 1944; Rubin, 1994). The need of individuals has

been analyzed from both socio-psychological and systems perspectives and

conclusion reached that satisfaction of needs establishes "the potential of the

individual for self-realization" (Severin and Tankard, 2001, pg. 293). It was also

uncovered that the needs of individuals are influenced by various factors primary of

which is the social structure. Other factors like age, personal values, and condition(s)

which brought about their needs for information are also cited as shapers of needs.

However, Elliott and Rosenberg appear to disagree based on their own empirical data.

They conclude that "media gratifications are primarily the result of the social

situation and background factors and may depend more on habit than on internalized

need states" (1987, pg. 687). As can be seen from the assertions above, media

dependency theory is a theory of media power and it has its roots in uses and

gratifications theory, it maintains audiences as active rather than passive consumers

of media but goes a step further to locate them within an interconnected system.

According to Ball-Rokeach there is "the idea that individuals' needs and interests

affect what they select out of an environment to perceive" (1998, pg.6). When this

theory is viewed from the large systems perspective it becomes obvious that the

composite units within the systems reinforce and regulate each other with a view of

reducing instability/ ambiguity. Like every parsimonious theory there are spaces that

still need to be filled. For instance, if we can explain why individuals select certain media over others, can the same argument explain why some individuals contribute intellectual resources to the media?

The lacunae notwithstanding, this theory has been applied to what determines Internet news use (Yang and Patwardhan, 2004), to different political situations; Pablo Halpern (1994) applied it to how the Chilean Left survived political persuasion and negative media representation. Chang and Yu (2001) applied the theory to how changes in China's social structures impacted on audiences and on media transformation in a new political environment. According to them the dependency model allowed them to explain "why Chinese readers prefer a particular kind of news and why the Party organs, especially the newspapers, are losing ground to more market-oriented mass media" (2001, pg.200). Applied to geographically dispersed citizens who need reliable sources of information, especially during crisis in the homeland or when personal values are under attack by out-group forces, the media system dependency theory helps in shaping the description of how media is mobilized to stabilize the social upheaval.

In effect, for this study media can be taken collectively as the bridges between the concept and imagination of nations and narratives that are generated during discourse. The narratives generated in a virtual space are limited to those who have access to a computer terminal and possess the needed writing skills to be able to

contribute to ongoing conversations online. This set of people are constantly

reflecting on the past and imagining a future for their homeland based on influences

from their host country or on information acquired from media sources. In the process

of these reconnections and reconstructions, most authors need specific forms of

information that either meets their preconceived notions of the homeland or provide

them with information that can clarify fuzzy notions. Media reports have been

identified as one of the sources geographically dispersed people depend upon for

(re)connection with the homeland. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur's media system

dependency theory helps to understand the importance diasporic citizens attach to

specific media reports and how their perception of homeland in relation to the rest of

the world is (re)formed. The theory, though criticized for its high descriptive but low

predictive powers, in essence proposes a tripartite system of audience, media, and

society when the subjects of study are within their national territories. The third leg of

the tripartite changes slightly when an audience is outside of their society. However,

according to Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur the degree of dependence by the audience is

"a key variable in understanding when and why media messages alter audience

beliefs, feelings, or behavior" (1976, pg.5). The geographical or social location of the

audience appears not to be one of these factors.

  During the course of this study it was observed that media organizations on

the homeland (Nigeria) cull some materials produced for websites or written during

exchanges in the various forums and publish them without permission from the authors. Though the impact of such activities has not been researched, it presents possibilities for interpreting the likely effect such transnational flows may have on national integration from the perspectives of citizens living outside of the country but still connected at the level of ideas. One theory that helps in explaining the practice is the agenda setting theory. The section below reviews the theory and its applicability.

<u>Agenda setting theory</u>

Two important aspects of agenda-setting theory are the influence the media have on the reading and viewing public by calling their attention to news reports, and the importance the public attaches to such information derived from how the media frame or play up the story. In effect, "agenda-setting function of the media refers to the media's capability, through repeated news coverage, of raising the importance of an issue in the public's mind" (Severin and Tankard, 2001, pg. 219). The theory focuses on ways the media as a social institution impact on public life and public policy. The sheer pervasiveness of the media makes their presence difficult to ignore but makes impact on behavior empirically and qualitatively observable. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972), the scholars credited with the first use of the term, designed a study that focused on 100 undecided voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the 1968 Presidential elections. The objective of the study was to demonstrate that the issues voters rated as important coincided with those the local

newspapers in Chapel Hill selected as important. Their hypothesis anticipated media content having effect on perception of voters, especially those undecided members of the electorate during political campaigns. Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller (1980), in a review of the study, posit that the sample was drawn from a single community and at a single point in time. There are possibilities that a single locational study may have its limitations due to inherent factors like demography and socio-economic status, but the correlation between the variables was still strong enough to make the kind of deduction that was made. The statistical results notwithstanding, it is accepted in the discipline of statistics that correlation does not inevitably prove causation. On that premise, I agree with Klapper who observed that "[m]ass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences" (1960, p.8). Erbring et al. also share this position in their study of front page news and real-world cues. They concluded that "secondary diffusion of problem salience through networks of informal social communication is shown to eventually override early news impact" (1980, pg. 16).

Agenda-setting theory recognizes two different effects on individuals. Erbring et al. differentiate between media exposures which lead to attitudinal changes and political cognitions. Attitudinal changes, according to these researchers, are "characterized by evaluative direction and affective polarity" (1980, pg. 16). Political

cognitions relate to issues such that have to do with value judgments by readers. In one instance, issues such as governmental corruption or racial issues were considered as belonging to this category.

There have been various developments to the agenda-setting theory in terms of re-conceptualization and applications. Dearing and Rogers (1996), carried out longitudinal studies spanning a period of twenty-five years and affirmed the linkage between public concern and issue saliency in the media. At the level of theory application, Kiousis, McDevitt, and Wu applied agenda-setting theory to the process of political socialization. The research design does not rely solely on media reports but considers other reinforcing characteristics such as "influence of school intervention exposure, news attention, discussion, and information integration" (2005, pg.756). The study breaks new ground and adds to the corpus of works that links agenda-setting to dynamics of news frames, schema and priming. David and Pavlik applied the theory to how the media in 2003 covered SARS, a potential pandemic, and concluded that "media tend to shift focus from other relevant issues and instead of disseminating useful information…spread panic among audience" (2005, pg.12). This study brought to the fore an information science perspective on the relationship of reader preference and news frames. The authors suggest that the agenda-setting role of the media is located along the functional continuum of information provision and rhetorical sophistication deployed in persuasion and reinforcement of selected

ideas. These various studies have implication for research design and analysis of data. Since data collection directly results from observation, it is imperative that the theoretical framework underlying online interactions and activities should be explicated. The section below focuses on symbolic interactionism.

<u>Symbolic interactionism theory</u>

Symbolic interactionism is part of the interactional tradition which proposes that "communication and meaning are unabashedly social" (Littlejohn, 1999, pg. 155). Implicit in the theory is an understanding that meaning is not outside the interaction of social groups. Bryman puts the idea succinctly when he avers that "[s]ymbolic interactionists view social life as an unfolding process in which the individual interprets his or her environment and acts on the basis of that interpretation" (1988, pg. 54). It can then be deduced that the theory does not fix knowledge but presents it as an evolving process rather than that a fixed state (Rock, 1979, pg. 8). The term "symbolic interactionism" is credited to Herbert Blumer and focuses attention on how human beings arrive at social meaning. The conceptual framework and intellectual antecedents of the theory are based on George Herbert Mead's study of group life. It is not a theory given to easy articulation. Paul Rock, in tracing the intellectual trajectories of the theory, states that "its hostility to detailed explanation reflects a reasoned aversion to certain forms of rationality" (1979, pg. 5). Blumer also agrees with Rock's position when he posits that "there has been no clear formulation of the

position of symbolic interactionism" (1986, pg. 1). In making up for the lack of an

articulated statement on the theory's methodological position, various scholars,

including Blumer, agree to certain principles inherent in the nature of the theory.

Blumer, according to Littlejohn, "believed above all that the study of humans could

not be conducted in the same manner as the study of things" (1999, pg. 156). On this

basis Blumer articulated three fundamental premises on which the theory rests:

(1) Human beings act toward things on the basis of meanings that the things have
    for them.
(2) The meanings of such things are derived from, or arise out of, the social
    interaction that one has with one's fellows.
(3) Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used
    by the person in dealing with the things one encounters.

It is generally understood that "things" as used by Blumer has a wider connotation

than just inanimate objects; it is a representation of physicality in its wildest

imaginative essence. Things as objects can be categorized into three types, "physical

(things), social (people), and abstract (ideas)" (Littlejohn, 1999, pg. 159). In essence,

the three principles stated above privilege meanings over other psychological factors

that may be responsible for human or social actions. In effect, "[t]he self is the

fundamental concept of symbolic interaction, regardless of level of analysis

employed" (Manning, 2001, pg. 153). In accordance with Wrong's (1961)

explanation, meaning-making speaks to one aspect of the concept of socialization and

over-socialized views of human beings must be avoided. The unfair separation of the

tripartite of "social meaning, embodied self, and the surrounding material world" (Puddephatt, 2009, pg. 90) must be avoided in analysis.

Most social scientists, it is reported, tend to misread the emphasis on meanings and interpretations by social actors to "imply a need for participant observation" (Bryman, pg. 55). Bryman further asserts that the taken-for-granted linkage between social interactionism and the ethnographic method of observer participant can be argued to the contrary. To buttress his assertion he makes reference to the 1979 and 1980 intellectual debates between McPhail and Rexroat and Blumer. The core of the contention was whether "Mead's epistemology was closer to the natural science model than Blumer has typically allowed" (Bryman,1988, pg. 56).

The usefulness of symbolic interactionism to this research study is both in the choice of methods, reading, and interpretation of texts. Understanding 'self' as a composite of biology and sociology allows for the application of a concept like social constructionism. Individuals are seen as actors who are shaping social actions and are constantly shaped by their actions and interactions. On this premise, texts produced during online debates and interactions are not read as products of the mind of single individuals. The texts become integral parts of complex systems of signs and signification. The texts produced by the various participants in online forums are taken as the units of analyses. It is the meaning and interpretation derived from these

texts that will help in the provision of answers to the research questions which are generated as a consequence of the literature review found in the section below.

Roadmap of the study

The procedural order of this study started with a comprehensive background and justification for the research and then related the various concepts to the objective of the study. It now continues with an understanding of the extent a geographically dispersed people rely on online media reports from their national media and to a lesser extent on reports from other sources. The sources, it is anticipated contribute to the creation of critical conversations/discussions and narratives about physical space, governance, leadership and normative expectations for a state (nation in some cases) of their imagination. A detailed look at selected postings was carried out so as to uncover the level of pre-existing background knowledge included in the posting or contribution. Postings and contributions are read with a view of establishing the extent of opinion/ sentiment indicators in them.

The second chapter is an extensive literature review of previous works relating to the subject of this research. The literature review leads to a main research question and a few inter-related questions. Once the research question is established, the third

chapter undertakes a philosophical view point of the research by stating the

methodology and the subsequent research methods. The choice of research methods

help to formulate the nature of data and its collection. Chapter four contains the data

while chapter five is devoted to analysis. The last chapter discusses the data and

draws a conclusion in relation to the guiding questions of the research.

Chapter 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

<u>Review of previous Nigeria-related studies</u>

There are many tributaries that make up the mainstream of this dissertation.

Each of these can be traced in the work of media and cultural studies scholars,

especially those interested in the presence of nations in cyberspace either for the

creation of identity (Omoniyi, 2007) or creation of transnational spaces for long

distance nationalist struggles and relevance. Farooq Kperogi fused media and

migration studies in his study titled "Guerrillas in cyberia" (2008). This study by

Kperogi focused on a selected number of online newspapers run by Nigerians in the

diaspora. Other disciplines have not been left out of nations and Internet research. For

instance, Misty Bastian's (1999) study reconstructs Nigeria's cyberpresence from an

anthropological perspective. Her contribution ruptures the master narratives of nation

and the unidirectional perspectives of globalization in terms of the interlocking ideas

of imagination and immigration. She posits that the manner in which citizens away

from home conceptualize home is directly related to the nature of government in

place. Her research was carried out during the twilight days of Major-General Sanni

Abacha, a onetime military ruler of Nigeria who commentators (Badmus, 2006) in

discourse frame as one of Nigeria's worst military dictator who gave very little room

for opposition at home and abroad[6].

Bastian's observation of the interaction between Nigerians in the diaspora and

politics of home points to Benedict Anderson's concept of long distance nationalism[7].

Though not explicitly labeled in her study, she instead raised the issue of ambiguity

and questioned the praxis of immigrants away from their countries but who still make

out time to engage their homeland from the comfort of dwelling places and offices of

their host countries. This observation presents both a contradiction for, and an

expectation of, citizens who nurture a commitment to their fatherland. As part of the

conclusion of her study, Bastian named into being a 'virtual Nigeria,' which,

according to her, represents a safe zone for immigrants who are temporarily

dislocated from the 'real Nigeria'. Virtual Nigeria becomes the significant other of

'real Nigeria' or what can be called a symbolic nation which exists mainly in the

imagination of its creators.

Bastian's research tangentially addressed the issue of diverse forms of media

(not just the Internet) usage by geographically dispersed citizens with the purpose of

understanding the culture they represent and the views they disseminate to others and

within the Nigerian group. Her research-focus was more on the form of media and not

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[6] Sesay and Ukeje (1997) give a detailed account of Major-General Sanni Abacha's reign.

[7] See Zlatko, S. (1999). Long-distance nationalism: Diasporas, homelands and identities. Aldershot: Ashgate.

the content. As expected her social location as an outsider to the socio-political conditions were questioned but her findings were not invalidated. Bastian's findings were debated online by intellectuals who disagreed with her historical reconstruction of how *Naijanet*, one of the premier online discussion groups, came into existence[8]. The brains behind the idea, and the social events that bestowed visibility and acceptability on the fledging electronic list thought otherwise. In conclusion, she predicted that "the moment when virtual Nigeria becomes open to real Nigeria, there is the possibility of a new synthesis, a drawing closer of the electronic world of the brain drain diaspora and the real worlds of both material diasporic experience and Nigerian quotidian life." (1999, para. 36). The anticipated synthesis has materialized in the last five years (2002-2007), but with yet-to-be studied measurable impact on the Nigerian society.

The paucity of studies on how the Internet is impacting the Nigerian nation notwithstanding, there is yet another work that extended Bastian's anthropological study. Ben Moran (2000) focused on how identities are expressed in one of the virtual spaces specially created by and for Nigerians. His research is from an African Studies perspective and theoretical departure point of social ecology of change and its impact

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[8] There is a posting of August 6, 2001 by Bee Alkay (not real names) which is a reaction to Bastian's account of how Naijanet started. Deploying a proverb, Alkay wrote that "the lion and the hunter have different tales to tell, he who must have a balanced history must read both tales" <http://groups.google.com/group/soc.culture.nigeria>

on who people conceive themselves to be in a virtual environment. Social ecology,
though not referenced as such by Moran, implies that changes are not just additions
within interconnected social structures like urbanization, printing press, colonialism
but that the impact of changes do have rippling effects. What becomes evident is that
one small change in any of the sub-sectors has the capacity for greater impacts in
others. Moran drew his theories of identity from disciplines as far flung as
postcolonial studies, communication and media studies. He deduced an inter-media
connection in terms of cross-sharing of information between Internet groups and local
media organizations that found the materials useful for publication. According to him,
"separate media interact, so that Usenet can contribute to content in newspapers, or
information can cross from e-mail into radio broadcasts" (2000, pg.7)[9]. He was able
to use various online and offline exchanges to illustrate an African country's presence
in the global sphere of electronic networks. The active production and consumption
of information in virtual spaces indicates, in the words of one of his respondents, "we
are part of the Internet and the Internet is a part of us" (Moran, 200 quoting Odili's
words).

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[9] An asynchronous exchange between Madunagu, a newspaper columnist who lives in Nigeria and
Emeguali, a Nigerian based in the United States of America, illustrates this point. See complete
exchange in Appendix A.

Though the personal pronoun 'we' in Odili's statement may appear unproblematized to a casual reader, Moran's study re-establishes the multiple identities of an average Nigerian online or offline. Ethnicity, gender, professional status and a few identities can be implicated in shaping and re-shaping of an individual's perception of what his/her nation is or ought to be. He was able to follow discussions at different online forums and for his analysis he selected genres that pointed to how multiple identities can feature in one individual. These multiple identities need not be in completion depending on which type of identity is in operation. Moran identifies contact as one of the essential conditions that influences identity formation. He posits that "emphasis on contact as the heart of identity shifts the viewpoint away from individual actors surrounded by external social forces, and forces consideration onto the kinds of contact that occur" (Moran, 2000, pg. 103). The openness of the Internet forums is contrasted with other media forms and its impact on the nature of dialogue and message developed during the interaction. In conclusion Moran argues that "[e]conomic and political entities such as the Nigerian state still play the most significant role in the shaping of identity" (2000, p.110). A perspective steeped in the knowledge of the conflictual nature of the relationship between Nigerians and the state will come to a different conclusion. For instance, Peter Ekeh argues that "[i]t is an indication of the stress and turbulence of our times that Nigerians are everywhere reexamining the purpose of the Nigerian state and the

relationships between their ethnic groups and the Nigerian federation" (2001). To

Ekeh and some of those whose words are used in this study, it is the ethnic nationality

that shapes their identity and not the state. There exists an ambivalent relationship

between majority of Nigerians and the state.

A third study carried out seven years after Moran's study focuses on identity

formation from a socio-linguist's perspective. Tope Omoniyi, a Nigerian professor

based in the United Kingdom, constructs a continuum from the past to the present

information age. He contextualizes the present use of cyberspace as part of the space

for socialization. This he compares to the time when Africans in rural areas used

village-squares and market-squares for socialization functions within the society.

According to him, the village square "was an arena of social engineering, a meeting

place for friends, acquaintances, lovers, traditional professionals, etc up to the 20th

century and beyond" (2007, pg. 27). Though he goes on to make a sweeping

statement that "[c]ybercafes especially in the cities and emails and chat-rooms have

become part of the social and cultural reality for a growing number of new 'elite'

Nigerians" (pg. 28), his assertion can only be used as one of the anecdotal evidences

of the role of discussion groups during the complex process of identity formation. As

a study focused on how real people discuss concrete events and conditions which

directly relates to their homeland, his conclusion proves to be very pertinent to this

present study. It added to the complex issue surrounding issues of research ethics.

Though in obedience to his pledge to keep the main participants anonymous, I was still able to identify a few of the postings he used in the study which had direct bearings to my past activities. Proper names were changed but the incidences been referred to remain unchanged and recognizable to the participants.

Unlike Omoniyi's study, Kperogi (2008) focused on Nigerian diasporic Internet-based investigative media in a bid to establish a news-sharing connection between the home-based media and this present crop of 'muckrakers'. He was also able to show that the federal and state governments are paying attention to online investigative journalism. Kperogi further states that this brand of citizen journalism can be credited with an emerging transformation and complication of "normative notions of news and cultural flows. In the recent past, it used to be the case that Nigerians in the diaspora relied on the online content of their domestic newspapers for news about homeland" (2008, pg. 74). The present situation shows that some news outlets rely on diaspora-run news outlets.

Using these studies as guides it is possible to argue that the concept of nation can neither be homogenized nor made Eurocentric in essence. To buttress this position Calhoun asserts that "[a]ll of the available essentialist definitions are unstable and inherently contestable, thus not only because they bias usage for or against various political claims, but because they are based either (i) on qualities which putative nations or nationalist movements share with admitted non-nations" (1993,

pg. 216). There are critical questions asked across cultures and time about the what, when and how of nations. The discourse about, and debates around the concept of nation, nationhood, and nationalism cannot be pushed further into the back burners of media studies scholarship. The issues of news imperialism, nationality, identity formation and cultural politics as it relates to people in postcolonial states have been the subject of commentary by numerous authors and scholars from different fields (Soyinka, 1996; Szeman, 2003; Lim, 2004). Apart from those in the literary field whose interest in the literary intersection of nationalism and colonialism, other disciplines focus on effects of globalization on nation-states[10]. Sarah Ives notes that "[m]any geographers have incorporated the idea of the nation, and indeed all scales and boundaries, as imagined, recognizing the nation as a fluid battleground for meaning" (2007, pg. 155). Furthermore, unlike geographers, the core of the discourse of media and information scientists can be summarized as the impact of global information networks on nation-states. Frank Webster in reviewing the position of writers on the subject restated their fear of the atrophy of nation-states, a similar fate which had been entertained by political scientists during the Cold-War era. The justification for the fear that the state will wither away at this time is that "frontiers are irrelevant to electronics flows and, accordingly, marketing, production and distribution are increasingly conducted on a world stage that undermines national

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[10] For in-depth discussion on effects of globalization see Steve Wiley (2004). Rethinking nationality in the context of globalization. *Communication Theory*, 14(1), 78-92.

boundaries" (Webster, 2002, pg. 101). When these transactions and interactions across national borders are subjected to historical contextualization, it can be reframed that "[t]ransnationalism (as long-distance networks) certainly preceded the nation" (Vertovec, 1999, pg. 447). These two mutually exclusive positions raise issues, such as origin of nations, interaction between nation and state, and the processes of state legitimacy. Among these issues, the origin of nations will be briefly discussed below by first drawing from a universal knowledge pool and later return to location-specific ideas from the geopolitical region of interest. The net will be cast far and wide in order to benefit from the corpus of literature on this subject.

In reflecting on the origin of nations, Anderson, (1991) drawing from extensive South-East Asian experiences, describes differences in the nature of nationalism and nationalist politics of various communities. He differentiates anti-colonialist nationalists' movements from the anti-imperialist nationalists' movements in Asia. Anderson also links the development of print technology to capital formation and concludes that the logic to print and ability to read in one language across a wide area improved profitability and also aided imagination and national consciousness. The idea of reading the same material in different locations helped create a unifying chord that existed only in their minds, materials, and memories. In Anderson's view the individuals who claim nationality of a space may never meet face-to-face but "in the minds of each lives the image of the communion" (1991, pg. 6). Imagination can

be taken as a "process of expanding one-self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (Wenger, 1998, pg. 176). The cognitive process of imagination is not constrained by a need to physically interact or communicate in a face-to-face mode. Mediated communication and interaction within and beyond a community displaces the need to see others in a population.

The concept of imagined political communities has not been without it own fair share of criticism, especially where multi-lingual, postcolonial nation-states are concerned. Partha Chatterjee raises the question of whose imagination forms the national community when colonial authorities are known to have already set into motion the structures of governance resulting in the state as a *fait accompli* which lags behind nation-building efforts (Chatterjee, 1996). The conception of nationhood for colonized nations then follows after Eurocentric models that hardly fit the asymmetrical power relations that exist in the colonized states (Chatterjee, 1993, pg. 5). The Eurocentric model has various implications. Giddens (1987) makes reference to one of these implications when he observes that the existence of geographical entities as states under colonial authority and power prior to their becoming nations or embarking on the enterprise of nation-building shapes their history and their future. This misstep has been argued to partially account for the apparent national dysfunctionality prevalent in most postcolonial nation-states and a general lack of consensus among its ruling elites. It is my assumption that a general lack of consensus

among the ruling elites has consequences on how the political community is imagined and such vision disseminated to the rest of the public. Aside from the lack of consensus among the elites, Young refers to "[m]any of the leading students of nationalism, such as Anthony Smith or Walker Connor, dismissed territorial nationalism in Africa as inauthentic, lacking the ultimate ethnic origin around which the constitutive myths of shared history and ancestry took form " (2004, pg. 5). This historical perspective cannot be easily discounted; it has to be recognized as part of any discussion of nationhood where postcolonial nations are concerned. The next section gives a brief context to various terms in the study. It defines diaspora in relation to Nigeria, examines postcolonialism, and reviews construction of national identity.

<p align="center">Diaspora in literature</p>

A corpus of literature exists on how different groups use mass media as sites for exchange of information, social interaction, and launch-pad of nationalistic struggles (Brookes, 1999; Yumul and Özkirimli, 2000). Schudson goes further to state that "[t]he mass media are probably more potent in creating solidarities than in breaking them" (2002, pg. 482). Apart from traditional media platforms it has been documented that new information and communication technologies play similar roles in bringing people together. Boczkowski observes that "émigrés have increasingly used various forms of computer-mediated communication (CMC) to accomplish this

goal [of remaining in contact]" (1999, p. 86). Kohl (2005) examined the role of the

media and national education in imagining Singapore's nationality and identity and

concluded that both institutions are ideological, state apparatuses playing different

functions. Unlike state-controlled media, there are specific studies on the role of the

Internet on self-determination, political organizing and advocacy. Human agency is

what makes such political changes possible. They often use the Internet as one of the

many technologies available to citizens who need to function below the radar screen

of national governments. Yuval-Davis puts it succinctly in her allusion to a group she

terms "committed diasporas." In her words, "[o]ne cannot imagine the continued

nationalist struggles of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), for instance, without the

financial, political and other help of the Irish diaspora communities, especially in the

USA" (1997, p. 18). If the imagination cannot capture the struggles of IRA's

nationalist fervor, reconstructing the role of Jewish diaspora has been made easier

with the works of scholars like Sheffer who studied Jewish diaspora communities

against the backdrop of "current national, regional, and global politics" (2003, p. xi).

He established a complex tripartite relationship involving diaspora communities, their

homeland and the host country. In his studies, it was not difficult to see similarities

among various diaspora communities. He surmises that the collapse of the Soviet

Union and the constantly expanding processes of globalization are responsible for the

interest in diaspora studies. Apart from the intervention of diaspora communities in

socio-political relations of their homeland, Pantoja (n.d) explores in his study of the

Dominican diaspora the involvement of the group in shaping certain foreign policy of

the United States government toward the Dominican Republic. He concludes that the

Dominicans are involved in direct political participation in their homeland.

An impression of national coherence is what emanates from some studies. For

instance, Tsaliki focuses on the notion of "Greekness on the Internet" (2003, p. 162).

Similarly, the study of Filipinos online by Ignacio (2005) concludes that though there

is unity in diversity and an imagined thread still binds the different regions together,

what holds a country like the Philippines together is cultural and historical with

different groups coming to the loom with different resources. The study of the

peoples of the island nation of Trinidad and Tobago online by Miller and Slater

(2000) adds to the body of works which present how people in different locations

redefine and renegotiate nationality. The interaction online by both groups dissolves

the dichotomy of homeland and diaspora and calls for a re-formulation of the concept.

An idea of such a re-formulation appears to be happening is some discussion groups.

For instance a discussant, who I shall simply identify as AaA, on one of Nigerian

online forums disagreed with the use of the term diaspora for Nigerians[11]. AaA

relying on Internet sources for definition of the term posits that sticking to such a term

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[11] The main point in the article written and circulated, June 19th 2007, is that diaspora as used by
Nigerians is an opportunistic political term. He prefers the term Nigerians living abroad instead of
Nigerians in the diaspora.

is mere delusion. Unlike AaA, UN**,** another prolific Internet pundit, looks toward

Safran (1991) in the construction of his argument about the dichotomy and distrust

which exists between "diasporans and homeland Nigerians"[12]. In essence, the

competition and altercations becomes understandable when the term is framed as "a

process, a condition, a space, and a discourse" (Zeleza, 2004, pg. 262). Zeleza further

submits that there are historical differences among diasporas which sometimes leads

to intimate competition and differences in communicative practices.

There are scholars who reduce the complex term diaspora to simply refer "to

the dispersal of any group of people from their original country to other countries"

(El-Aziz, Axworthy, Ghorayshi, Reid, Kliewer, Kudadirgwa, 2005, p. 3). What is not

obvious from the definition is how it homogenizes the term "diaspora". This term, as

some scholars believe, is embedded in ambiguities in that it "has been stretched to

cover a varied assortment of social phenomena, transnational relationships, cultural

endeavors, and identitarian orientations and disorientations" (Safran, 2003, p. 438).

Scholars who prefer to set a time frame for their definition of diaspora make reference

to new and old diasporas especially in the case of African recent immigrants who left

their homeland on their own free volition (Okome, 2009). Apart from time of leave-

taking, Chariandy introduces the concept of post-colonial diasporas. According to

him, "postcolonial diasporas would then mark a (not-so?) new disenchantment with

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[12] The article was posted online and it was later published on May 13th 2007 in one of Nigeria's
newspapers; The Daily Independent online.

nation-based articulations of post-colonialism"(2006, p. 2). Post-colonialism can be both a theoretical and historical construct that maps the various trajectories of resistances before a nation is formed or imagined. Brah (1999) suggested a necessary distinction between diaspora as a theoretical notion and the historical experiences of diaspora. In her opinion, not all away from their homeland nurse any ambition of returning to the home they left. Riggs (2000) introduces another dimension to the situation of those away from their homeland. He identifies those leaving home and those staying in touch (2000, p. 3). This position is shared with Tsagarousianou who posits that "diaspora should be better seen as depending not [so] much on displacement but on connectivity" (2004, p. 52). As if to make complex the concept, Moran raises the issue of diaspora as one which cannot be an exclusive preserve of those outside a country. He makes reference to internal diaspora by citing the example of "[t]he founding of the Ibo (sic) Union in Lagos in 1936," which could pass for Igbo diaspora among Yoruba people (Moran, 2000, p. 14). The location is not the essence but rather the various links forged with the homeland.

On the premise of connectivity, Riggs explains further that some in the diaspora never left their homeland, because they were born and raised outside of their homeland. Brah avers that "the concept of diaspora offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, while taking account of a homing desire which is not the same thing as desire for a homeland" (1999, p. 180). Her definition introduces the binary opposition

of homeland and abroad and the conceptual changes that have been visited on the term by new realities and possibilities of imagination. The Internet is one such reality.

Review of social and technological aspects of the Internet

The Internet is creating new possibilities for imagination, interaction, and communication with a promise to redefine culture and politics (Poster, 2001). One area where these possibilities are most prominent is in the areas of identity construction, community formation and economic (dis)empowerment within and among nations. Since individuals make up nations, it is easy to observe that extensive usage of the Internet encourages construction of new knowledge and challenge to hitherto accepted social concepts and norms (Kanuka and Anderson, 1998). For instance, users of the Internet have reconfigured the meaning of Anderson's notion of imagined communities and at the same time constantly redefining the notion of nationhood through diverse narratives. It appears that nations, like stories, are frames constructed by a class of citizens who enjoy unlimited access to, or own the media. Sheila Croucher, invoking Anderson 1991; Brubaker 1992; Breuilly 1993, submits that "governing elites and intellectuals play a central role in shaping this sense of community" (2003, p. 2). In this century, however, access and ownership of the media are no more restricted in any way to a particular class (king, 2003, p. 179). Apart from socio-economic status, Turoff and Roxanne are of the opinion that "no restriction separates information providers from information receivers" (1998, p.

116). The apparent non-restrictive potentials of the Internet have not gone

unchallenged by other media scholars. Alkalimat (2001) submits that digital divide is

the concept being used to denote the emerging disparity between information rich and

poor. However, Servon (2002) is of the view that the divide is not just an issue of

access but also one that presents social inequality and injustice. In addition, Ebeling

maps the digital gaps along what she refers to as "the global fault lines of inequality"

(2003, pg. 97). Applying McLuhan's four laws of media, Eriksen submits that the

Internet "intensifies the development of new class divisions (the haves and the have-

nots in the information maze)" (1996, online document). Scholars argue that a digital

divide exists along national, class, racial and gender lines. According to Norris,"[a]

global divide is evident between industrialized and developing societies. A social

divide is apparent between rich and poor within each nation. And within the online

community, evidence for a democratic divide is emerging" (2001, pg. i). In effect, the

comparative cost of access between developing and developed nations cannot be

ignored (Ebo, 1998).

Fragmentation of societies and groups notwithstanding, fortunate[13] Internet

users appear to be (re)framing the discourse on nations in cyberspace for purposes

still uncertain. In the spirit of this uncertainty, King argues that "[t]here is certainly no

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[13] The word fortunate is coupled with Internet users to connote the fact that there are some users whose access is dependent on their profession, vocation, or privilege in the society. Individuals of equal social-status may not be that fortunate.

evidence that the presence of national groups on the Web somehow adds to their

strength in reclaiming or carving out sovereign, political entity, as opposed to simply

keeping in touch" (King, 2003, pg. 179). Keeping in touch is not that simple; in that it

intersects sociology with technology. It brings to the fore entire components of social

networking, which, according to Wellman, "are not the densely-knit small groups that

groupware tries to support" (1992, pg. 123). Lovink would rather argue that "[t]he

aim of the networks is not transportation of data but contestation of systems" (2005,

pg. 11). The challenge to the system could be political, economic or cultural,

depending on the balance of forces and how quickly the forces can dominate the

public domain with their discourse and circulation of meaning.

Taking all these perspectives together, the notion assumes a transparency that

there are different sides and questions to the discourse on the impact of the Internet on

individuals and societies. Ebo using a religious metaphor raises a pertinent question:

"Is the Internet a messiah or a demon?"(2001, pg. ix). There are as many imagined as

real answers to Ebo's poser. According to Wilson and Peterson "early literature

surrounding the Internet regarded the new technology as revolutionary in both its

technical innovation and its broad social and political implication" (2002, pg. 450).

Apart from the connotation of a revolution there are optimists who accord liberatory

and democratic roles to the Internet (Rheingold 1993, Soukup, 2004, online

document). While a scholar like Tom Brignall III compares the Internet to Betham's

panopticon "because the dissemination of power and control is in the hands of the 'jailers'" (Brignall III, n.d, online document). In addition, Brignall III raises germane questions when he asks about the type of liberation attainable from a technology that allows for exchange of information and if such unbridled dissemination can lead to social revolution. What will be made clear later in this study is that the unbridled dissemination of information is not the main focus of the aftermath of the evolving social revolution but the strengthening and empowering of virtual voices online[14].

Wellman and Gulia, in a review that takes various perspectives in its critical wings conclude by categorizing differing camps into four: "Manichean, presentist, unscholarly and parochial" (1997, pg. 167). According to this arbitrary categorization, 'Manicheans' are said to argue on both sides with one group positing that the Internet has a constructive effect while the other maintains that it has a corrosive effect on community foundation. Whatever changes the use of the Internet brings upon the character of communities as presently constituted or constructed; the nature of communication at interpersonal, inter-group and international levels will also be fundamentally affected. Wellman and Gulia cited Barlow's prophetic statement that "[w]ith the development of the Internet, and with increasing pervasiveness of communication between networked computers, we are in the middle of the most

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[14] Ananda Mitra & Eric Watts (2002) deal with the issue of voice in Internet discourse from a humanistic perspective. According to them the "human voice announces one's immediate relation to, and inseparability from, the world and others." (p. 481).

transforming technological event since the capture of fire" (1998, pg. 167). The metaphor of fire in this prediction has a dual connotation of heat and light, constructive and destructive tendencies as well.

To anchor this dual metaphor with empirical data entails a perspective which suggests that the use of the Internet can encourage national integration as typified by the case of the Philippines (Ignacio, 2005) and Trinidad and Tobago (Miller and Slater, 2000). Apart from national integration, other trends are developing toward national transformation or re-negotiation of power and identity for various nationalities. A tentative reading of the present case study of online discussions among Nigerian immigrant communities appears to represent a scenario of ethnic promotion over national identity.

Based on areas covered by the literature review, the section below poses a few research questions that will guide the collection of data and their subsequent analyses.

Research questions

R1: What are the main themes of postings made by Nigerians Online? Are nation, nationalism or nationhood topics engaged by Nigerians online? How is nationhood discussed in the postings among geographically dispersed Nigerians? Where do the ideas which influence these concepts come from?

R2: To what extent do news-media reports from the homeland reinforce (or displace) previously-held notions of nationhood and nationalism when immigrants relocate to Western countries or are the shifts influenced by Western dominant ideas and media?

Chapter 3
METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals in part with the philosophical underpinnings of the methodology of this study while not neglecting the actual methodology. Details of the procedural steps taken for data collection are discussed in the next chapter under data collection. This chapter focuses on the parameters which guide how data should be and are collected in a qualitative research design and the various methods chosen for the research. The chapter goes further to elucidate the rationale for this study. According to Ignacio there should not be a dissonance between research questions and the method chosen. She opines that "[a]s in other sciences, the research questions one asks should guide the practitioner to the methods used, and no one method is considered to be the 'best' form of inquiry; however, scholars must carefully choose the method which will enable them to best answer their research questions" (2005, pg 11). Watkins and Swidler while introducing their form of ethnography also observe the interconnectedness of theory and methods (2009, pg. 162).

Since the main objective of this research is to understand how citizens frame/define a concept or generate knowledge about the concept, it does not require a general universal law as its outcome but involves an approach that focuses on meaning bestowed on a phenomenon. This is what Mark Smith, relying on authorities like Wilhelm Windelband, Max Weber and others, terms

"methodological individualism" (1998, pg. 143). It implies that my

methodological position accepts the relationship and interactions of individuals as

the basic unit within a society or a collective. In effect, the search for meaning of

concepts like nationality, nationalism, and nationhood will be derived from

postings of individuals with an understanding that each posting is a result of

textual interactions from different sources. Once a methodological position was

established the next logical turn was the consideration of possible methodological

options by which data will be collected and analyzed.

There are many methods of finding out what a people think about specific

issues or ideas. One method is to ask the people concerned directly using open

ended or structured interview instruments that can probe deep into their minds as

they reconstruct their thoughts on the subject of interest. To be able to conclude

that the study represents an approximation of what the collective thinks, it is

paramount that the survey should reflect the demography as well as be a

representative sample of the population. This technique reflects some perspectives

in James Surowiecki's treatise; "The wisdom of crowds" (2004). In Surowiecki's

opinion seeking knowledge from a broad based audience produces better results

than asking a few experts about a topic of interest. There are a number of

assumptions and limitations in this kind of quantitative research technique[15]. One

of the assumptions is that the research instrument will be interpreted the same way

by each of the respondents and that the reconstruction of their past can be relied

upon by the research as valid statements which eventually forms part of the data

deployed in the final analysis and conclusion. According to Cass Sunstein "[i]t is

well-known that statistical answers from groups of sufficiently large sizes tend to

match the views of population-wide samples" (2006, pg. 23). An alternative

method to statistically-driven studies will be, what Boeree terms present

orientation which involves "observing (or introspecting) what is happening now"

(1998, online document). In this kind of study it implies locating where the group

regularly meets online or offline and in the social science tradition of

ethnography, the researcher interacts with, and observes, postings made by the

cyber-community on a regular basis. To ensure credibility and reliability of data it

is imperative that notes and important information (especial the context of the

notes) are kept while participation in the discussions is maintained at very

minimal levels to avoid distortion. In this study, I opted for the participant

observation method and was sensitive to an observant-participant status in most of

the online-groups I selected for this study. My major activity like Bogan (1973)

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[15] Bodan (1973) defines quantitative as "data which are rich in description, understanding, and detail but not subject to quantitative procedures" (pg. 302).

suggests "is characterized by a prolonged period of contact" (pg. 303) with the

constant production of text and following the context that gave rise to each thread.

In this section, I lay out the thoughts which informed the research design

of this study against the background of the knowledge gained from the extensive

literature review in the preceding chapter. In the study of this phenomenon, I

make the assumption that my objects of analysis which are derived from

individual reflections and reactions can be deployed as "concrete things with a

definite structure or, alternatively, are constituted by a set of components

accessible to some procedure of knowing" (Smith, 2003, pg.1). In effect, the

everyday talk[16] of participants at various online forums lends themselves to a

valid construction of knowledge and by extension memory of very recent past.

The objective of the study is to systematically (albeit qualitatively) analyze

various postings and threads of diasporic Nigerians online. The analyses carried

out for this study used a (re)construction of what Nigerians in diaspora are

expressing about concepts such as nation, nationhood, and nationalism. The

choice of these concepts comes from both the literature review and my interaction

with various Nigerian online sites. I also considered the attractive injunction of

Cameron and Kulick that "[w]e cannot understand the significance of any word

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[16] Everyday talk in this sense connotes "a mixture of spontaneous and planned written communication" (Thimbley, 1996, pg. 4). This kind of every day talk occurs in different sphere of life.

unless we attend closely to its relationship to other words and to the discourse (indeed, the competing discourses) in which words are always embedded" (2003 pg. 29).

As an observer-participant (and an observant-participant) it became evident that one of the preoccupations of citizens, outside of their geopolitical space, is their homeland. In line with the expositions of Michael Billig (1995) on banal nationalism that citizens, especially those away from home, constantly reflect on the notion of nationhood and their place in it. According to him "[t]o have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood" (1995, pg. 8). If 'talk' is not to be limited to speech alone, voice encoded within written text can be part of valid data in the understanding of how citizens think about their nation and their national identity. Billig also gives a suggestion as to a possible operationalization of identity. He argues that "a number of critical social psychologists have been emphasizing, [that] the social psychological study of identity should involve the detailed study of discourse" (1995, pg.8). This suggestion shapes the design of this study, kind of data collected and the websites they are collected from. The units of analyses are postings voluntarily made by Nigerians online. By postings, I mean texts, sounds, and images, written, copied or taken by Nigerians and sent to discussion groups, websites, or distributed by e-mail for the consumption of others. The collection of data begins with a detailed

reconstruction of the number of posts on a monthly basis followed by a careful

reading of individual postings so as to register where the news reports contained

therein were obtained. To put these numbers in context a general description of

the main features on the website was embarked upon. The understanding of the

sites' architecture and layout made the search for keywords a rewarding

experience. For instance, on the Nigeria Village Square (NVS) site, I used the

very effective search engine on the website to locate stories that included words

such as nation, Nigeria, nationalism and nationhood within hundreds of postings

sent to the site on a regular basis by Nigerians and friends of Nigeria. The articles

or news materials sent to NVS are moderated by owners of the website. Unlike

feature articles which are moderated, general comments are not subjected to such

pre-posting scrutiny. The owners of the site expect a measure of decorum and

there are ground rules which are meant to self-regulate participants.

Participant observation method

As previously stated the units of analyses are the postings made at the

different virtual locations where I constantly visited as an unobtrusive observer-

participant. There were times when I was more of a participant than a mere

observer or what is termed a lurker. For instance I registered on the Nigerian

village square website using Omowa2 as a pseudonym in December 2006, and I

monitored the website till the last month of 2008. During the period of this study I

made a total of 141 postings on various topics. The decision to use this

pseudonym was taken in order to allow me maintain an acceptable social distance

from some familiar Nigerians on the site. I contributed to discussions and got

responses based mainly on what I submitted and not my personality as a former

activist and a photojournalist in Nigeria. In a similar I substituted acronyms for

the real names of people who their postings were used so as to de-emphasize the

identity of who wrote what and in its place focus more on the text.

To monitor the thread of discussions I opted to continually archive

important or significant topics which participants showed great interest in. The

decision was made retroactively as I was not possible to know *ab initio* which

topic would generate interest. In addition to the archived postings I maintained

what can be termed a field note by contributing ideas to issues I considered

germane to this study or topics I had alternative source of information to.

On the discussion groups sites it was not possible to maintain my

anonymity because of the nature of the registration protocol. A valid e-mail

contact is necessary for membership registration. As at the end of 2008, I was a

member (both passive and active) of one google discussion group (USA Africa

dialogue) and 28 yahoo discussion groups. As if to deepen my participation and

expand my understanding of how the discussion groups function, I was

conscripted in September 16th 2007 as a moderator of one of yahoo cultural

discussion groups, NijaExcel in October 5th, and about eight months later (April

8th, 2008) I was upgraded as a moderator of African Business discussion group.

My responsibilities included approving messages sent by members or deleting

what the owner of the string of yahoogroups considers as purely commercial

information[17], approving membership and at times delisting members who want to

discontinue participation in the group. By virtue of my responsibility as a

moderator, I became a member of the Moderators' Circle and Moderator's Square

at about the same time. The two groups provided me with first hand back-stage

information and how decisions are taken.

Apart from following the trend of discussions and contributing, I was also

constantly on the watch for articles or information that has to do with Nigeria as a

nation or the role of Nigerians in the diaspora. To fully understand the objective

of the sites I analyzed the self-description (a requirement by Yahoo) written by

the groups or the founder of the discussion group. In other cases those who started

the group sometimes send out guidelines for participation. In the data analysis

section some of these self-descriptions will be analyzed in tandem with the

guidelines for participation where available. The methods and techniques utilized

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[17] There are regular checks on our activities and reprimand is send by e-mail if any posting deemed to be a commercial is approved by any of us. There are guidelines on what to approve or not approve. When in doubt we are advised to ask the owner/founder of the groups for clarifications.

for this study were moderated by a set of theoretical perspectives which I discuss below.

The participant observation technique shares perspectives with Baym's 1993 study of soap opera fan community and Christine Hine's (2000) concept of virtual ethnography. Miller and Slater also carried out an ethnographic study of "what Trinidadians find in the Internet, what they make of it" and concluded that "one can use this particularism as a solid grounding for comparative ethnography" (2000, pg. 1). The primary objective is to understand how Nigerians express themselves online and how online news stories influence their discussions and choice of themes. The choice of virtual ethnography as the technique for this study is based on the assumption that online participants are evolving a culture and practice of interaction that needs understanding in its near natural setting as possible. On one hand, Hine opines that "[c]ultures are studied in their natural state, rather than as disturbed by survey techniques or experimental scenarios" (2000, pg. 42). On the other hand, Lovink raises a caveat that "[t]he study of the 'everyday life' of net culture has been useful, but nowadays seems incapable of providing us with a bigger picture" (2005, pg. 6). The bigger picture for him is a combination of overlooked areas of "changes at the level of infrastructure, software, interface organization" (pg. 6) which as technical as they appear are beyond the scope of this study. A picture that is within the frame of this study is

that of "bringing research back from cyberspace and virtual reality into geographical, social spaces, to address a variety of issues" (2002 pg. 453). Once I collected both numerical and textual data, making sense of the content and constructing threads was the next logical step. The section below focuses on my framing of text and its analysis.

<div align="center">Textual analysis of postings</div>

The term textual analysis (or analysis of text) can be defined in multiple ways. Text analysis in the words of Norman Fairclough (2003) "is seen as not only linguistic analysis; it also includes what I have called 'interdiscursive analysis; that is seeing texts in terms of different discourses" (pg. 3). However in the simplest terms "[t]extual analysis is a way for researchers to gather information about how other human beings make sense of the world" (McKee, 2003, pg. 1). The information gathered is a means to an end. The end is that of systematically reconstructing informed opinions from the text against known backgrounds. To make that informed opinion from texts it must be accepted that texts are representations of the world of the writers. The written word reflects and represents ideas from different sources, moments and worldviews. Each of the sources, moments, and worldviews are marked within the text and can be recovered. According to Parker "[w]ords and phrases do not come ready packaged with specific delimited meaning that a researcher can be sure to know as if they

were fixed and self-contained" (1999, pg. 2). In this regard, texts are not just

mechanical containers of meaning; they are communicative events that do things

(de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981; Eskelinen and Koskimaa, 2001). The

communicative events of interest to this research fall under Harré's notion of

informal social episodes (as cited by Parker and the Bolton Discourse Network,

1999, pg. 30). As will be demonstrated, most online forums are informal

asynchronous communicative events. The informality of the episodes imposes a

particular kind of reading of the texts. The happenings on the sites are "more than

just visible behaviour, they also include the thoughts, feelings, intentions, plans,

and so on of all who participate" (Harré and Lanenhove, 1998, pg. 4). It implies

that the various postings online have richer clues that can help in reconstructing

the thinking behind the text. This cannot be done in vacuum there are guidelines

that must be followed. For instance, Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, and Vetter, 2000

suggest that understanding of what texts mean is theory-dependant and context

driven. What texts mean can follow different perspectives. There are perspectives

on the writing of text and also on the reading of text as part of a social practice or

as an academic exercise. There is the literary theory which focuses on the nature

of text as the source of its meaning. Within the literary category is also Stanley

Fish's reader-response theory which focuses on what the text does rather than

what it means. Fish privileges the reader of a text as the creator and constructor of

meaning. However, from a post-structuralist perspective of textual analysis, the sole objective is not meaning derived from measurement of reality but an uncovering of specific ideas inherent in naturally occurring textual conversations. McKee submits that "[i]n post-structuralist textual analysis, we do not make claims about whether texts are 'accurate,' 'truthful' or 'show reality'. We don't dismiss them as 'inaccurate' or biased" (McKee, 2003, pg. 17).

<u>Rationale for this study</u>

This section of the dissertation also details how the theoretical frameworks shape the philosophy which underlies the choice of methods employed in the study. This section makes explicit, some of the assumptions behind an interpretive naturalistic research design. The interest of this study is the uncovering of how Nigerians in the diaspora frame concepts as nebulous as nation, nationalism, and nationhood. Concepts such as these are language and context driven. Should a quantitative research model be considered for this kind of study, it implies an intention to generalize into the target population of interest. According to Trochim positivism "is a position that holds that the goal of knowledge is simply to describe the phenomena that we experience" (2000, online doc.). Going along such a positivist path denotes a concurrence with the assumption that outcomes of social enquires should be value free and objective. The root of this kind of proposition according to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie is located in the idea that

"social observations should be treated as entities in much the same way that physical scientists treat physical phenomena" (2004, pg.14). To ensure reliability, reproducibility and validity physical scientists rely on instruments for measurement and collection of data. The data are collected in this mode by the researchers in accord to scientific codes and conventions. In addition, legitimacy and respectability are conferred by the research community and the disciplinary field once data are collected in a "randomized, prospective, double blind study" (Runciman, 2002, pg. 146). The data so collected is expected to be subjected to mathematical calculations as a way of determining significant differences, eliminating fluke and computing the (correlation) relationship between dependant and independent variables. Interpretation of data is deductive and based on the empirical evidence so generated. This mode of making sense of the world is not without its limitations. For instance it is difficult to "measure how much of something there is before we know what it is we are looking for" (Moran, 2000, pg. 45). During the phase when the 'thing' been researched is still fuzzy, scientific procedure insists that "[a]n a priori hypothesis is required; this may limit the chance of a truly new finding" (Runciman , 2002, pg. 146). New findings have been known to result from paradigm shifts and challenges to disciplinary conventions within logical reasons. Viewing the argument from a postmodernist perspective Liu and Liu posit that "modernist search for natural laws and unified

theory using impartial methods is undermined by the postmodernist critique that reality is socially constructed" (1997, pg. 159). In addition, the entire quantitative research process can be charged with putting faith in non-human parameters which are expected neither to be location bound nor culture specific. An experiment performed in one part of the world is anticipated to be able to produce similar results within a set margin of error in other parts of the world. The outcome of most quantitative processes gives semblance of universality and broad based generalization with high explanatory and predictive powers. But from experience and the diverse nature of the human population, understanding the nature of specific cultures, instances, or moments, helps shape our collective understanding of the global. In effect, most researchers "often study individuals, but usually we are interested in generalizing to more than just the individual" (Trochim, 2000, online doc.). The study of the local is as important for the appreciation of the global just as the study of the individuals allow for projections into a population. There is an axiom that "understanding always falls back on the idea that meaning is constituted in an interplay between parts and the whole" (Larsson, 1998, para. 18).

The ultimate is to fully understand the whole of life but the many holes in life makes such an agenda too ambitious. One approach that focuses on locals, groups, and sub-groups is the qualitative research model. The model is based on

diametrically opposed sets of values when compared to the quantitative model. Yet they are not mutually exclusive, one can reinforce the other in a mixed method design. Both methods speak to different objectives in relation to how social change occurs and continuity promoted. The charge that qualitative research is extractive and distant still holds true in many cases. Extractive studies allow researchers to maintain the subject/object binary opposition during the process of study without giving much back to the community. To take the edge off the charge, scientific researchers are said to be the bed-rock of human progress. True as the defense may be, it can also be argued that science cannot lay equal claim to the grounded development of human spirituality, identity, and sensitivity to nature. Wheeler, Ampadu and Wangari "consider the spiritual essence to be the critical missing factor in explanations of life-span development relevant to people of African descent" (2002, pg. 71). There definition of spirituality links community, identity, and nature. Observing attributes such as spirituality, identity and sensitivity to nature call for a different empiricism, values, and mode of enquiry.

Qualitative research approach operates from an interpretive stand point; it is not a search for the truth but truthful explanation to aspects of everyday living. Bryman lists a number of intellectual undercurrents which provides qualitative research with its peculiar way of knowing. He mentions "phenomenology,

symbolic interactionism, vertehen, naturalism, and ethnogenics" (1988, pg. 50).

Staffan Larsson instead traces the roots of this system of knowing to

hermeneutics, ethnography (a product of social anthropology and sociology), and

finally phenomenology a philosophical related endeavor (1998, para10). It may be

a trite point to restate that reality is constructed rather than discovered. Qualitative

research aims at not only giving meaning to everyday occurrences in ways that

human beings can understand but lays a framework for societal transformation. It

is a research model that is performative in practice and transformative in essence.

According to Larsson "[t]he word [qualitative] originates from Latin, 'qualitas',

which means character, feature, kind. Qualitative method, thus, is systematized

knowledge about how to describe something in a way that presents character"

(1998, para. 9).

The choice of qualitative techniques is determined by many factors,

principal among which is the nature of problem to be addressed. "It may be

particularly useful where problems are 'complex, contextual and influenced by the

interaction of physical, psychological and social factors" (Runciman, 2002,

pg.14). The nature of this mode of research calls for engagement in a natural

setting as opposed to contrived laboratory experimentations. It anticipates

minimal intrusion from the researcher during the process of observation and data

collection. However, there are various social science methods that engage subjects

of their studies as part of the process. For instance ethnography makes room for a balancing of observation and participation and thereby opens the doors for critics who raise issues of subjectivity and critical distance or insistence of logic over feelings (Moi, 1988, pg.105). Subjectivity, according to the critics, has a potential of introducing personal bias into the process of study while lack of critical distance robs the researcher the needed disinterestedness for a balanced view based on reason as opposed to raw emotions. These are justified concerns that can and must be accounted for during the re-presentation phase of the study. The charges hardly stand in the face of postulations of fields such as "dialectical anthropology which brings together the study of structure, cultural process, and human agency" (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc, 1994, pg. 10). According to the authors, dialectical anthropology makes a case for the endless possibilities of divisions found during field work. Ultimately the prize is how to gain in-depth knowledge within a sub-group, one as a researcher may be involved with, in an intimate yet scientific way (Arweck and Stringer 2002).

On the one hand, Hair and Clark cite research works which refer to ethnography "as a set of methods, a research strategy, a paradigm, a frame of mind, while a number define ethnography by its means of writing" (2003, online doc.). On the other hand, Johnson defines ethnography as "a descriptive account of social life and culture in a particular social system based on detailed

observations of what people actually do" (2000, pg. 111). In this case what the subjects are doing is communicative in essence. Their physical location of the subjects gives context to the text generated. In effect, the virtual nature of the 'location' provides an emerging practice that allows for a different kind of observation, participation and data collection from online communities. To be able to respond to the research questions, it is expedient that a research method that provides the opportunity to experience at close range the flow of discourse and debates online be chosen. Of the different methods an adopted form of ethnography appears a best fit.

The general consensus is to locate the origin of virtual ethnographic approach as an adaptation from anthropology. According to Christine Hine "[t]he idea of virtual ethnography was to find a way of taking seriously, as a sociological phenomenon, the kinds of things people did on the Internet" (2004, para.1). The objective of ethnography is the development of enriched sense of the "meanings of technology and the cultures that enable them and are enabled by it" (Hine, 2000, pg. 8). Added to this is to use one of the gap-bridging features of the Internet to study textual exchanges between groups that may hitherto not be in contact with each other. These perspectives have implications for studying aspects of the Internet. Instead of physically living among chosen subjects, websites, weblogs and home-pages become the sites of study. In a similar study, Moran

posits that "[i]t is the understanding and familiarity with the research setting gained by the months of observation that (hopefully) allows a measure of insight into the dynamics of discourse within the group" (2000, pg. 52). The familiarity results from what Hine refers to as "a process of intermittent engagement" (2004, para x). It will be noticed that on any typical web forum there could be hundreds of posting on a monthly basis[10]. Constant presence on the sites gives one the capability to track and evaluate important moments which are relevant for discussing the research questions. Like a physical location websites and weblogs have unique features that help contextualize the dynamics of the group's interaction and textual exchange. For instance the Yahoo groups have a message history that gives a statistical picture of number of posting on a monthly and yearly basis. It is also possible to read off the number of members and the identity of the group complete with ground rules for engagement. In addition, details such as location, gender and vocation are possible on most of the sites as well. Virtual ethnography does not have the problem of informer exaggeration since the data are collected in form of text. The collection of information has a potential for creating ethical problems if not properly addressed. Ethical issues such as informed consent, invasion of privacy, and secret collection of personal information have been addressed in literature.

Problems are wont to arise while forging functional relationships between the 'observer' and the 'observed' on the field. Some of these problems are linked intricately to a series of ethical issues. Among which are "important issues regarding observation, recording and reporting online" (Elgesem, 2002, pg.195). Apart from these issues Capurro and Pingel narrow ethical problems arising from studies online to "the tension between the proper object of research, i.e. online existence, and bodily existence. The borderline between these two phenomena is interface communication itself" (2002, pg. 190). This tension according to the authors arises when virtual ethnography is compared to how the issue of authenticity is negotiated during face-to-face communication studies. It is possible within reason and by use of methods of triangulation to reduce deceit in face-to-face studies. However, the Internet with its promotion of anonymity and multiple personalities poses a challenge where personal details are needed in a study.

Virtual ethnography as practice forms one of the main planks of this study by virtue of the location of the research subjects on the Internet. The virtual terrain will be treated as a composite part of a broader media system located within communication ecology. During the analysis it will be argued that online communities do not stand alone; they are interlinked to different sets of networks. Understanding the media interconnections helps to configure how social events are represented in text and how the reports form the core of debates or reflections

online. Since text is the unit of analysis and the link between the concept and the online contributors it is imperative to focus on its impact on methodology and on textual analysis. In addition the section below will describe observer-participation for the duration of the study.

Chapter 4
DATA COLLECTION

This chapter details the procedure for data collection. What was done and how it was done in each of the situations is explained for each data set. In addition, it states the philosophy behind data collected. The data collected for this study is not a representative sample of texts within postings produced online by mainly Nigerians in diaspora. The data collected are guided by outcomes of literature review, constant interaction, and limited participation on some of the websites and discussion groups. Decision to collect data from two discussion groups specifically was mediated by findings in the literature review. Collecting data from *Naijanet* for instance, was decided upon because it was mentioned in previous studies by Bastian 1996, same for the discussion group soc.culture.Nigeria which was mentioned in Moran, 2000. In addition, the decision to collect data from some of the other sites was predicated on the appearance on other sites and comments left about them by participants who frequent the forums. In other cases search engines on the web-sites, I either participated in or observed, brought up useful leads. To make sense of the vast virtual landscape of websites and discussion groups I categorized them below. The typology is based on the nature of the site architecture and nature of information contained on the sites. I chose to categorize Nigerian-related sites into four distinct types namely:

(1)   There are a number of discussion groups which started first as mailing lists but later evolved into asynchronous web-based forums where postings can be accessed and

achieved. Postings from these forums are observed in greater details. By discussion groups,

I accepted the definition provided by Bayam 2002. In his view, "discussion forums [are]

organized by topic and distributed to subscribers through e-mail" (pg. 62). These e-groups

can be further sub-divided into moderated and non-moderated groups. For instance,

Naijanet is both a Yahoo discussion group and also a website run independently by a

webmaster. In its self description, it states simply on the homepage that it is a "[l]ist for

Nigerians from all walks of life and in the diaspora." Apart from those mentioned above

there is a large number of Yahoo discussion groups. Most of the groups are moderated and

monitored on a constant basis. Here is a sample of yahoo discussion groups which cut

across, cultural, ethnic, political, and national issues.

Table: 1. shows a list of some Yahoo discussion groups with focus on Nigeria

Social groups	Political oriented groups	News oriented
AriyaInStyle.com	NaijaElections.com	Naijanet@yahoogroups.com
ChatAfrikArticles.com	NaijaPolitics@yahoogroups.com	NaijaBusiness.info
GeleStyles.com	ConcernedNigeriansgroup@yahoogroups.com	AfricansBusiness.info
AfricansBookClub.com	edo-ciao@yahoogroups.com	ChatAfrikClassifieds.com
ChatAfrikReview.com	nidocanada@yahoogroups.com	NaijaViewPoints.com
edo_global@yahoogroups.com	OmoOdua@yahoogroups.com	newpublications@yahoogroups.com
Esan_Community@yahoogroups.com	TalkNigeria@yahoogroups.com	Africare-Newpublications

afenmai@yahoogroups.com	Nidoa@yahoogroups.com	NaijaNewsandReports.com
Yorubas-Community@yahoogroups.com	Naijaintellects@googlegroups.com	Nigeria360@yahoogroups.com
afenmai@yahoogroups.com	AfricanTalk@yahoogroups.com	
	NaijaExcel@yahoogroups.com	
	ChatAfrikPinnacle.com	
	NaijaExcel@yahoogroups.com	

(2) Web-pages which encourage well thought out feature-like articles and also have provision for instant feedbacks and contributions by participants who took the trouble to subscribe to the site. I participated in a number of the conversations which took place on websites such as 'Nigeria Village Square' (www.nigeriavillagesquare.com) and Nigerians In America (www.nigeriansinamerica.com). But more than the ones I participated in, I visited these others just to experience first-hand what was going on there. Sites such as Gamji, Odili. Net, 'Nigeria Muse' and 'Nigeria World' post interesting articles periodically.

(3) There are weblogs devoted to independent investigative type journalism and personal diaries that range from lifestyles to travelogues. Sahara Reporters, judging from cross-postings by other websites appears to be the reference point in this type of investigative citizen journalism. There are evidences to show that newspapers in Nigeria

often times publish some investigative news from the site (Kperogi, 2008). There are

similar sites which mirror the Sahara Reporters model but these will not be included in

the data collected.

 (4) Internet radio and television stations based outside Nigeria. These will only

be mentioned but not a part of the study. Their presence expands sources where Nigerians

in the diaspora obtain news, footage, and entertainment.

The section below shows data collected from each of the sub-categories starting

with discussion groups.

<div align="center">

Data from discussion groups

</div>

There are a number of discussion groups that fit the objective of

this study and which can provide data that can respond to the four research questions but

only four of such groups will be presented in details. The main criteria for choice of

which site to visit, observe, and participate was based on the activity on the site and the

willingness of those who subscribed to the groups to keep bringing up issues. *Naijanet*

appears to be the pioneer discussion group established as a Yahoo website, it was

founded January 19, 1999.[18] A look at the archived data showing the number of postings

per month indicates that its migration to Yahoo was in 1999.

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[18] See a comprehensive reconstruction of *Naijanet*'s history in the chapter on discussion.

Table: 2. Showing number of postings per month on the *Naijanet* Yahoo discussion group

Data collected June 14, 2008

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
1999	193										3	894
2000	1998	2443	3230	1818	1964	2503	2728	2822	2712	3175	2496	2225
2001	2346	2162	2731	2322	2090	2847	3221	1457	605	1204	1199	860
2002	1031	1086	683	815	1033	898	714	1123	1082	1150	470	416
2003	686	625	562	772	972	1005	1303	1132	612	490	576	595
2004	534	592	501	485	673	342	230	363	270	240	258	258
2005	278	255	563	500	498	521	897	491	494	701	518	428
2006	541	256	287	254	428	278	171	213	292	258	262	551
2007	472	441	603	321	478	468	323	449	332	356	431	364
2008	406	294	209	43	272	111						

Naijanet has one of the shortest textual descriptions of its activities on the opening page. It simply states it is a "[l]ist for Nigerians from all walks of life at home and in the Diaspora." However, hidden out of view as part of the files section is a comprehensive seventeen page document on the rules of the listeserv. Though the rules and expectations guiding interactions on the site was uploaded on February 14th, 2000, it was revised on October 1998. It spells out the nature of the group, membership structure, and other obligations of membership. A detailed

textual analysis of this document is in the next chapter. The section below

presents data collected from the web-site.

As at June 15, 2008 when these data were collected from the site, there

were 1,285 members subscribed to the site. It is not possible to know the real

identity of the members or their geographical locations because the list moderator

did not make the list of members public. Information such as these can be

obtained from reading the texts as they often times reveal who they are and where

they are contributing from. Looking through the 406 postings in January 2008, it

appears that the most active participant obtained news reports from the online

version of the Punch newspapers published in Nigeria. There are a total of 149

news reports covering a range of issues such as activities of the Economic and

Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), local and national political activities such

as the conflict situation in oil-rich Niger Delta

The tables below show the breakdown, from which sources of postings

were obtained for the months of January and June, 2008. They present where the

news reports are culled from and the number of times each publication appears for

the months of January and June respectively:

Table 3. Showing a breakdown of news/ information sources for the month of January 2008.

Number of Nigerian online papers posted January '08	Foreign sources	Other sources	Number of contributions from members
Punch – **149**	BBC- **38**	PRONOCO **2**	Okala **6**
The News/ PM News- **51**	New York Times- **6**	Ghana.com **2**	Fubara **4**
Sunnewsonline **5**	CNN- **3**	Press Release **1**	Niajanet **3**
Tribune- **36**	Financial Times **2**	www.nigeriabem.com	Nowa **1**
The Nation- **23**	MSNBC- **1**	African Women Cancer- **1**	-
Guardian- **14**	Associated Press- **1**	United Nations- **1**	-
New Nigerian- **8**	Telegraph **2**	Odili.net- **1**	-
Leadership- **4**	YouTube- **1**	International Journal of Social & Mgt Sciences- **1**	-
Vanguard- **5**	-	Trieste Science Prize- **1**	-
This Day **3**	-	www.spigel.de- **1**	-
New Age **1**	-	Unknown **3**	-
Total- **299**	**54**	**15**	**14**

Table 4. Showing a breakdown of news/ information sources for the month of June 2008.

Number of Nigerian online papers posted June '08	Foreign sources		Other sources		Number of contributions from members	
Punch – 3	BBC-	6	PRONOCO	1	FDW	**30**
The News/ PM News- **15**	New York Times-	2	Ghana.com	0	Niajanet	**2**
Sunnewsonline **0**	CNN-	2	Press Release	1	NO	**1**
Tribune- 10	Financial Times	0	www.nigeriabem.com 0		N B	**1**
The Nation- **4**	MSNBC-	0	African Women Cancer- 0		VOTT	**5**
Guardian- **12** (Update)	Associated Press-	3	United Nations-	0	MA	**1**
New Nigerian- 0	Telegraph	0	Odili.net-	0	-	
Leadership- 0	YouTube-	0	International Journal of Social & Mgt Sciences- 0		-	
Vanguard- **3**	Obama speech 1 www.democrats.org.1		Trieste Science Prize- 0		-	
This Day **3**	Reuters Africa	3	www.spigel.de-	0	-	
New Age 0	AFP	1	www.nairaland	0	-	
Daily Trust **4**	USAfricaonline	1	Unknown	0	-	
Compass **1**	USAToday	1	Ojipeoplesforum	1	-	
-	Guardian, UK	1	www.ngex.com	3	-	
Total- **55**	**22**		**6**		40	

Soc.culture.nigeria is a part of the google discussion group network. The
Nigerian forum was founded over 10 years ago. It is one of the many Usenet newsgroups
found on the Internet. As expected of every discussion forum there are stated objectives
or a brief description of what the forum stands for. Soc.culture.nigeria is described as a
group for "Nigerian affairs, society, cultures, and peoples" (1994). The table below gives
a picture of the activities of the group since inception till June 19th, 2008 when the data
were collected.

Table 5. Showing number of postings per month on the soc.culture.nigeria
discussion group Data collected June 19, 2008

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008	41	15	26	13	22	4						
2007	45	18	270	96	72	30	35	31	36	17	59	54
2006	18	33	23	316	453	385	328	237	322	192	264	63
2005	153	19	64	52	30	35	82	43	48	42	71	30
2004	150	230	48	93	83	52	31	34	23	53	193	113
2003	85	49	53	71	30	49	59	82	154	204	193	113
2002	670	719	136	141	99	46	95	53	60	53	269	223
2001	1217	833	1237	839	810	790	1207	1249	1035	1442	821	584
2000	888	1301	1687	980	942	1311	1044	1227	1606	1504	1306	933
1999	1936	2365	2062	1985	1189	801	1202	1421	1690	1635	1464	1373

1998	1979	2696	2418	2279	2733	3686	3007	2412	1619	1535	1660	1505
1997	1438	1614	1018	1033	1027	1295	1812	1621	2111	245	734	2328
1996	1692	1583	939	2021	1672	1515	1201	1624	1143	1423	1401	1345
1995	133	152	154	3	3	6	4	3	0	9	57	13
1994	-	-	-	-	-	2	0	1	20	15	122	41

In January 2008, *soc.culture.nigeria* recorded a total of 41 postings, of which twenty postings were from the same participant. The others were either postings that had little to do with Nigeria or were just spam. However, ten different postings had information about military activities in the Oil producing region of Niger Delta.

As at June 21, 2008 when postings for the month of June were collected they were only five postings. One post was an announcement for a proposed digitalization of Nigerian daily newspapers to be housed in university libraries across the nation. Two other postings were about activities of Nigerian military, while the remaining two postings were spam.

USA Africa dialogue series is one of the vibrant discussion groups started around 2006 as a "Pan-African listserve that reaches the entire world, and focuses on issues of importance to Africa and its diaspora." This is a moderated group, which means those subscribed can post messages but the messages will have to be

'approved by the managers of the site. This group has a mirror-image on the University of Texas website under the supervision of Toyin Falola, a professor of History. In the introductory message to potential members, objectives and expectations of the series were enunciated[19].

As at June 21, 2008 when these data were collected, there were 1,351 subscribed members. As part of my interaction on the site, I noticed that membership is spread across Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. Though the membership list is not open to the public, it is possible to deduce the location of some participants from their email address or from the electronic signatures that accompany their email messages. USA Africa dialogue series is included in this study because Nigeria appears to be one of the African countries that features prominently on the site and also because of the robustness and maturity of discourse. The table below shows the number of postings per month for the three years of the discussion group's existence on the Google platform.

Table: 6. shows the number of postings per month

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
2008	443	344	467	584	744	301						
2007	278	261	360	349	377	366	464	380	303	265	260	507
2006	-	3	-	-	19	78	69	61	233	254	167	276

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[19] See the full statement in Appendix C

On the mirror site at the University of Texas, the archives indicate that there are a total of 1,608 messages. However, on the Google platform there are a total of 8,210 messages archived. The tables below show the breakdown of activities for the months of January and June, 2008. They present the sources from where the news reports are culled and the number of times each publication appears for the months of January and June respectively.

Table 7. Shows data collected from *USA Africa dialogue* for the month of January 2008

Number of Nigerian online papers posted January '08	Foreign news sources	Other sources	Number of contributions from some active members
Sunnewsonline 4	Guardian, UK 57	Ghana.com 9	HTH 68
Guardian-(Update) 4	BBC- 12	Zelza 10	TF 37
Leadership- 3	New York Times- 10	Pambazuka 6	MA 34
This Day 3	Associated Press- 7	www.nigeriabem.com 1	AK 21
The Nation- 2	Washington Post 6	Press Release 1	VOTT 14
Tribune- 2	YouTube- 3	United Nations-	US 12
Independent 2	CNN- 3	Odili.net-	MEO 9
The News/ PM 0	Observer, UK 2	African Women Cancer-	J I 9
Vanguard- 0	MSNBC- 2	Nation (Kenya)	OOk 7

New Nigerian-	0	Reuters Africa 1	Book by Falola & Ihonvbere	TA	6
New Age	0	Financial Times 1	Half a Yellow Sun	SA	6
Daily Trust	0	Times, UK 1	Wikipedia	KH	3
Compass	0	NPR 1	Monograph: Analysis of criminalizing policies	QS	3
Punch –	0	Fox-news 1	UNDOC	PA	2
			Unknown	AR	2
-			PRONOCO	Others	108
Total-	**20**	**99**	**13**		**341**

Table 8. Shows data collected from *USA Africa dialogue* for the month of June

2008

Number of Nigerian online papers posted June '08		Foreign news sources		Other sources	Number of contributions from some active members	
This Day	2	Guardian, UK 53		TalkNigeriaYahoogroup	HTH	60
Leadership-	1	BBC- 2		The East African Standard 1	TF	49
The News/ PM	1	New York Times- 12		Chronicle Reporters 1	MA	38
Guardian- (Update)	0	Associated Press- 22		*The Entrepreneur* **Newspaper**	AKB	27
The Nation-	0	Washington Post 8		Press Release 1	VOTT	20

Tribune-	0	YouTube-	1	New Era (Namibian publication)	PA	19
Independent	0	CNN-	1	ZNet commentary	TA	18
Sunnewsonline	0	Observer, UK 8		Mercury News…1	JI	12
Vanguard-	0	VOA	2	Green Left Weekly…1	AK	12
New Nigerian-	0	Reuters Africa 1		The International Socialist Organisation 1	MEO	10
New Age	0	Financial Times	1	-	IK	6
Daily Trust	0	Times, UK	1	-	KH	4
Compass	0	NPR	1	-	OO	2
Punch –	0	Fox-news	1	-	US	1
-		AFP	1	-	Others	206
-		Telegraph	1	-	-	
Total-	4	116		10	278 + 206=484	

Apart from numerical data collected, data in textual form representing critical moments were also collected. In a particular instance an innocuous signature by one of the contributors to the forum resulted in a debate about the structure of the Nigeria nation. Summaries of the postings are produced below while the complete data is in Appendix X. Names of the discussants have been slightly changed to protect their real identities.

The chronology of the USA-Africa debate on "Job prescription of SSA, SA and A"

Summary: of a particular thread

This thread commenced on December 11th and what appeared to be a last word came in on Saturday December 15th. There are a total of 36 contributions which came from 19 contributors. Dr. Saul Amdee (not real names), who inadvertently became the issue had six postings in response to what others had to say. There are a number of key issues and themes which resulted from the conversation and sometimes debates. The entire thread can be categorized into three just for convenience: Perception of the problem with Nigeria from within the system, the country and in the diaspora; diagnosis of the problem(s) from within Nigeria; and suggestions of how to remedy the problem. In the process of these spontaneous discussions issues like who should criticize and from which space should criticism be rendered? There are instances where questions were raised about the value of criticism in nation building. The tension of long distance nationalism (Anderson, 1983) is played out in the form of those in the diaspora and those at home. In the process a brief exposition on the inner workings of state and its many failures are exposed. There were a few solutions for participation in aid of nation building. The solutions all come in the form of how to have a voice in the construction and renewal of the Nigeria project. The section below is a graphic representation of the summary of the actual discussions that took place. It

shows postings and turn-taking pattern. The summary of the text forms part of

appendix B.

Table: 9. Showing the date, time, and number of turns per participant

Serial numbers of Postings	Number of contributions	Date and time
Post 1 name 21	1st turn	Tuesday, December 11, 2007 2:55:20 PM
Post 2 name 7	1st turn	Tuesday, December 11, 2007 2:55:20 PM
Post 3 name 5	1st turn	Tue, 11 Dec 2007 21:29:19 -0800 (PST)
Post 4 name 7	2nd turn	Wed, 12 Dec 2007 09:41:26 -0800 (PST)
Post 5 name 20	1st turn	13 Dec 2007 08:34:27 +0000 (GMT)
Post 6 name 5	2nd turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 07:19:07 -0800 (PST)
Post 7 name 10	1st turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 12:36:59 -0500
Post 8 name 7	3rd turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 08:41:48 -0800 (PST)
Post 9 name 10	2nd turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 10:27:55 -0500
Post 10 name 19	1st turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 **09:59:55** -0800 (PST)
Post 11 name 10	3rd turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 13:35:43 -0500
Post 12 name 18	1st turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 11:51:47 -0800 (PST)
Post 13 name 7	4th turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 11:54:10 -0800
Post 14 name11	1st turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 19:44:44 -0800 (PST)
Post 15 name 7	5th turn	Thu, 13 Dec 2007 21:06:28 -0800 (PST)
Post 16 name 12 turn 1	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 12:04:28 +0100

Post 17 name 9	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:30:24 +0000
Post 18 name 4	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 08:21:39 -0600
Post 19 name 8	1st turn	14 Dec 2007 11:31:06 -0500
Post 20 name 16	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:38:44 -0500
Post 21 name 15	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:51:46 EST
Post 22 name 14	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 16:58:54 +0000
Post 23 name 4	2nd turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:11:24 -0600
Post 24 name 13	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 09:47:00 -0800 (PST)
Post 25 name 12	2nd turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 18:50:34 +0100
Post 27 name 10	4th turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 14:21:47 -0500
Post 28 name 9	2nd turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 21:51:15 +0000
Post 29 name 8	2nd turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 17:41:27 -0500
Post 30 name 7	6th turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 15:47:18 -0800 (PST)
Post 31 name 6	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 22:57:28 -0600
Post 32 name 5	1st turn	Fri, 14 Dec 2007 21:40:15 -0800 (PST)
Post 33 name 4	3rd turn	Sat, 15 Dec 2007 10:00:30 -0600
Post 34 name 3	1st turn	Sat, 15 Dec 2007 17:45:02 +0100
Post 35 name 8	3rd turn	Sat, 15 Dec 2007 14:14:25 -0500
Post 36 name 1	1st turn	Sat, 15 Dec 2007 15:15:55 -0800 (PST)

The salient points and my interpretation of these data are in chapter 5. There the implication of the number of postings and the sources will be explained further. As a way of contextualizing the spontaneous discussion that resulted about one of the contributor's electronic signatures, time will be spent on textual analysis of the postings.

The next section below takes a look at feature articles written specifically to address certain issues. The writers sometimes base their articles on media reports or on ideas they wish to reflect upon.

(2) Discussion groups present a different kind of data from web-sites that encourage participants to submit feature-like articles to the webmaster before they are posted. Once posted on the sites there is provision for subscribers to the site to express their opinions on the article. One of the most popular and frequently updated sites is the Nigeria Village Square (NVS), which members prefer to identify as the flagship of online forums for Nigerians. It has about 215 contributing authors to its website and an unknown number of visitors to the site. As expected the contributions vary in quantity and quality.

The website has a very efficient search engine that helps in locating articles by themes or topic. In the same category is Nigerians in America website. As at August 23, 2008, the website has a total of 234 writers who have contributed to the site at one time or the other. Capturing the energy of, and

contributions to, NVS site is a very daunting task. I formally registered on the site

December 2006 under a pseudonym to allow me contribute to some of the

discussions without distractions. I acted as an 'agent provocateur' in some

instances. There were two methods of data collection used for this site. One was

to use the search engine on the site to locate articles which included the word

'nation' as a part of its title. Included also in the data were number of hits

(meaning those who viewed the article) for each article. As at Friday November

23, 2007 when these data were collected there were about 68 articles with the

word nation as part of its title. A few of these articles will be discussed in chapter

5.

Nigerians appear not to bother when fellow Nigerians express negative

opinions about the country but when someone or an institution perceived as an

outsider engages in casting aspersion on the collective integrity of Nigeria and

Nigerians; the Internet community is set abuzz. There are a few instances of such

outburst, one was when CNN produced and presented a documentary on criminals

with Nigerian nationality. A posting with the title "CNN Attacks on Nigerians in

Houston & Why Nigeria's Image Matters" was posted on the NVS website on

June 4th 2006 illustrates this point. There were a series of online and offline

activities to seek redress for the perceived 'shame' brought on the collective. The

community demanded, and obtained apology from CNN. The thread will also be discussed in the following chapter.

There are also times when the discussion is turned inwards for the benefit of other Nigerians. There is a discussion group "TalkNigeria" which was set up four years ago to discuss current affairs as they relate to Nigeria and the world. There is an instance that will be used to illustrate how Nigerians recall and revisit the history of the country.

Apart from passionate discussions that involve personalities and ideas there are instances when a contributor takes on an idea of concern and reflects upon it. One of such posting titled "*Our nation awaits it's creators*" posted online on June 22, 2007. The writer of this article opines that Nigeria as a nation is still a prospect not yet a reality. Contracting this article to "How to build a nation" which was published on the NVS website on July 21, 2007 gives another perspective on how Nigerians think about the concept of nationhood. It was written by a Nigerian who lives in Texas, USA. This posting is included to also illustrate the role I played on the site. I submitted a response to this posting. The article and my response will be analyzed in the next chapter. The writer of this article focuses more on the state and the leadership as opposed to the nation. It says little about how to build a nation or what a nation connotes in the Nigerian context. In contrast to this July 2007 article there are a few others by Nigerian

intelligentsia who constantly share their reflections on the concept of nationhood as it relates to Nigeria. There are three prominent ones that form a part of this study one way or the other. One is a lecture delivered by Wole Soyinka in March 2009 on "Between nation space and nationhood." This lecture unexpectedly did not attract as many responses from Nigerians as expected. There were two major published reactions to the lecture in one of Nigeria's newspapers published online. The other two articles were written by a contributor (PA) who regularly posts his thoughts on to Internet discussion sites. He titled it; "Orile ede: Preliminary reflections." It was posted on the USA Africa Dialogue discussion group on March 30th 2009 and cross-posted to a number of other sites as its common practice. The third one is on "Project Nigeria: The struggle for meaning" (May 10 2009) was also written by PA. In all these articles by individuals, certain perspectives that can be traced to the media in Nigeria emerged. This will be discussed in chapter 5.

Using the method of textual analysis in a naturalistic design allows a researcher the opportunity to recover the thoughts of participants on issues without reverting to the writer for clarifications. An example of this is how participants on the NVS website think about the website and other members. A posting on September 13th 2007 gives such an opportunity. It reads like the history of the site from the perspective of one of the early contributors. It lists and

reviews the works of other active participants on the site. He submits that he found out "the uniqueness and 'flagshipness' [sic] of the Nigerian Village Square -- the market place of ideas." Another active member posted a piece on "Segun Adeniyi and the village square trap" (UN, September 23, 2007). This contribution represents one of the many articles that self-examine the performance of members of an emerging Nigeria Internet Community. It is also a summary of how the writer sees the function of various Internet sites and how information they distribute can be assessed.

The second type of data involved taking note of specific articles that spoke directly or tangentially to the topic of the study especially when it looks like there is an on-going dialogue between the parties involved. One of such an instance was an exchange between a home-based Nigerian public intellectual and a Nigerian university professor based in America. The issue at stake revolved around who has a right to express opinions in the emerging transnational public sphere. In total there were nine articles of differing lengths but each responding to an initial idea. Below is a table of titles of the nine articles, initials of their authors, date, and the number of hits as at June 12th 2009. The main core of the circulatory dialogue begins with an article written by one of the home-based public intellectual who commentators felt was defending or creating an "exculpatory space" for a fellow elite. The postings bring in other issues as it progressed. It

started well before May 11th 2008 and the last article I tracked was published on

in December 29th 2008. These series of exchanges speak to other texts written by

others. In about 4 days, the home-based public intellectual, who was at the center

of the textual interchange responded in an attempt to clarify issues. He pleaded for

a "robust public square and reasoned discussion" (PU, 2008) that was devoid of

sentiments and emotions. Four days after his 235-word release he now wrote a

lengthy defense of his initial position. His response takes on the issue of

participants in Nigeria's public sphere and how they are (mis)treated.

Table: 10. Shows titles of articles, acronyms of writers, and the dates of
publications

Title of Article	Author of Article	Date	Hits
Pat Utomi's Unraveling	MEO	May 11 2008	1355
Re: Utomi Faults FG On $462m AFC Probe	PU	May 15 2008	1166
Nigeria's Public Space And Reason Embattled	PU	May 19 2008	1314
Pat Utomi and Reuben Abati in Nigeria's Public Discourse	SA	May 21 2008	1905
The Reproach from Mount Olympus: Pat Utomi, Moses Ochonu, and the Burden of Reason	PA	May 26 2008	685
Public Space And The Discipline Of Honest Engagement	PU	December 27 2008	1226
Utomi And His Glad Cry Of Triumphalism	TT	December 28 2008	725

Pat Utomi, Anti-Corruption, And The Public Good	MEO	December 29 2008	1091
Pat Utomi's Syncretism	KE	December 29 2008	503

Here is a summary of the main points within the nine articles collected

(1). Pat Utomi's Unraveling by MOE , May 11 2008

Summary of this feature article: It uses an individual's reaction to public

debate as a take-off point to reflect on what he terms "public intellectualism and

activism" in the service of nation building. This is also another dimension to the

debate of whom among intellectuals at home or those abroad possess the

legitimate right to criticize the nation.

(2). Re: Utomi Faults FG on $462m AFC Probe by PU, May 15 2008

PU takes the opportunity to defend himself against the charges raised by

MOE in his May 11th article and uses the forum to re-state his democratic

credentials.

(3). Nigeria's Public Space and Reason Embattled by Pat Utomi   Monday, May
19 2008

This is a longer piece compared to the very brief but succinct one written

May 15th. In this piece PU talks about Nigeria's public sphere why some people

will not participate in it. He takes the challenge to"Diaspora based internet warrior

raining down vituperations from the comfort of American suburbia." It must be

noted that of the six references to individuals he made, three are foreign authors.

He starts with Dante's infano and later brings in Bob Garratt, ending with reference to Spiro Agnew. Analysis of the implication of this reliance on Western authors will be in the next chapter.

(4). *Pat Utomi and Reuben Abati in Nigeria's Public Discourse* by SA, May 21 2008

This posting starts with a definition of who a public intellectual is using an African thinker's perspective. He then bemoans the dearth of Public intellectuals and the need for rigor and versatility of public discourse. His posting is a reaction to PU's article and the perceived tone of the article.

(5). *The Reproach from Mount Olympus*: Pat Utomi, MO, and the Burden of Reason by PA, May 26 2008

This is another reaction to the perceived tone of PU's article. He establishes what the ethos of the public sphere should be. In his words "[t]he ethos of the public sphere, however, forbids you from ignoring the fundamental difference between *talking to* and *talking at* your interlocutors. He further avers that "[w]hat the new modes of knowledge production and instrumentalization in academia impose on us is the responsibility to unlearn our privileges." He even rhetorically asks how the subalterns in Nigeria imagine the nation, the state and the leadership.

(6). *Public Space and The Discipline Of Honest Engagement* by PU, December 27 2008

In this third attempt, coming about seven months after the initial articles, he admits to a semblance of an Internet war brought about by a misinterpretation of his words. He re-states his position that he has earned a moral right to speak down on commentators who "in the comfort of suburbia, thousands of miles away, take on people on the firing line who risk limb and life, in the self-righteous manner that some of our internet warriors do." These exchanges help to articulate the question on who has the moral authority ande legitimacy to comment on issues affecting the motherland.

(7). Utomi and His Glad Cry Of Triumphalism by TT   Sunday, December 28 2008

This writer also responded to the article written by PU. He calls him a "ganster-leader." It is a well worded textual attack on the person and past of PU. TT spares nothing in his castigation of the initial writer.

(8). *Pat Utomi, Anti-Corruption, and The Public Good* by MEO, December 29 2008

MEO in his article responds to the issue of moral authority in PU's article. Nearly all ideas in PU's article come under microscopic analysis. His article attracted about 8o commentators.

(9). Pat Utomi's Syncretism by KE Monday, December 29 2008

The first issue taken up by this writer is that of the moral authority of commentators. In the nature of online conversations KE reflects the writings of others who have written about the subject in his own posting. He concludes his article by stating that the "Internet has democratized public discourse and will continue to give power and influence to more people now and in the future."

The third and final method simply used search engines to recover archival materials which appear to be relevant to the research questions. The success of this method depended on the choice of keywords. Using nation as the keyword on the soc.culture.nigeria discussion group turned up a thread on someone (CTA) seeking to know if Yoruba people of South Western part of Nigeria could be called a nation. Below is a summary of the thread from the question posed to the final conclusion.

Newsgroups: soc.culture.nigeria
From: CTA
Date: 2000/01/12
Subject: Why is Yoruba a Nation?

The participant introduced what he was doing as "a project on Nigeria at the university." He wrote that he had read a few articles stating that Yoruba is a nation and some referring to the group as a tribe. He states his own position that he thinks that Yoruba should be referred to as a nation he is confused about these concepts of

nation and nation-state. He then threw his inquiry open to anyone on the list who is

familiar with the concepts.

Newsgroups: soc.culture.nigeria
From: OKQ
Date: 2000/01/13
Subject: Re: Why is Yoruba a Nation?

Speaking in historical terms one could legitimately identify entities such as
Yoruba Nation(s), Igbo Nation, etc., from amongst the different ethnic
groups which make up modern Nigeria.

> However, in modern times there is nothing that could legitimately be
> construed as Yoruba nation, Igbo nation, etc., since the sovereignties of all
> the component ethnic groups of Nigeria were usurped when Nigeria became a
> colony of Britain and following independence in 1960 when the country became
> a republic.

> The current noise about Yoruba nation, Igbo nation, etc., are heard only from
> the corners of those who claim to be fed up with the current make up of
> present day Nigeria and from those who are longing for the day when they
> could live in their own independent or autonomous ethnically homogenous
> enclaves or "nations" to be named O'dua Nation, Yoruba Nation, Igbo Nation or
> Biafra, etc. In my own humble opinion, this is not going to happen.

> I will advise that you stick to the current recognized definitions of what
> constitutes a "nation" and a "nation state" in your assignment since in my
> own opinion the term nation is best reserved for a sovereign state!

> The Yoruba constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, along with
> the Igbo and the Hausa-Fulani amongst a total of over 250 other smaller
> ethnic groups.

> The Yoruba, a people with a distinctive language and proud culture constitute
> the overwhelming majority of people who live in or originate from the
> Southwest region of Nigeria. The Yoruba are also to be found in the
> Republics of Benin and Togo and are widespread in the new world in such

places as the USA, Cuba, Brazil, the Caribbean (especially Trinidad and Tobago) and other parts of South America!

The Yoruba constitute one of Nigeria's major ethnic groups; they do not constitute a "nation" in the true sense of the word, regardless of the popular rhetoric from certain quarters!

Nations are entities that are for the most part self governing! As I see things none of Nigeria's ethnic groups constitute self-governing entities. All Nigerians belong to regions, zones or one of the 36 states constituting the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

There is only one nation in Nigeria--it is the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

Bye, OKQ

Newsgroups: soc.culture.nigeria
From: CTA
Date: 2000/15/12
Subject: Why is Yoruba a Nation?

I am sending this e.mail to thank all those who have used their precious time to

respond to my question on "nation", "nation-state" and "tribe". I received so

many definitions, analogies, critiques and comments which have so far enriched

my understanding of what the concept

"nation" means. I found out from the plethora of responses, that a nation may

mean one, two or more of the following:

1. A people who have claim to a common ancestry, language, history--in

this case, a nation is a thing in itself because of its primordial nature.

2. A nation can be a social construction made into a reality by a group of

people. In other words, when a phenomenon is made real, it definitely

becomes real in its consequence.

3. Interestingly, a nation may exist without being "bounded"--community

without propinquity, as in the Jewish case, nations of Islam (thanks for this

XXX!).

4. There is an "imagined notion" of a nation, as in the incorporative

practice of those people of the Yoruba in the Diaspora across the world,

especially in the Americas.

In conclusion, I discovered that there is no "all encompassing" definition of the

concept "nation". It is an abstract concept like "state", "society", "social system"

which may even be more difficult to define than "nation". The problem with a

concept "nation" lies neither with the

concept itself nor with the "social reality" (as espoused by those who respond).

 The point is that any particular nation, "out there" (wherever it may be), may not

exactly match our concept, which is a general problem with abstract concepts.

 Because of a problem like this, some social

scientists make use of the "ideal type" (Max Weber, the Swiss/German

sociologists was reknowned [sic] for this), which is an abstraction of reality. Ipso

facto, ideal-typical nation exists only in the analyst's mind; one will never find it

in reality. These findings will in hopes let me know more about the Nigerian

societies, and without your help, this would not have been possible. And finally,

based on your various expositions, and my further research, the word "tribe"
cannot be applicable to a society like Nigeria . It does not seem like there is a tribe
out there, the word is nothing but a typology, which has now assumed a racist
connotation.

Finally, thanks so much for the valuable time you all expended to respond to a
question that seemed pedantic but meant so much to me to know. Good night.

The search engine (google) also brought up a few article written by
commentators based at home. These articles eventually form a part of what
Nigerians think about the concept of nationhood. The various published articles
draw from different sources in the construction of their ideas. ("*A nation in
doubt"* Friday April 27, 2006 in online version of Guardian; "*Again, the national
question*" *Sunday, September 23, 2007* in the online version of Vanguard
newspaper; "Limits of the Yar'adua doctrine" *Sunday, September 30, 2007* in the
online version of Vanguard newspaper; "The Media and National Patriotism"
Sunday July 13, 2008 in the online version of Sun newspapers; "**Newspapers and
Politics" Sunday July 20, 2008** in the online version of Sun newspapers. The
table below shows the titles of the articles and the publications in which they are
found.

Table: 11. Titles of articles focused on nationhood published in Nigeria.

Ref No	Title of article	Publication	Date
001	A nation in doubt	Guardian	April 27, 2006
002	Nigerianhood in question	Vanguard	*May 09, 2006*
003	*Again, the national question*	Vanguard	*September 23, 2007*
004	Limits of the Yar'adua doctrine	Vanguard	*September 30, 2007*
005	The Media and National Patriotism	Sun	July 13, 2008
006	Newspapers and Politics	Sun	July 20, 2008

Chapter 5
DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter focuses on detailed analyses of the data collected, and the implication and interpretation of the tables and texts constructed from different sources. It allows for a construction of the trend in the data and an explanation of what the data connotes in regards to the subject of study. As a way of setting the tone and presenting a picture of the extent of the sample size, Table 2 on page 73, details the number of postings per month on Naijanet, one of the foremost discussion groups on Yahoo platform. It has a history that pre-dates its present virtual abode. According to Ene, "its present home at egroups.com allows only subscribers to post and receive e-mails" (nigeriaworld.com, 2000). The implication of this statement is that Naijanet existed elsewhere on the Internet before migrating to its present location. It was known in the mid-1990s as a bulletin board where "any issues relating to Nigeria, immigration, and social topics of interest to Africans were discussed" (Bastian, 1999). An informed participant on a few of the online discussion groups reflected on his experience and said"[t]hroughout the Abacha era, the famed Nigerian newsgroup, Naijanet, was very vibrant" (Ene, 2000).

Unfortunately there are no perceptible traces of the early years of the vibrancy alluded to by Ene. The number of postings available for 1999 does not in

any way represent the true account of happening as it was a period of transition from one platform to another. The figures for year 2000 however, paint a different picture that raises one's curiosity. There are two noticeable peaks in terms of postings to the discussion group. In March there were 3230 postings, and in October there were 3175 postings. Reading these numbers could lead to a tentative conclusion that with October being the independence anniversary of Nigeria such a peak is not unexpected. There may not be a particular reason for the peaks except there are indications within the text to show why traffic increased at certain times. Whatever the reasons; it can be safely noted that in the years 2000- 2003 Naijanet witnessed a high volume of postings. This is of course in line with the history of Naijanet as constructed by Misty Bastian's (1999) study of Nigeria's online presence.

Since the number of postings reveals very little, Table 2 (chapter 4) represents a picture of the content of 406 postings in January 2008 while Table 3 looks at the month of June 2008. The results show that in January, local news predominates with a very wide margin. There were 299 local news reports from Nigeria newspapers compared to 54 from foreign sources like BBC, New York Times, CNN, Financial Times and others. In June of the same year, the same trend is noticed in that there were 55 local news reports from Nigeria newspapers compared to 22 from foreign sources. In the two months (January and June) it was

observed that direct contributions from members (meaning postings which originated from participants) were just 14 in January and 40 in June 2008. These figures are not unexpected considering the primary objective of the group to exchange news reports about happenings in the homeland. It should be of interest why they chose the news items to post on the site. Unfortunately this aspect of participants' information sharing behavior is not one of the concerns of this study.

One stated objective of this study is to establish the source of knowledge of diasporic Nigerians. Ignacio avers that to carry out such a task of studying "the production, maintenance, and re-conceptualization of knowledge, sociologists have paid close attention to language and patterns of communication" (2005, pg 11). In essence, this study seeks to know where the ideas that influence some Nigerians in the diaspora originate. The assumption here is that a person is deemed influenced by an idea if within such a person's writing or contribution there are indications of internalization or ownership of an idea. Ni most cases ownership of the idea appears as a hybrid or synthesis of the initial idea. My questions then will be; are contributors to the online conversations influenced (or exposed) more by foreign news stories or local news reports from the homeland? It is possible to surmise that most contributors to the various discussion threads draw from a pool of knowledge especially from American and European sources. I must admit that this is not as simple as it appears. The question and its answer is

complex and needs further interrogation. However, the question of what influences the local news media is outside the scope of this present study, but should be kept in mind for further studies.

Soc.culture.nigeria is on the Google platform and in comparative to the other discussion groups appears to have richer sources of data. Table 5 shows the number of postings per month for most of the fifteen years the discussion group has been in existence .The discussion group commenced in 1994 with very few postings for the months of June to December of that year. The following year was no different, but by 1996 to 1999 that data shows that the discussion group recorded more than, 1000 postings per month. This was the period when General Sanni Abacha ruled the country (November 1993 to June 1998) and Nigerians in the diaspora organized various pro-democracy activities within and outside the country against Abacha's regime. By 2002, just as the situation within the country changed so too did the online activities take a new turn. As can be observed in Table 5 on page 77, there was a steady decrease in the number of postings per month. One likely interpretation of this data is that online activities coincided with the post-transition period of democratic experiment in Nigeria (1999 to 2002). The next period of 2003 to 2007 coincided with the second term of the former president of Nigeria, the Obasanjo administration. Subsequently there was another democratic election in 2007 to usher in new civilians. The lull can be attributed

yet again to happenings back on the homeland and also to the fact that more

interactive discussion groups with broader perspectives emerged. One such group

is USA Africa dialogue series on the Google platform. In the self-description of

the listserv found on the homepage, it is written that it reaches the entire world

with a focus on issues of importance to Africa and its diaspora. The claim that the

listserv reaches the entire world is very difficult to verify. Which entire world is

this referencing? Does the statement refer to the entire world of Africans or the

entire world of all those with access to computers? Since this is solely a textual

analytical study; the answer, if possible, can only be obtained within the text

produced. As I seek to locate apt responses to questions, the section below

discusses the implication for the number of postings to the group over a period of

three years and snapshot textual analysis of a particular instance which allows for

a window into the nature of the contributions.

A steady increase in postings to this discussion group is noticeable over

time. The postings rose from about 3 postings in the month of February 2006 to a

record high of 744 postings in May 2008. If these figures do not express much to

a person interested in the content of the postings it at least points to a vibrancy

that demands closer attention. To appreciate the dynamics of the discussion group,

Tables 7 and 8 give a breakdown of news sources and self-written contributions of

a select number of active participants. By self-written contributions, I mean

thoughts expressed by participants in their own words or as reactions to some other person's ideas as opposed to postings which were just culled from other sources. Those I term active participants are participants who frequent the discussion group more than once and make their views known on subjects which interest them or which they have knowledge about. Unlike Naijanet (see Tables 2 and 3), where most of the news reports emanate from local news reports from the homeland, a higher percentage of news on USA African dialogue comes from foreign news sources. For instance in January 2008, there were 99 news stories and reports compared to 20 from local newspapers. In June (as at the time data was collected) there were 116 news items from foreign (Euro-American) news outlets with the Guardian of UK topping the list with 53 news reports, features, and opinions. During the months chosen for the snapshot views, an individual (HTH) who lives in Holland posted the highest number of materials. In January 2008, she posted 68 items, while another participant (TF) posted 37 items. In June, HTH posted 60 items against TF's 49. Apart from cut-and-paste news reports there were also asynchronous conversations that were posted on the site depending on the flow and direction of the topic.

As an observant participant on this virtual discussion group I noticed the robustness of exchanges among the participants. I define robustness in terms of the range and span of what interests the contributors and the diversity of

intellectual sources used in the construction of their positions. There is hardly any issue that is sacrosanct which could not be, and has not been, discussed in the discussion groups (though the moderator admits to minimal editing and elimination of certain postings). It is not possible to predict what could interest the group at any given time. There have been times when events from the homeland in Nigeria (or any other place on the African continent) triggered off heated arguments or what read like well-researched position papers. There were other times when socio-cultural institutions within the country were subjected to critical appraisal. This model of conversation fits what Shudson terms "the sociable model of conversation" (1997, pg. 299) as opposed to the problem-solving model. The sociable model which is "spontaneous and free" (Shudson, 1997, pg. 298) can be illustrated with an instance which took place in December 11th 2008 when very active contributors to Nigeria's emerging Internet community (referred to as SOA in this study) wrote a three-part article on Nigerian journalism using one of the country's newspapers as a departure point and later focused attention on a particular columnist in the same paper. The first article on "Nigerian journalism and the Guardian newspaper" was written April 6 2008. Then on October 21 2008, he published "The Guardian newspaper: Ungrateful and insensitive." The third article, which led to a heated debate on an issue which had nothing to do with the practice of journalism, was written December 11, 2008.

Kendall, 1999, offers a prescription for understanding how conversations develop. She suggests that the context or background to the conversation must be established. So before focusing on the exchange (conversation) that occurred on the USA African dialogue discussion group, for the sake of clarity and contextualization, I revisit the main points in SOA's three articles (mentioned above) on the press in Nigeria and subsequently reflect on how he frames his relationship to the homeland. In his opinion, one option of analyzing a nation is through its institutions. The state of some of these institutions and those who work in them can be used as a barometer to judge the health of the nation. On this premise, SOA links the fate of the nation to the nature of its journalism. He goes even further to liken journalists, members of the judiciary, and the intellectual class as the moral custodians of a nation. Once these groups are found wanting the salvation of the nation is in jeopardy. According to him "both [the nation and journalism] are going to the dogs" (SAO, 2008). This sense of disappointment in the state of affairs of the country/nation appears to be a common position taken by Nigerians, at home or in the diaspora.

Apart from the issues mentioned by SAO in his three articles about the press in Nigeria, which I mentioned earlier, a contributor ('Name7') added to the mix that most writers at the newspapers have lost touch with public intellectualism and social discourse. The points he adduced were not in

contention, but the electronic signature attached to his messages raised an alarm with another participant ('Name 5'). The electronic signature included a string of titles and affiliations. 'Name 5' wanted the bearer of the titles to explain the job description of a Senior Special Assistant and the other titles attached to the electronic signature. Considering this to be an innocuous question 'Name 7' attempted to respond using his personal experience as a backdrop. In what appears as a way to validate his perspective on the matter 'Name 7' went on to compare the Nigerian organizational structure with America. As is usual in asynchronous conversations, 'Name 20' went back to the issue of the newspapers and their responsibility to the society before commenting on the long electronic signature. This contribution re-focused attention to the cost of running the present democratic arrangement where about four officers each of the 360 House of Representatives and 109 Senators were allowed to employ personal staff. The implicit concern here is the waste taxpayers are made to bear on behalf of the political class. This comment takes the discussion closer to how the country is being run and sets the tone for binary oppositions of those in power and those who are not.

Unlike the face-to-face mode of conversation, each contributor just jumps into the discussion going back and forth depending on what they have to say. 'Name 5', who was the first to raise the alarm about the electronic signature,

returned for a second time. He makes reference to the explanation offered by 'Name 7' but does not agree with it. He is concerned with the unnecessary financial burden borne by the generality of Nigerians. As an aside, he talks about his own personal predicament as an academic in the diaspora, adding his own opinion at that time the country was run better. This contribution introduces the pain of the immigrant and the memory of a past. According to Omoniyi "memory features as a central tool in the construction and validation of an identity that is rooted in a different space" (2007, pg. 29). Both the validation of self and construction of what an immigrant has become away from home can be gleaned from 'Name 10's' narrative. In giving a context to his contribution 'Name 10' narrates how he joined the pro-democracy movement built around the events of June 12, 1993, when the military regime annulled an election that was deemed the freest in the country. Asides such as this are not just superfluous but help (re)construct for readers how an immigrant remembers home.

Since the main focus of this study is to uncover how Nigerians in the diaspora define nationhood in their conversations it becomes pertinent to call attention to important statements that bear relationship to the study. On that premise, the past of a people and their origin always has a role to play when issues such as nationhood and state are on stage, but this discussion moves from the past to the present. 'Name 7' who is the central focus of the contributions, reveals that

he is at present on the soil of the United States of America where most of the

participants are located. The reason for that revelation is to forge a connection

between what is happening in Nigeria with the situation in America. This

revelation further makes the concept of insider-outsider perspective problematic.

He is abroad speaking about home. So he speaks as an insider who is temporarily

located abroad. It is within this complex spatial positioning that he throws light on

the working of the government. He explains the reason for the staffing needs that

was a bone of contention in the spirit of imagining a new Nigeria and by

extension a new nation. To him, service should be paramount. He explains further

that it is for efficiency in governance and not just jobs for the boys that lead to

what appears like wastage of scarce resources by the political class. For the first

time reference is made to the ideas of Edward Said about intellectuals who are

policy oriented and their possible immersion in the illogicality and" immorality of

the hegemony." Said is invoked as a way of justifying his involvement in

governance. What may not be very explicit in this line of reasoning is the aversion

Nigerians in the diaspora have for the political class. Corruption within the

government is held responsible for the media reports about decay of social

infrastructure in the homeland. The media at home functions both as the eyes and

ears of those in the diaspora. There are some dangers in over-reliance on media

reports as pillars for basing one's perspectives and positions. There have been a

few cases in which debates and discussions have been held based on incorrect reporting of events.

State, structure, and nature of governance became sub-themes in the ongoing conversation which started as an appraisal of the nation through one of its institutions. On this premise 'Name 10' returns for the second time to reinforce some of the points made about the unnecessary retinue of staff who attend to members of the political class. He goes into details about the lack of budget for the officers and the positions they hold. Since discussions here are unstructured, issues flow in, are sustained, or discarded at will. As a sub-sub theme 'Name10' re-introduced the talk about what was known in most online forums as the third-term agenda. This is a debate that revolved around changing the Nigerian constitution to allow for more terms for the (now former) president of the country. With the third term agenda in the background, 'Name 19' comes into the conversation with a critique of other contributors. He thinks they are cynics who see nothing good in working for government. Again the comparison is with America and not any country on the African continent or Europe. This participant goes back to the initial topic of discussion about Guardian newspapers and its sordid labor relations. He condemns the double standard and the cynicism of some of the contributors to the conversation.

A re-reading of the exchanges to this point will leave one with a perception that Nigeria's inability to forge a nation out of its many constituent parts is traceable to internal leadership deficiencies and a totally weakened civil society. There is hardly any mention of the role of outside forces or the effect of neo-colonialism in the weakening of integrative forces. Though this particular conversation cannot be generalized to represent the tone and direction of other conversations, it typifies the thinking of Nigerians in the diaspora who live within the boundaries of most of the imperial powers. If there is any linking chord which connects majority of Nigerians to the nation (or nation space) it is the disdain for the political leadership and political elites. One of the engines which drive nationalist pathos can be traced to this internalized anger against individuals and the institutions they lead.

As noted above, not every contributor to the issue of leadership takes the same position. On another forum where the issues of leadership and nationalism come up as part of a larger discussion, a contributor to TalkNigeria 'Yahoo egroup', links both the followership and leadership as responsible for the present state of anomie in the country. The contributor in a frustrating tone notes that "Nigerians have been making so much noise in the cyberspace, giving the impression we have problems because we have diabolic entities and evil mongers in as leaders in Nigeria" (January 31, 2005, message #431). To this contributor,

leadership is not the only problem that plagues the land but the dearth of Nigerian nationalists working in concert for the progress of the country should be factored into the equation.

One of the characteristics of 'egroups' is that contributors sometimes reflect previous submissions in their own as the thread progresses taking the liberty to add or go off topic at will. This characteristic was properly documented and discussed in Moran's study of the USENET newsgroup. He stated that the discussions "were deliberately designed to be center-less: rhizomic in character, horizontally organized and not hierarchically dependant on any particular part" (2000, page 106). There are times contributors make use of archival materials to reinforce or disagree with what others expressed. For instance a contributor like 'name 10' returns for the third time, but this time decided to first evaluate what others have written before making his own points. The painful issue of flawed elections in the country soon becomes a part of the bouquet of issues that have previously come up for discussion. At this stage of the conversation it is treated as one of the indicators of the inability of the political class to conduct credible elections.

Apart from 'serious' issues (meaning not personal issues), it is not unusual for friends to occasionally drop a line to register their presence. The contribution of 'Name18' can be interpreted along such a preposition. She congratulated him

('Name7') for a new job and then asked for a position paper she read about citizen's diplomacy. That was her own way of re-establishing connection with a friend. This particular posting may not have added much to the direction of the conversation; it at least presented information about the foreign policy direction of the country. 'Name 7' responds for the fourth time. This time he took on those who have expressed opinions on his participation in the government. To him, some contributors are comfortable with pessimism and would rather not participate in the process of change. He frames the present time as birth-time for the country and states that all experts are needed to ensure problem-free delivery. The symbolism of the choice of this metaphor raises more questions than it possibly answers. For instance, who are the parents of the nation, and in what womb is the nation encased? To whose hands will the nation be delivered? Questions such as these arise when human metaphors are used in framing concepts such as nationhood. The questions also bring to consciousness the agency needed to mid-wife a nation from prior seeds supplied by the colonial masters.

In the spirit of birth and re-birth, 'Name 11' links the virtual with the real and avers that the ongoing online conversations bear semblance to how political debates are conducted in Nigeria. After setting the scene with a few remarks he then zeros in with a personal observation of what he witnessed at the

local government level where young graduates just hung around their principals

doing next to nothing. In conclusion he disagreed with the comparison of

Nigeria's system with that of the United States of America, especially in the area

of knowledge production/ consumption of the various think-tanks and other sites

of political knowledge construction. Apart from this, he brings in the hierarchical

cultural difference between the two countries. Thus far Nigeria as a nation or

nation space is imagined in relation to a significant other (in this case the United

States of America). The tension between those in the diaspora and those within

the country gradually emerges as the conversation progressed.

'Name 7' for the fifth time returns to defend his position by addressing

some of the points raised in previous contributions. In analyzing the problem of

nationhood he identifies a crisis of citizenship as "the failure of ownership of the

nation." His analysis then turns generational. He posits that the younger

generation has not shown the courage to wrestle the nation from those he termed

as the charlatans. In a previous posting he used the metaphor of birth and re-birth

to characterize the country but during this turn (post 15, turn 5) he opted for the

word patrimony. It is of interest to note the linguistic difference between the

choices of both ideas. The one (birth) implicitly envisions growth while the other

(patrimony) is a gift handed over to another generation. The question then arises

in what form or shape is Nigeria been handed over to the next generation? His

conclusion that citizens must get engaged in the art of making Nigeria a nation, according to him marks the difference between him and those in the forum. In short Nigeria is a work in progress which historically was delivered to the hands of nationalists by colonial masters. As can be noted the idea of what a nation is or can be is gradually emerging in this conversation.

Anger at how the political leadership in the country conducts its affairs is a common currency in most articles and reports about Nigeria. Post 16 is not different in that 'name 12' brings up the issue of anger and then castigates the celebratory attitude of some commentators concerning the defeat of the attempt of the president to extend his stay in office. This posting is definitely a reaction to previous contributions. He does not think there is a need to locate entry points into the system before change is effected. He does not subscribe to the notion that it is only insiders within the government who can make changes. The implied notion here is that those in the diaspora can also play a role from their various stations outside the country and 'Name12' brings up a number of names to support his position.

One more issue (that of the African high command- AFRICOM) is added to those already on the table. The context of this issue is that most African leaders rejected the idea of an American-led military command in Africa but during the visit of Nigeria's president to the White House he sort of reversed the joint

decision. It was on this premise that 'Name 9' wanted to know how much of 'Name7's contact and connections "define the quality of policy paper" handed to his boss the Minister of foreign Affairs and why the president reversed himself.

All through the discussion hardly any of the participants bothered to define what a nation means but judging from the way Nigeria as a country with all its imperfections is discussed one cannot miss the passion each of the discussants have for the country. What is missing is any attempt to distinguish between patriotism and nationalism, not necessarily an academic treatise on one or the other. Maurizio Viroli in his book makes a similar observation. He begins with a remark that "in scholarly literature and common language, 'love of country' and 'loyalty to the nation', patriotism and nationalism, are used as synonyms" (1995, pg. 1). Viroli is not advocating for a scientific definition but a deep understanding of what both concepts mean in the minds of those deploying the terms. In Viroli's perception "the primary values [for patriots] is the republic and the free way of life that the republic permits" (1995, pg.2). In the data collected from the USA Africa dialogue series, patriotism and nationalism were freely used during the conversation especially in posts 23, 26, and 33 (see appendix 2). In post 23 it comes as a reaction to a perceived threat to freedom of speech and this led to an assertion that what is in contention is not shades of patriotism measured by participation or co-optation. To 'Name 4,' his role as a critic of government

should also be rated as part of his civic responsibility. Along this same line of reasoning 'Name 11' also takes exception to the tendency to equate participation in government as patriotism. Finally, 'Name 4' returns to reinforce his earlier position that the rhetoric of sacrifice, patriotism, and nationalism is just expedient rhetoric. When these positions are placed in tandem to Viroli's definition of patriotism there is a temptation to conclude that the conversations are not rigorous academic exercises but everyday talk of a people. Though it might not have been explicitly stated during the conversation, Viroli's list of enemies of republican patriotism as "tyranny, despotism, oppression, and corruption" is in agreement with sentiments expressed in most of the comments by contributors. There are no parallel ideas in the conversation when enemies of nationalism are listed. Viroli mentions "cultural contamination, heterogeneity, racial impurity, and social, political, and intellectual disunion" (1995, pp1-2) as obstacles to nation building. So Viroli makes a distinction between patriots and nationalist writers. Nationalists in the perception of Viroli work toward the spiritual and cultural unity of the people. Though these may appear as mutually exclusive positions but they are not because both patriots and nationalists love their country or the idea of it.

In the spirit of triangulation, the next section below focuses on some randomly selected articles, from the Nigeria Village Square website, with the word nation as part of their titles. The decision to use these randomly selected

articles is one way of establishing the presence of the theme on different threads

and discussion sites. The method may not be methodologically sound but it serves

to restate the fact that nation, nationhood and nationalism are not just side

occurrences but one of the major interests of Nigerians.

When these articles were collected on Friday November 23, 2007 there were

about 68 articles with nation as part of their titles. As a general guide I ask the

question; How do the writers of these articles frame the concept of nationhood

and nationalism in their perception? It will become evident that not all the articles

explicitly had anything to do with the concept. For instance the article written by

VED toward the end of the year was more an evaluation of the passing year and a

lamentation of the tragedy the country was at that time. This kind of narrative

feeds off from how the news-media from the homeland constantly analyze

prevailing socio-economic conditions at the time of publication. The narrative of a

failed-state is a constant one.

As part of the 68 articles I randomly searched, there is one which was a

talk delivered to one of the ethnic majority groups during an event in Boston

Massachusetts in 2003 with a title as "Intellectuals as nation builders," my

expectation was to encounter the lecturer's perception of nationhood. Instead

there is more material on who an intellectual is and how problems of the country

can be solved using intellect and imagination. Since what is left unsaid sometimes

casts a light on what is spoken. Scholars have deliberated on problems such an intervention can cause for those living and struggling within the country. For example the problem of moving from a Western country back to one's own country has its own burdens. In solving the problem of the nation from 'outside,' Kostantaras avers that "[n]ational revival movements from early modern times to the present have often drawn intense support from those dwelling outside the nation" (2008, pg. 701). It implies that both groups must find means of working together as a means of getting the nation to a destination of transformation. The concept of nation building deploys a mechanistic metaphor of an engineering construction which needs parts that have to be cobbled together before the final product emerges.

In the case of Nigeria, the parts in relation to the whole can be gleaned from an article written by SAO in July 2004 on "The Nigerian Presidency and the Igbo Nation." To put this title in context it should be understood that Igbo people represent one of the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, yet the writer conceives them as a nation within the national geo-political space called Nigeria. In the same article mention is made of "Nigeria and her myriad nationalities." These terms nation and nationality appears to connote deeper meanings among Western scholars. For instance, an Austrian scholar, Ludwig von Mises submits that "[t]he word and concept *nation* belong completely to the modern sphere of ideas of

political and philosophical individualism; they win importance for real life only in modern democracy" (1983, pg.9). It may seem that the term has a universal meaning applicable to all cultures and countries, but according to Joshua Fisherman "'Nation' signifies something different for Americans, Englishmen, Frenchmen, and Eastern Europeans, not to mention Africans and Asians" (1968, pg. 39). The implication of this observation by Fisherman is that one should not expect the same definition of the term from different people. Since there is a linkage between nation-building and intellectuals there is an article (Nigeria: A Nation without Heroes?) written by SAO in 2005. He brings up the case of "a budding pool of pseudo-intellectuals" who speak ill of Nigeria's nationalists on the Internet. In my own interpretation of this writer's article, the word nation could as well be substituted for country and there will be no difference in the overall meaning. It will be safe at this point to tentatively conclude that nationhood as a concept comes across as a given which needs little interrogation or reflection by commentators.

The same conclusion cannot be reached for defining a patriot or the attributes of patriot. There are about six feature articles posted on the Nigeria Village Square website between 2003 and 2009. The 2003 articles will not be considered because it is in response to a group in Nigeria that goes by the name The Patriots. The article by AO reflects on "Nigerian 'patriots' and their righteous

tirades" (June 13, 2006). It is a response to an earlier article by a home-based commentator who felt those outside the country simply criticize without proffering solutions to the problems of the country. AO opines that the act of articulating, either from within or outside the country, what is wrong with Nigeria is an important task that must be done by someone. Almost seven months after AO's article, another one by MFE was posted with a title; "Fake intellectuals, useless patriots." The article starts on a philosophical note about the subjectivity of views and how one is not superior to another. The use of the word 'we' becomes very noticeable in the first nine paragraphs of this article and its collective tone gives a feeling of representing a larger community beyond the writer. It is a long list of what is wrong with politicians, and in particular a generation "born into, the era of criticizing." As is usual with Nigerian Internet commentators, personal views are presented as if they represent that of the collective. There may not be any concrete idea in this article, but it presents the reader with the pain and passion of an average Nigerian especially the debilitating impact of ethnic divisions within the country.

This ethnic (or tribal) division is the subject of another contribution on the NVS website by RO. His contribution is titled: "Of patriots and tribalists" (April 21, 2007). This writer takes a stand from the outset that the idea of Nigeria as a nation has expired and sooner or later the country will break up into its constituent

parts. The sub-text of this piece is a response to those the writer thinks are

patriots. It brings to the fore the lack of a linking chord between the various ethnic

groups. He argues that the poor in one corner of Nigeria cannot imagine what

links them together within Nigeria. In his words "has the poor man in Akure the

same notion of Nigeria as the poor in Bauchi to sufficiently bring them together

and fight alongside each other for the overthrow of this (sic) rapacious elites

found in every ethnic group?" Issues these raises is the relationship of parts to the

whole, the place of ethnic groups in a nation. 'RO' takes a position of mutual

exclusiveness. In his view only one identity at a time is permissible, the idea of

multiple identities at different times appears unattractive to him. There are

scholars who have argued that you can still be a member of an ethnic group and

be a nationalist or a patriot at the same time. It comes down to how these concepts

are defined and from which social location the writer is writing from.

The article "We are all patriots" written by 'MEO' and posted on the NVS

on May 31, 2007 can be said to be written from the point of view of an academic

with the capability to keep emotions in check. He outlines four attributes of

patriotism in the course of the essay. According to him, patriotism "is a

progressive emotional evolution towards the love of country. In effect, patriotism

can be framed as a growing relationship between citizens and their country. What

is left unexpressed are the necessary conditions within the country that can drive

such growth of emotion. In his opinion no matter how strong a feeling one has for the nation-state it cannot be expressed in absolutes. It can be "expressed in degrees." The degree of expression as expected should differ from individual to individual depending on how pleased such a person is with the situation of the country. MEO argues further that "patriotism usually follows from a sense of gratitude and pride." The corollary of this position is that patriotism is hindered when citizens feel a sense of shame about their country or nation. When questioned in an interview, Benedict Anderson responded that "If you feel no shame for your country you cannot be a nationalist. And, shame can be contagious" (2005, online doc). Along the same lines of thought Liah Greenfeld, posits that "investment in national prestige necessarily gives rise to an endless international completion" (2005, pg. 327).The competition comes in various guises especially where neighbors to one's country are involved. This kind of international competition plays up when a Ghanaian is in dialogue with a Nigerian. There are other instances where Nigerians defend the name of the country when it has been unjustly impugned. Finally, MEO compares patriots and non-patriots when he reasons that "patriots are optimists, sometimes unrealistic optimists, while so-called non-patriots are pessimists." In both cases he was able to show that there is an intersection where both parties meet and that emotional intersection is unbridled love for ones homeland. The dividing line is not ancestry

or affiliation but how each group reads the history and the present condition of the nation.

In all the articles thus far reviewed, it is apparent that these Nigerians are able to express love for country and take time to reflect on the nature of their relationship to the place. There are those who feel and express pride and optimism in the way the country is run and there are others who express their disappointment in the negative projection of the country within the continent of Africa and globally. The representation of the situation is expressed differently. 'IsT' who posted an article on June 22, 2007, posits that Western ideas dominate the internal landscape to such an extent that most "conceptual castles" are designed and distributed from the same "poison-emitting source." At another end of the perspective there are those who are totally unhappy with the situation that they employ a strategy of disassociation. To illustrate this point, 'DO' posted an article in NVS on October 2007 with a provocative title that screams "*I don't care what you all say, I am not a Nigerian*." This is a story illustrates what it means to love one's country and be able to communicate the feeling to others. To 'DO' a person's "nationality, pride, and patriotism are dependent on his heart and not geographical location." There appears to be an emphasis on the subjective rather than reason (locative).

The frame of 'love of one's country' is about one of the very simple frames used in discussing Nigeria. This frame comes up a number of times especially when Nigerians suspect a smear campaign is likely. Looking at the text produced during a CNN broadcast which most Nigerians online felt was unfair; a few issues come to the fore. The coming together of Nigerians online is not just for information exchange or creation of knowledge. The forums are used for quick mobilization of 'virtual Nigerians' to defend the name of the country whenever its integrity is at stake. In this particular case, the community (at first through a few, then a town hall meeting) was reacting to mis-representation of a people. One of the planks of the argument was that if the chief executives of Enron could be found guilty of fraud and treated as individuals why can't the media also treat Nigerian criminals, who have been found guilty, as individuals as well. In the words of the writer of the June 4, 2006, article, "Why did CNN focus on a few Nigerians in Houston despite the Enron catastrophe in Houston? Is this just a matter of perception and perspectives?" In making the case, the writer spent time on the Enron fraud as a way of showing that crime has no nationality. The call was for all Nigerians to "write protest letters, phone calls and emails to CNN to debunk CNN's claim to the effect that forty percent of Nigerians in America are into frauds and crimes."

The message of mobilization originated from a newly-formed Nigerian Leadership Council which is an umbrella organization of twenty-five Nigerian associations based in the United States of America. This umbrella organization in the press release of September 19, 2006, specifically indicated that it was formed to "battle the CNN 'how to rob a bank' report in which CNN falsely implied that about 40 percent of Nigerians in the United States were involved with fraud." The militant tone and urgency of the press release cannot be missed. It was more like a call to arms. The umbrella organization demanded and received a letter of apology from CNN as a result of a town hall meeting it organized.

Prior to this intervention by Nigerians in the diaspora, the government of Nigeria issued a statement on the matter stating its displeasure on CNN's "unflattering portrayal of Nigerian citizens" (June 12, 2006). The various commentators to the thread on the NVS website identified with the government stand. One of the contributors wrote "This is what we expect from FGN and should take it further by banning CNN reporters from Nigeria" Another participant (#2) expressed surprise that the government actually attacked "the Western media for negative depiction of Nigerians." To this contributor, CNN is a symbol of Western media and as in war he is pleased the Nigerian government attacked in retaliation. Not all contributors are completely satisfied, participant #4 was unhappy with the snail-speed of response by the government. To this

participant, it proves the inefficiency of the government in Nigeria. However

participant #5 changes the tone of the discussion. The contributor wanted to know

if in truth a large percentage of Nigerians in the diaspora are involved in crimes.

No one responded to him but participant # 7 thinks there is a link between the

White House and CNN. Misconceptions such as this, coupled with a

misunderstanding of the relationship between government and the media in

America, are common during spontaneous online exchanges unless someone spots

it and points it out. In the view of this participant, Nigeria's state-funded

television station is "pathologically inept, unimaginative, incompetent, inefficient,

and absolutely hopeless." This posting, as with so many others, is a reflection of

the general displeasure of Nigerians in the diaspora about the state of affairs in the

country. Participant # 8, still in the symbolic battle mood, informs others that

he/she is in possession of newspaper reports that implicates Westerners of frauds

perpetuated within their country. The implication of this information is to further

drive home the point that CNN is selective in its reporting. The participant also

thinks it is a cultural struggle against the largest black community. There is a

suggestion that the state-funded TV station should retaliate by doing a

documentary to show "such big time Western rip offs that [were] committed by

the fatcats at Enron for a change." It is important to state that the feelings

expressed in this thread are not unique. There are a few other instances in which

Nigerians online have taken up symbolic 'arms' against negative reporting directed at Africa or Africans as a whole. For instance, there was a feature article written in May 2006 on "Images from and about Africa" by SAO. The original article attracted another full length response by another online participant. In the article a contributor to SAO's article was said to have expressed the following words; "If Africans want to stop negative depiction of us then we should be prepared to mobilize and rebut any false reporting of the continent. Africans have this passive and subservient posture when dealing with anything Western that they feel it must either be right or cannot be any other way."

The tone and language of the CNN incident of mis-representation of Nigerians in Houston is framed as a battle between the largest black community and one of the symbolic representatives of Western powers. It is also cast as a cultural war of subjugation by a member of the global/Western press. The combatants on both sides have a history of similar battles. The role of the United States of America during the era of New World Information and Communication Order should also be put into its proper context just as the state system Africans inherited from Europeans must be brought to bear in understanding the reactions of the Nigerians in the Diaspora. Coincidentally Mazuri and Mazurui draw a linkage between fighting external wars and promotion of unity within a geo-political space. Taking a long historical perspective, Mazuri and Mazurui submit

that African nation-states "were nurtured in the bosom of calculation, conflict and war" (1998, pg.4) and that to strengthen the nation-states calculation and conflict become the inevitable stimulus. It is no surprise then that the virtual is a mirror of a historical reality. The way the campaign to obtain redress from CNN was organized and implemented appeared more like a 'war' fought by words and off-line organizing instead of with bombs and guns. The language and metaphor at every turn became that of 'us' versus 'them'. It may be safe to deduce that the aftermath of the media misrepresentation was unity of the various ethnic groups in the diaspora and an emerging hope to take the newly found patriot fervor back to the homeland. In the words of the press release, by the umbrella organization formed in the wake of CNN's onslaught, it expresses that "it is now abundantly clear ..that there is a growing sense of Nationalism amongst generations of Nigerians in the Diaspora."

Just as the nationalistic fervor is palpable there are also sprinklings of those who feel strongly that Nigeria as a country needs to be split along linguistic/ethnic lines of fission (Discussion on this issue is in chapter 6). One such proponent posted a seven-part article on the possibility of dividing Nigeria into different units. The first one was a rejoinder to a posting by another participant who was reflecting on the despicable life of existence immigrants in Western capitals have to endure because of the socio-economic state of their

homeland. The initial article written by 'UN' also hinted on the imposed lack of voice of immigrants in the host country's mainstream media. The rejoinder by 'BE' written on July 13, 2007, with the title "A battle cry to reverse the poor state of the Nation" presented the plight of immigrants in Russia through a personal narrative. A tangential issue to the personal narrative that captured my interest was the analysis for the reason of mass migration. This issue developed into a critique of the nation-state. In the conclusion 'BE' articulated his perception of what a nation ought to be. According to him, the ability to collaborate along shared visions separates a nation from a country. "In a nation, majority of the people share common goals, values and aspirations and they work very hard together to achieve their goals" (July 13, 2007). The question this position raises is what agency of state will be charged to mobilize the people to work hard in the realization of their goals. By what process such common goals, values, and aspirations will evolve is not included in the article.

Thus far major attention has been on news and its coverage, the analysis has focused on what was observed online and the various exchanges that took place. There were a few instances in which I also had to participate by responding to postings. One was to a select group of readers of a columnist who sends us an advanced copy of his weekly article by e-mail. My intervention was occasioned by a certain paragraph and the continual reference of Nigeria as a nation. The

author wrote "Nigeria is a nation that lives on ever thinning hope. It is a fractured edifice, a nation sold down the river by too many of its citizens, especially those who presume to be its leaders. Born by British fiat and thus branded by the stigma of bastardy, it remains, in many respects, a fictional construct. Some twenty years ago, the novelist Chinua Achebe told me in an interview that Nigeria as a nation was yet to be founded. A fledging reporter at the time, I was scandalized by the dourness of his statement. Today, however, Nigeria strikes me as farther from, not nearer to, being founded." (e-mail, March 6, 2007). After reading this e-mail, I sent my plea to the list without knowing the identity of those on the list. An excerpt of the questions I raised is below: "What I want to know is how/ when is a nation founded? What are the elements that one must look out for? I understand the term country, I understand state formation but this ambiguous term of nation, and its fellow family members; nationality, nationalism, nationalist, and so on confuse me." The only response, which came, was from 'VC,' who attempted to throw some light on my questions. He said "In our context, founding a nation means believing in that nation the cost not-withstanding. It is synonymous with patriotism. It is evident that the spirit of patriotism among Nigerians is below zero level at the moment. Nigerians do not believe in Nigeria! I can only vouch for our patriotism when Nigeria is involved in a soccer match, even then it does not

subsist when our players are doing a bad job. We switch instantly to the better side."

The other intervention was on NVS where an article titled "How *to build a nation*" was published on July 21, 2007. It was written by a Nigerian who lives in Texas, USA. My response to the article captures how I felt at that stage of the study. Apart from mine there was just one other response to the article. The first respondent was more interested in a structural make-up of the country as opposed to building a nation. In my own response, I was disappointed by the sophomoric level understanding of the subject matter. I pointed out the confusion between a nation and a nation-state which was apparent in the article. A part of my contribution reads thus: "A country is the physical space from where a nation arises. Yes, there are nations without states and states struggling to build a nation. The act of nation building is more cognitive than physical. A nation is built when the minds of the people are developed. Things like roads, food, security, education are means to various ends. The most difficult aspect of nation building is in getting citizens like the writer of this piece to appreciate the value of reason and objectivity. Nations are not built when all the people do is look back into events that divide them. There is something in nation-building called healing process and process of healing." For reasons not too clear to me, there was no

other contributor to the thread after mine. My intention was to invite other commentators but it did not succeed.

The concept of nation-building is one that has occupied the attention of political science scholars. Bohdan Harasymiw defines the concept as "the sum of polices designed to promote national integration" (2002, pg. 204). To be sure that this task is not without agency, Harasymiw explains that the task of national integration is state-driven. In some other countries, the media, either privately owned or state sponsored has been known to take up the task of national integration. Apart from the media, certain institutions of state like schools, libraries, theaters, and museums constantly share the burden of creating and sustaining environments for nation-building. The aspect of dualities mentioned by Harasymiw appear to be absent in debates and discussions held by Nigerians. He lists territorial and ethnic, "civic-territorial and ethno-national components to nation building" (2002, pg. 205). As an active participant in a number of discussion groups, I did not encounter such divisions of the nation-building task.

To conclude this chapter on data analyses, I review the three articles written by members of the Nigerian intelligentsia. One by Wole Soyinka represents the very familiar framing of Nigeria as a "mere geographical expression," which was made popular by one of Nigeria's nationalists, Chief Obafemi Awolowo. The metaphor of Nigeria as a mere geographical expression

sends the message of a country that exists on a map as opposed to one that has

created that rare geographical impression in the minds of the citizens. One of the

arguments of this lecture is that a nation "is brought into being through the

political – and inclusive - will of its citizens" (March, 2009). He too does not

accept the fact that Nigeria has attained the status of a nation but there is a need to

work on the Nigeria project. This idea of Nigeria as a project fits into the global

nation of nation-building. A concept such as this speaks to the complex humanist

process of nationhood as if it were a mechanical object that can be put together.

The framing in turn will desire a design on which the project will be realized, a set

of builders and maybe engineers and quantity surveyor to ensure that the final

project meets local or global standards. Harasymiw also queries the notion of

building nations by design. In his words "question of whether nations can be built

by design, as in the architectural analogy suggested by the concept, are in dispute"

(2002, pg. 205). As with every framing, Nigeria as a project bears its own burden

of connotation and signification. As every building comes with a price so too does

nation-building come with its own cost. Silk makes reference to "[t]he pressures

of nation building are also viewed almost unanimously as factors contributing to

Africa's poor human rights [record]" (1990). This aspect of human cost as it

relates to nation-building is absent in most of the exchanges I observed or if

present it was hardly explicit. Yet it is not too difficult to understand the linkage

between forcing all the various nationalities with their different histories into a

union. The alternative framing concept that has not been used much in literature

is the process of nation formation. This model is what is what most media studies

scholar use when discussing about nation formation. The notion of the media as

nation builders is current within media studies discipline. Silvio Waisbord avers

that "[m]edia studies can make a valuable contribution to nationalism studies by

understanding how the media continue to articulate nationalistic sentiments"

(2004, pg. 375). The next step in this proposition is also to track how readers

deliberate on the nationalistic sentiments articulated by the media. It is one thing

to read a text, it is another to interpret and internalize the content.

Aside from the framing of Nigeria as a project, Wole Soyinka, the lecturer,

mentioned above, also defined a nation within the parameters of what it is not and

what it is. "Nations do not exist as mere abstractions. A nation is a material

implantation, and the building block of that growth is the human entity" (Soyinka,

March 2009). In effect people make the nation and in the co-deterministic

perspective it is safe to extrapolate from his position that nations make the people

what they are and what they may become. This aspect deals with a people's

identity and how they see themselves in relation to others. Though Soyinka argues

that nations do not exist as mere abstractions, it is possible to postulate that

nations start as abstractions in the minds of the political elites who then work with

others to ensure the concretization of the mere abstractions. As if to concretize the

linguistic abstraction that nationhood has become in the minds of most

postcolonial subjects, who are struggling with cultural alienation occasioned by

the inability to move between official and indigenous languages, an online

commentator who shall be known simply as 'PA' posted an article titled "Orile

ede: Preliminary reflections" (March 30 2009). In this contribution he attends to

the likely cultural equivalent of nation in various local languages and dialects.

Using the Yoruba language as a point of departure he constructs various layers of

complexities and contradictions inherent in such a conceptual enterprise. It

appears there is hardly any word or phrase that can adequately explain the

meaning/ notion of nation in Yoruba language or any of the other Nigerian

languages. From the standpoint of metalanguage studies this is not an isolated

problem when dealing with translations of modern (or Western) terms to other

cultures. But beyond the limitation of finding the most appropriate code to express

the idea of nation in Yoruba or any of the other 250 languages spoken in Nigeria,

there is first the absence of conditions necessary for effective formation of a

nation. He alludes to the conditions enumerated by Ernest Renan in his seminal

lecture titled "What is a nation?"

Conditions that can be summed up as commonality of origin, values, and heritage

are definitely absent in the Nigerian nation space.

On the Nigeria Village Square website there were nine responses to PA's article. Most of those who responded were unable to deal with the substantive issues in the article. The first person who responded was concerned more with the fear of national disintegration. The second person's contribution read more like a comic relief, since it added nothing substantive to the initial contribution, while the third contributor simply commended the writer. Contributor # 4 re-presented the issue of the inability of multi-ethnic societies to come to agreement or reach consensus in any matter. He takes the externalist perspective to history, following after the notion that colonialists are the source of Nigeria's problems. The tone of contributions slightly changes with # 5 who wrote "My heart pains as I think about the direction of this country and about the future of the Yoruba people in general. I do not have anything against other nations or culture, I just fear for the direction of our people." This is another case where a contributor thinks nationalism and ethnicity are mutually exclusive. The position of Harasymiw, commands recommendation to Nigerians. Harasymiw posits that "[t]here is nationalism from above and nationalism from below. Then there is nation-building as government policy and as individual choice of identity, which cannot be assumed to follow automatically" (2002, pg. 205). The final goal of nationalism is the production of a nation brought to life by the will of a collective.

The strategy is dependent on the historical condition in which the constituent parts exist and choose to relate in time and in space.

The other contribution from PA; "Project Nigeria: The struggle for meaning" (May 10 2009) speaks eloquently to one of the objectives of this study in that it focuses attention on how a peoples imagination defines for them reality and concepts that give meaning to their existence. This objective at first glance may appear political but it helps in analysis of the textual data collected. The article also raises a few questions on national myth-making and its circulation. According to PA "[t]here is no nation without a foundational national myth. When that myth commands the attention and respect of the citizenry, it garners legitimacy and hegemony" (May 10, 2009). He also goes further to assert that a national myth is what marks one nation from the other. What this article does not share with the readers is what makes the difference between analysis of a societal problem and how to improve the situation.

The comparison about national myths and how the elites control the struggle for meaning presents to the discussion forum two historically important Western countries that have interesting roots in democratic struggles and a long track record of public opinion management. These two Western countries; France and the United States of America, are held up as examples of countries that have been able to create myths and circulate them widely among the populace. It does not

tell the readers how such myths became part of popular consciousness and usage. Since the United States has featured more in this study, I will focus on, and fill the gap in knowledge about the United States' idea of the American dream. The origin of the phrase 'American Dream' is both an individualized and personally held notion of imagination and a derivative from the constitution of the country. The term is attributed to James Truslow Adams, who according to Jim Cullen, first used it in the book titled "The Epic of America" published in 1931. Though the origin of the term 'American Dream' may be in dispute, what is not arguable is the role the term plays in the identity of the average American and how this idea also slipped into popular usage.

In 'PA's' article, he derides the term 'national cake', which according to him is how Nigeria represents its national myth. What the article inadvertently omits is how the term 'national cake' came into the public domain and who should take responsibility for introducing the phrase. The term is neither attributed to the government nor to media organizations; it is a term, according to the article, that does not uplift the vision of any nation interested in using symbols and semantics to mobilize the people as loyal citizens. The highly popular Benedict Anderson idea of nationhood can be summed up as belonging to the realm of imagination, connection through text, and making of meaning by citizens in a geographically contiguous space. This idea of linking the

imagination of citizens through text appears to have become a mantra that finds
rendering at any and every opportunity it can be dropped into an article. Further
away from Benedict Anderson's borrowed idea, 'PA' gives vent to a personal
anger as if it were collective "[o]ur semantic concessions have consequences
that are real and impact on lives and national destiny" (May 10 2009).
Unfortunately, there is no document where Nigeria's national destiny is
articulated in popular imagination. The profusion of lamentations and pain
makes it almost impossible to create and circulate a vision and definition of
nationhood that can be owned at a national or continental level. The notion of
meaning-making has a lone advocate. He is a former journalism teacher in
Nigeria but now writes a weekly column from his base in America. He writes in
a Nigerian newspaper (online version). In one of his weekly articles he started
with a preposition "[h]ow we define an issue or a problem — framing, as
communicologists call it – can have profound consequences" (Dare, May 26,
2009, Nation newspaper online). In this article, the writer's focus was on the
Niger Delta region, where local militants have taken up arms against the state.
The solution to the problem, according to the writer has a lot to do with how the
issue is framed in the first instance in the minds of those consuming the reports
or attempting to resolve the issues. If the militants are framed as criminals they
will be treated as such but if they are framed as fighting for justice and resource

control the resolution of the issue will be along the lines of seeking justice for the fighters. He further highlights the disparities between media frames and that of those in authority. According to the article the media constantly framed the militants as freedom fighters while the military framed them as criminals.

The question still remains how do Nigerians frame or define a 'strange' concept such as nationhood. To ascertain that the notion is not entirely alien to the consciousness of the journalists who contribute ideas to the public domain, I did a random search for the term online and found a number of articles which speak to the issue but I chose to focus on six of the articles for no particular reason. In fact any of the articles would still have served the purpose of understanding how the writers conceptualize nationhood in their writings. The chosen articles were looked at from a textual analytic perspective and with the aim of uncovering the source(s) of influence. What the articles express and what they leave out will be pointed out. The antecedents of the writers will be deemphasized as much as possible so as to privilege the meaning over the writer.

In a 2006 article titled "A nation in doubt", the writer (ref# 001)[20] paints a picture of a citizenry who live in doubt of the government and whose imagination is conditioned by abject poverty. The life of the individual, ref # 001 argues, reflects in the manner of living of the collective and subsequently that of the

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[20] The writers of the articles in table 11 found in chapter 4 are referred by the use of ref # assigned to each article and the date of publication.

country. He stated further that an apparent disconnect exists between the aspirations of the people and the government which leads to stunted growth and development. Under-development to him is a symptom that has its roots in the military interregnum. The writer argues that the experience of military involvement in politics "will forever define the Nigerian nation or non-nation as it were" (ref # 001). The military alone is not to blame because "[e]ach time, one ethnic group excludes the other on the grounds of religion or indigeneity, what is being said is that Nigeria is not yet a nation" (ref # 001). This article takes an internalist perspective[21] to the problem of the nation but leaves out the epochal impact of colonialism or the recent debilitating effect of economic globalization. If these two ideas are taken in tandem it can be deduced that a nation's definition is dependent on its historical condition, nature of governance, and ethnic-relations if it is a multi-ethnic state. The idea of how to deal with ethnic relations within a multi-ethnic state is one that features many times during online discussions.

In another article, "Nigerianhood in question" the writer (ref # 002) reframes the question of identity from the abstract to the concrete when she sought to know who a Nigerian is. It is not difficult, the text says, to observe how citizens can identify with the nation during sporting events or by virtue of the

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[21] There are two perspectives in relation to the challenge of under-development in post colonial nation-states. One attributes the situation to external factors while the other attribute it to internal conditions

national symbols of legitimation and identification each citizen is made to obtain

especially for the purpose of international travels. Aside from leadership

challenges which many Nigerians (judging from the postings online) are

convinced are responsible for the present perilous state of the nation; this writer

introduces an economic class dimension and how this affects patriotism.

According to the argument in this text "Nigeria has not melted naturally into the

pot of nationhood" (ref # 002) because of the wide gap existing between various

socio-economic classes. The notion of economic class division transcends

ethnicity but re-focuses attention to the evolution of nationhood in relation to the

mode of production and those who control it. Likewise it is said that those who

control the means of production also control the means of social re-production.

The media and other social institutions are the very active sites of reproduction of

social values and ideas for national integration spear-headed by the elites in the

society. According to Mahmud Ali "[n]ations are an inevitable product, an

inevitable form, in the bourgeois epoch of social development" (1976, pg. 18).

This perspective is not very common among Nigerians.

Illustrating how the state promotes the 'non-nationness' of Nigeria, an

article titled "Again the national question" (ref # 003) details the lopsidedness

observed in appointments to certain strategic national institutions. The price to

pay for excluding a part of the country from the benefits of power according to the

text is "a fundamental lack of emotion that connects the new Nigerian with the idea of Nigeria" (ref # 003). The lack or presence of emotion is what other writers have termed patriotism or nationalism. Almost seven days after the article above appeared, the same writer in an article titled "Limits of the Yar'adua doctrine" (ref # 003) focused on the making of the nation-state. In the battle-like parlance it makes mention of a needed truce between the intellectual class and the state and according to the text the minister of foreign affairs delegates the task of imaging a Nigeria mythos to the intellectual class. In the intellectual tradition, the text avers that a "nation is a religion. Its theology is the idea of a shared and connected past" (ref # 003). Reading between the lines it becomes obvious that the spirituality (or sacredness) of nations is not a new or original concept; the writer borrows it from Ernest Renan who is often credited with the idea that "[a] nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle" (1996, pg.41). Mentioned as condition needed for creation of a nation are the following: the political and intellectual classes and the generality of the people. The missing but connecting piece is the media. It is the media that shoulder the responsibilities of promoting ideas by reaching out to people. Thus far there has been three distinct but inter-related classes within the society that are responsible for what a nation becomes or how it is perceived. There is the leadership, the (economic) elites, and the inter-relating ethnic groups.

An article on "The Media and National Patriotism" published in Sun news online, on July 13, 2008, reiterates the role of the press in the making of a nation. The writer draws upon ideas from American authors and institutions as the arguments are made. From a highly functional perspective the writer is of the opinion that **"**[n]o matter what Governments may think or feel, the media exists to promote democratic ideals, mould and shape the destiny of the State and set agenda" (ref # 004). The concern here is for the state but when the civil society comes into the picture the media become a conduit that allows communication and dialogue. This article in a very simplistic mode promotes the social responsibility model of the media without the necessary historical contextualization.

However, the July 20, 2008 article titled **"**Newspapers and Politics" continues with the comparison of the Nigerian situation with other Western countries. According to the writer **"**[u]nlike in the West, and resulting directly from the colonialist and imperial history of Nigeria, the origin, growth and development of the mass media in Nigeria (especially the print media) is intricately linked to the Christian religious influences"(ref # 004). Just as religious influences shaped media growth, it can also be postulated that Euro-American ideas contribute in no small way to how views of randomly selected columnists are shaped.

It appears ideas like country, nation, and state can hardly be differentiated in the consciousness of non-academic contributors of some of these articles. The name of the country is both a signifier and referent. Nigeria is the nation and the nation is Nigeria. Once Nigeria is defined and its meaning understood by writers and readers it can be said that a part of the search is fulfilled. As postcolonial subjects it may not be necessary then to go after such fine details "as Hans Kohn in his seminal distinction of 'Western' from 'non-Western' forms, but the tendency to make such distinctions is virtually ubiquitous" (Lowe and Lloyd, 1997, pg. 9). The path to a conclusion is to combine what Nigeria as a social space of habitation and a space for interaction means to those who constantly contribute ideas online and elsewhere in the process of their everyday 'talk' and periodic conversations.

The next chapter develops the connecting chords between the theory, methods, and the data collected from the study of how Nigerians frame nationhood online.

Chapter 6
DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The primary research interest of this study is to uncover by making

explicit, intellectual ideas, buried within texts that constitute a selection of

postings generated during 'natural' online interactions among a group I identified

as geographically dispersed/ diasporic Nigerians. On that premise this study

focused attention on archival and on-going online conversations initiated by these

individuals, who because of technological innovation, geographical distance from

the homeland, and other factors, creatively utilized the freedom from state

restrictive policies and political reprisals to recreate what can be termed virtual

people's parliaments similar to Europe's seventeenth-century literary and public

spheres but different in fundamental ways. The virtual spaces created have some

of the elements of the public sphere as described by Jurgen Habermas (1974) but

also bears the stamp that distances it from a typical Habermasian space.

Nkwachukwu's concept of "ethnicized public sphere" fits the virtual spaces where

Nigerians constantly interact. At another conceptual level, this virtual space can

be seen from Schudson's perspective because it encourages "private persons to

come together without the sponsorship or surveillance of government to discuss

public issues" (2002, pg. 483). The data collected and analyzed supports this

notion that Nigerians and friends of Nigeria, discus a range of issues from the

personal/ private to the public, no topic was sacrosanct (see pages 142 to 143 for

a graphic representation of themes discussed). At a theoretical level, it is implicit

that understanding that meaning of nationhood is not outside the interaction of

social groups. Meaning can be located within the text produced in accordance to

the perspective of symbolic interactionism. The theory explains how human

beings arrive at social meaning in a constitutive way. Meaning is not pre-

determined or pre-conditioned by individuals.

Judging from the data collected on news-related postings it is safe to

propose that there is a noticeable reliance on online media-news. These reports

often times acted as triggers for discussions and debates almost in line with the

agenda-setting theory. The position taken by Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller

(1980), when they differentiated between media exposure and change of attitude

resonates with this study. The veracity of the news-reports notwithstanding, the

effect on the dynamics of the discussions that ensued and reflections produced

could be observed in the various postings that form part of the data in chapter 4.

These news-reports from both local and global sources and knowledge gained

from within educational institutions affected the outcome of which frame is

available for use by the discussants. The reason for this can be explained from the

point of view of Tankard. who presented framing as an active process that

demands "getting beneath the surface of news coverage and exposing the hidden

assumption" (Tankard, 2001, pg.96). On the same premise, Entman defines

framing as "selecting and highlighting facets of events or issues, and making

connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation,

and/ or solution" (2004, pg. 5). The ability to go beyond surface meaning requires

a modicum of media literacy skills and expertise. Though there were hardly

ideological 'wars' but enough markers were left within the text to show the level

of educational sophistication or otherwise. There were times when 'externalist'

perspectives held sway over 'internalist' perspectives. The 'externalist'

perspective tends to view problems of postcolonial nation-states as externally

driven and that solutions to the challenges must factor in elements of global

inequalities.

Apart from the media frame used, Schudson points out two other effects

news information could have on public discourse. There is the effect of the

information conveyed and the effect of the legitimation conferred on the source

and the channel from which the news is disseminated (2002, pg. 482). Information

that can be classified as negative either from foreign or local news-media within

the country had the most spontaneous effect on the participants judging from the

text produced as commentaries to the media-news.

There were a few cases when the veracity of news sources was called into

question. There was a particular case that was expressed by a contributor who

warned that "it is always important to ascertain the veracity of certain Nigerian media news report" (NaijaElections, January 26, 2007, message # 396). This posting was in reaction to a damning news report about the chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, who was alleged to have forged certain school certificates. The report first appeared on one of the websites devoted to investigating malfeasance of government officials. It later was published in a Nigerian newsmagazine. This to be sure is not just a one off event but a constant staple within the Nigerian Internet community. It is worthy of note that Nigerian (online and offline) consumers of news-media reports have an ambiguous relationship with media organizations especially the print media. A few media scholars score the print media low in their performance, Oso for instance observes that "[t]he Nigerian press generally supports and advances the hegemonic project of the ruling class albeit in its fractured and rancorous state" (2001, pg. 273). The fragmentation observed has not made it possible to articulate the group interest of the post-independent Nigerian press. This confusion of identity is best constructed from a July 1993 edition of *The Media Review,* which according to Ayedun-Aluma, focused on how eight Nigerian newspapers reported the abortive presidential elections of June 12 1993.The identity of the newspapers reviewed were described with a total of six adjectives ranging from private, elitist, independent, populist, state government owned, partly-owned federal government

and fully owned federal government press (1996 pg. 47). The newspapers are framed as conduits that convey messages to willing consumers.

Available data (collected for this study) show that geographically dispersed Nigerians contribute to what the media focus attention upon just as online news stories appear to determine the agenda for discussants in most online forums (Kperogi, 2008). The co-deterministic perspective is a factor in the relationship most immigrants in the diaspora have with their homeland. The assumption is that as news media content is influenced so too will government policies be impacted. It can be deduced that perspectives displayed in the postings and knowledge about various issues Nigerians have is therefore partially moderated by what the homeland news media (especially those with online presence) and other sources framed, promoted, and published as important. For instance in one of the discussion groups there were a total of 299 news items from local online newspapers as against a total of 54 in different foreign newspapers (see Table 3 for a breakdown for January 2008). In the month of June 2008 there were a total of 55 news items culled from Nigerian news sources against 22 from foreign sources. A look at the USA African dialogue series presents a contrast in that there were 99 news reports culled from foreign news sources compared to just twenty (20) from Nigerian online papers. The scale in this very instance weighs heavily on the side of foreign news sources.

The implication of these figures leads to a conclusion that media sources play a role in what is discussed online. A closer look at the nature of the news-items and the discussions that follow, reveals that negative news especially those that expose state dysfunctionalty are predominant. This is not surprising in that "[o]ur knowledge of the world comes from various sources, of which the two most important are personal experience and the mass media" (Okigbo, 1995, pg. 107). During this study there were a few situations when reports not drawn directly from the online press still led to robust discussions, one such example was the one on dynamics of governance and the working of the State. A case in point is what I reference as the Dr. Saul Amdee[22] (not real names) episode (summary in appendix B).

In essence, the collected data for this study is textually analyzed to tease out hidden meanings and make explicit the sources that could have influenced the text. Data collection was an on-going and interactive one based on my knowledge of the flow of events online. Constant monitoring and archiving e-mail alerts on each posting helped to take decisions and follow patterns of discussions as they emerge. These discussions or contributions were "voluntarily carried out by free citizens without any specific purpose or predetermined agenda" (Kim,Wyatt, and

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[22] I followed the various exchanges that led to what I have referenced as the Dr. Saul Amdee episode. The posting started on a different issue before someone noticed the long signature attached to Dr. Amdee's name.

Katz, 1999, pg. 362). The conversations (postings) had a ring of political

conversations to them since the discussions were spontaneous and sometimes very

passionate too. There were hardly summaries or conclusions in most cases.

To fully appreciate the ongoing online activities, I argue that the emerging

conversations are spontaneous everyday-talk which can be interpreted using

Hartmut Mokros' constitutive theory of communication which "attempts to move

past strategic, outcome-oriented and informational senses of communication so as

to consider how the doing of communication invariably produces and engenders

social spaces" (2003 pg. vii). The participants in the social spaces also construct

and consume knowledge about others and a distant nation that exists in their

memory/ imagination. There is a noticeable tension between home-based

Nigerians and Nigerians in the diaspora when issues concerning the state and fate

of the nation is discussed or written about. The home-based Nigerians feel

discussing Nigeria is their preserve while those in Western countries have lost

such rights (there are textual evidences to support this preposition). One of the

issues of interest for this study was to uncover how the discussants come to know

what they know about nationhood and the role played by online newspapers and

other sources of information in mediating their eventual construction of reality.

The construction of reality cannot be in vacuum it is a part of a process

and one of which is communication. A communication scholar argues

"communication recognizes that the significance of communication resides in human interaction and sees the communicative event as the site of both meaning and identity" (Maynard, 2003, pg. 58). Included in meaning and identity formation, Hans-George Gadamer (1979) suggests that the process of conversations leads to understanding between two people. It is of course not every form of interaction that takes place between two or more persons that can qualify as a conversation. Conceptually there are various perspectives on what constitutes conversation, for instance Zali Gurevitch links conversation with "either the mediating vehicle of language or by immediate crossing looks, touch, or expressed and received emotion" (1998, pg. 25). This perspective by Gurevitch conceptually opens up the nature of conversations to social restrictions of language and the ambiguity of non-verbal communication. The complexities of the definition not withstanding scholars like Forsmark (2003) are interested in what takes place in a conversation.

One outcome of conversations (postings) that has been of interest to scholars is how individuals and communities construct knowledge about the world, their national and personal identities. At a general level, how do human beings occupying the same location know what they know about the social world, with or without mediation? At a more specific level, by what processes do geographically displaced citizens build (or deconstruct) knowledge about (an

imagined) nation, reclaim cultural vision and develop social interaction in virtual spaces whose geographical location exists within industrialized capitals of the world. It has been established that formation and sustenance of nation states depend on narrations produced and distributed by the elites of the country is it also possible that the dismembering (or disintegration) of the connecting ideas of a nation state can start from virtual conversations held in cyberspace? This study has data to support the notion of deep-rooted animosity in the minds of those who subscribe to the concept of ethno-nationalism and those opposed to the idea. The real effect on the homeland of what happens online during the textual exchanges is one of the issues for future research. But for this present study there were a set of research questions which were off-shoots of previous studies and extensive literature review.

The first research question of this study is a two part question; one part was to articulate the main themes of postings made by Nigerians online. The research focus also included how nationhood is discussed in the postings and a search for sources that influence ideas on nationalism expressed online. R1: What are the main themes of postings made by Nigerians Online? How is nationhood discussed in the postings among geographically dispersed Nigerians? Where do the ideas which influence these concepts come from?

The main themes of the postings revolve around socio-political conditions in the home land and around the world. A sampling of websites and discussion groups revealed a broad range of issues Nigerians online are passionate about. One feature of Nigerian discussion groups is that there are constant reviews by contributors on what other participants are contributing. One such example is a participant who for the purpose of this study shall be known as IRI. In a collective tone 'IRI' posted his views on why a number of Nigerians took to the Internet to express their disappointment with the military."We were mostly idealistic individuals who believed at the time that the problem with Nigeria was a lack of structures, of robust structures that would define our collective morality and ensure the survival and prosperity of our nation" (Nigerians in America website, December, 11 2005). It is not unusual on the websites I studied to find reflections of individuals as part of their postings. One contributor to Nigeria Village Square website (NVS) wrote as part of a longer posting that"[o]n a daily basis, issues of social, economic, political and cultural importance are introduced to the village square by the teeming NVS independent writers and contributors" (Nigeria Village Square website ,September, 2007). Another writer, reviewing his own contributions on NVS, starting with the most controversial piece he did; painted a picture of how passionate the readers are especially when the topic has to do with ethnicity. A panoramic view of his choice of themes can be taken as an indication

of the kind of issues that interest participants to the site. He commented on one of

his own article, written on the perceived blunders of a particular traditional leader

in the South-Western part of the country. He then chooses another one, from the

100 articles he had posted so far, which focused on the lapses of a member of the

political class, then another on one of the growing ethnic militias in the Eastern

part of the country. He also wrote about another member of the political class.

Among the seven examples he cited only one was about another West- African

country. He wrote a two-part article on "The Ivorian political tragedy" (published

on the website on April 16 and April 17 2007). The article focused on the

connections and the importance of Ivory Coast to Biafra and Nigeria. The

comparisons with Nigeria in the stories are implicit but cannot be missed.

Moving beyond these two individuals and what they perceive to be the

main issues discussed by the emergent Nigerian Internet community, is my own

representation of notes of issues I observed during the study. The list below is a

list in graphical form of themes and sub-themes I collated from the subject

headlines of the e-groups. The graphical representation of the themes is not

hierarchical but a one-dimensional view of how the issues are inter-related. The

way the themes below are represented, starting from politics, indicate that the

other issues have some connection to politics in one way or another.

Figure 1.0. List of themes in graphic form

Politics

Elections

Governance issues
Democracy

Leadership
State matters/
local
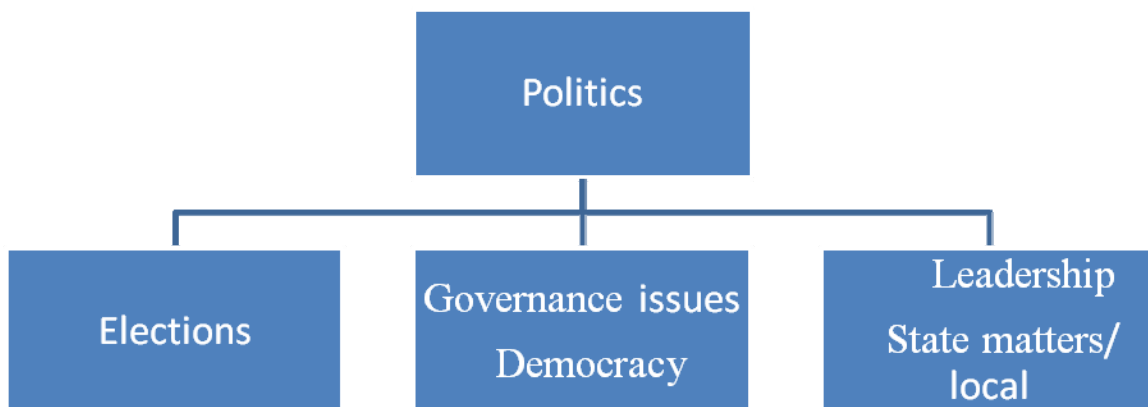
Politics is one of the themes that capture the imagination of the participants. Discussions revolve around national and local elections and most recently a series of electoral re-runs in some states of Nigeria. In no statistical order or ranking, issues of cultural matters also feature.
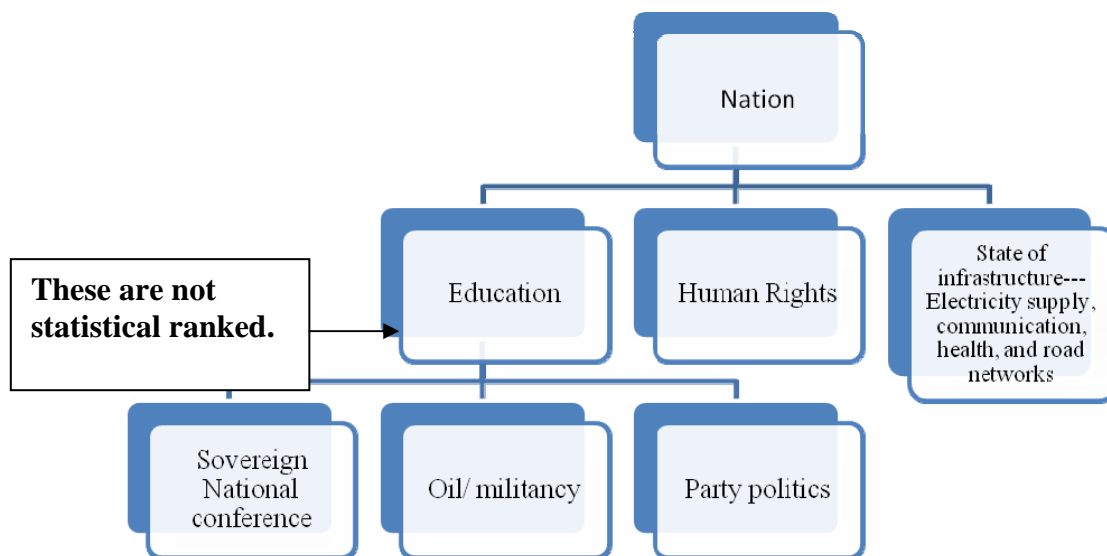
Figure 1.2 List of themes under culture
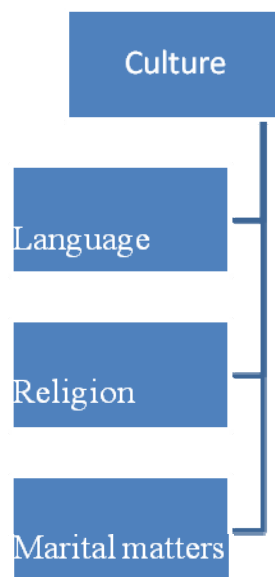
Culture, in its broadest connotation, is another theme that constantly

comes up for discussion. Subsumed under the general topic of culture are sub-

themes such as religion, language, and marital affairs. Religion is one of the

potential issues on which Nigerians do not often agree but it features frequently in

discussions. Scholarly articles about the country indicate that Nigerians are

divided along religious lines which at times lead to violence and intolerance

within the country[23].

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[23] See E. E. Osaghae and R. T. Suberu (2005). A history of identities, violence, and stability in Nigeria. CRISE working paper, (6). Ruth Marshall (2009). *Political spiritualities: The Pentecostal revolution in Nigeria.* Chicago: University of Chicago press.

Figure. 1-3. List of themes under nation

Nation

These are not
statistical ranked.

Education

Human Rights

State of
infrastructure---
Electricity supply,
communication,
health, and road
networks

Sovereign
National
conference

Oil/ militancy

Party politics

Various issues come under the main theme of nation. Issues such as the near-

collapse of the educational sector, human rights abuses, the state of infrastructure

especially electricity supply, communication, health, and the deplorable road

networks are some of the topics that come up for discussion regularly depending

on the news flow.

Figure 2.0 Different forms of advocacy

Advocacy

These are just two examples to illustrate how the Internet has been used for advocacy.

Global protest against the inhumane killing of Osamuyiwa Aikpitanhi

Boycott of British Airways and the founding of Respect Nigeria advocy group
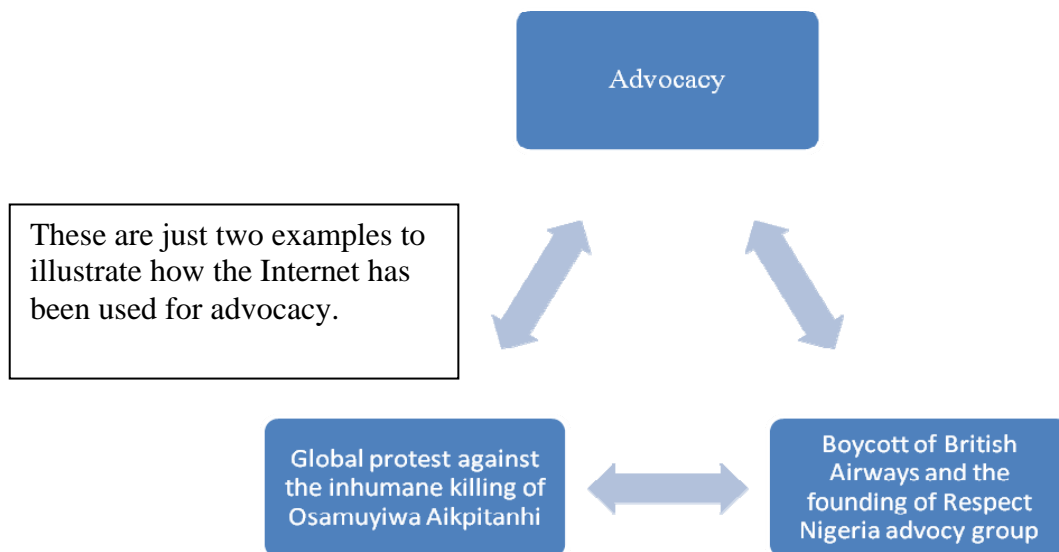
On June 29th 2009, Nigerians in major cities around the world organized peaceful protests to demonstrate the killing of a young man during deportation. Apart from signing of pettitions discussions about how to register the anger of Nigerians were constant features on most of the sites. The same for the ill-treatment meted to Nigerian passagers on a British Airways flight. In both cases the ineffiency of the nation and the imperfection of the external affairs personnel are highlighted. An excerpt of the notice was mass-mailed by the Concern for

Nigeria group expressed the feeling of most Nigerians[24]. It read "The time has come for us as Nigerians to say out loud to the whole world that we would no longer accept these types of treatments that has now become commonplace against our fellow citizens" (Nigeria Village Square website, June 27 2007). The note of collective identity cannot be missed.

Figure 3. Representation of ethnic issues

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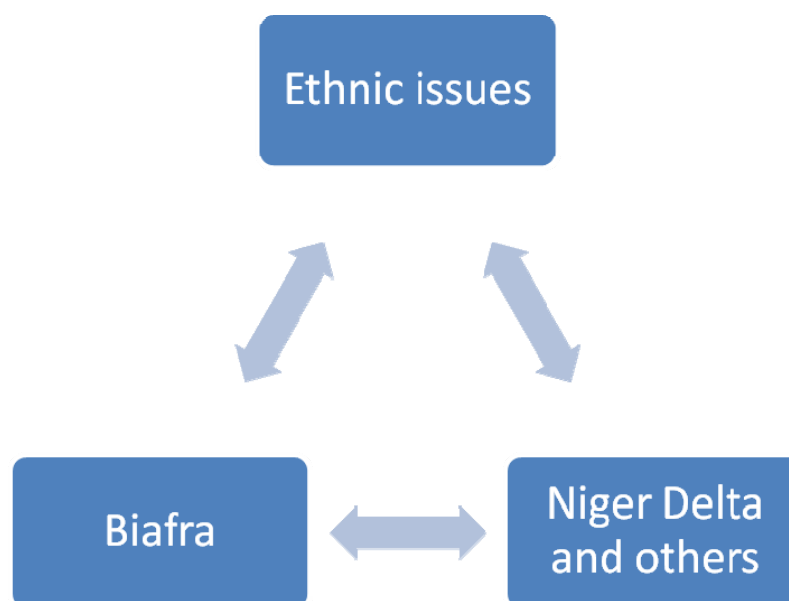
[24] There are close to 3000 signatories to the petition which protesting the British Airways treatment of Nigerians.

If there is one issue that Nigerians online are passionate about it is that of the Nigerian civil war when a part of the country wanted to secede to create the Republic of Biafra. It is a theme that crisscrosses various topics. There is hardly any issue that the contributors cannot connect to the Biafran war. For instance message # 79 of Tuesday November 7, 2006, links the leader of the defunct Republic of Biafra to the situation of the Nigerian Army. He reminded readers that the leader of Biafra warned military officers never to take orders from their juniors. The context of this discussion derives its background from a news-media report in a local newspaper published online. The article has a headline that reads "IBB Destroyed Military Integrity– Akhigbe." (IBB is how the media refer to one of Nigeria's military heads of State and Akhigbe who was attributed with the saying is a retired naval officer who was part of the 1999 military regime that conducted a democratic election). The contributor signed off as a citizen of Biafra. In support of message #79 another contributor in message #84 thinks history will absolve the leader of defunct republic. His position is that the leader was attempting to restore order to the Nigerian military. As in every debate, some participants presented oppositional views in very strong terms just as message # 85 expresses that the leader of the Republic of Biafra is a coward and an inept commander. Even by the time the context changed, message # 164 posted on Tuesday November 28, 2006, still brought in the Biafra dimension to the topic.

As it is usual the discussion is triggered by a news report in one of Nigeria's newspapers. The headline of the story pointed attention to the state of one of the federal highways in the South West of the country. The story informed its readers about the lack of funds to repair such an important road. The contributor found a way to relate the issue to the larger national question and applying a subtle conspiracy theory argues that the center had an ulterior motive in not also fixing roads going to the East of the country. He warned those on the list who were rooting for a break-up of the country to desist. He argues, "but some of you who want Nigeria to be divided along ethnic lines have not told me how we are going to survive with these many disunities among us, the Igbos. Is it not strange that in this 21st century, as other nations are reaching out, expanding to other regions…" (message # 164, NaijaElections, 2006).

One more example from message # 369 (Wednesday January 17, 2007) goes to show that Biafra as an issue occupies a central theme in the minds of most contributors. The context for this thread is also a news-report on the 2007 general elections. In this contribution the writer is straining to explain the connection between two of the major ethnic groups in relation to the larger national entity. He avers that "[t]he Biafran struggle on which you base your 'Igbos did their best in the 1960s' was again for the Igbos not for the Edos, the Yoruba or any of the other nationalities; not even for the Ogonis and the Ijaws who they sought to take

along with them into the sovereign [sic] state of Biafra" (Message # 369, NaijaElections, 2007). As the thread developed it became apparent that each contributor saw Nigeria (or the nation) with a sub-regional ethnic lens. The implication of this is that viewpoints frame most argument along ethno-nationalistic lines and present a fragmented picture of the Nigerian geo-political space. To better appreciate what is happening message # 370 provides three frames on which the national question is approached by contributors. He listed regionalism, true-federalism and a rejection of both as total disintegration.

There were times when contributors utilized their postings to clarify issues as they perceived it. Message # 397 tried to separate Biafra and Igbo as sometimes used inter-changeably during the discussion. He submits that "there is a world of difference between Igbo and Biafra. While the Igbos are people with distinct cultural, historical and traditional traits, the same cannot be said of this contraption called "Biafra" that suggests the lumping of the Ijaws, the Efiks, and even the Lagosians under this enterprise called "a Biafran state" Shouldn't we be mindful of creating another "Nigeria" in the East or some weird geographical coinage? (NaijaElections, January 27, 2007). This posting gives a hint to what this particular contributor thinks Nigeria is. It is a geo-political space inhabited by different ethnic groups that are so different from each other.

One advantage of the Internet that enriches the ease of knowledge

construction is the capability for cross-referencing and quick comparison with

archived ideas. The contributor above tried to make a distinction between Igbo

and Biafra but in a posting on Nigeria Village Square website three years earlier a

contributor posted an article with the title "Igbo 101: Facts little told" (January 5,

2004). In the article he first recognizes the various channels of education that can

be held responsible for mis-education of Nigeria. He listed certain disciplines

within education institutions and the mass media as such places where incorrect

information is circulated. On the question why Igbo people call themselves

Biafrans he submits that there "was a kingdom of Biafra that ruled most of the

ancient world about 50,000 years ago. Unfortunately, nobody talks about it, for

whatever reason" (NVS, January 4, 2004).

On another thread the ubiquitous concept of Benedict Anderson's "imagined

political communities" comes up while discussing how a Yoruba person perceives

the issue of nationhood. In message # 403 the contributor reacted to an earlier

posting in which the writer described his ethnic group as "our imagined Yoruba

nation" (Friday January 26, 2007). Before his own position was stated on the

subject he expressed the logic that will guide his contribution. He states that "[a]s

you know, if the premise of an argument is wrong, much of the logic that is built

on it will be wrong also" (NaijaElections, message # 403, 2007).

The earlier posting brought in the Eurocentric perspective of nation formation and declared that the model is not apt for Nigeria. The writer of message # 403 argues that though Europe was not colonized the way Nigeria (or any African) country was colonized but it must also be recalled that Britain was colonized by Rome and the United States was colonized by Britain. The essence of this information in my opinion is not to discount the role of colonialism and its effect on nation building but to re-assert that fact of history can be used as a basis of mobilization like the other nations in Europe and United States did. The differences between these two contributions come from their interpretation of history. The earlier contributor brings up the United States as a place where ethnic minorities have been integrated into the national system but the sender of message # 403 is of the opinion that "the United States was not formed by welding together the nations that were the historical occupants of that geographical space that is now known as America. On the contrary, the original nations were systematically exterminated and cleared out by the English/European settlers" (NaijaElections, message # 403, 2007).

In the spirit of dialogues, the writer whose views message # 403 reacted also made a comeback to clarify some points he disagreed with. In message # 410 he stated by stating that "the term nation has different connotations and it will suffice for us Yorubas as a cultural and social unity" (NaijaElections, message #

410, 2007). Further in his posting, he identified routes to nationhood and warns

that these do not lead to positive ends. He mentioned Hitlerian lines and portions

of it. He warned that the Otto Bismarck model in Germany led to too much

bloodshed and should be avoided. On the premise that Britain was colonized by

Rome, he counters by stating that the nature of both colonization experiences are

incomparable. He added further that, the "current British royalty is German in

origin and are from the House of Hannover. The Yoruba city-states, less than 100

years ago did not hanker over a pan Yoruba identity that you so gloriously peddle

today" (NaijaElections, message # 410, 2007). The thread continued with two

other messages # 417 and # 420 adding to the discussion on nationhood using one

ethnic group as points of departure. The two postings draw upon the richness of

the Yoruba language and culture as their rhetorical devise. Each contributor also

displayed a firm grip of global history and personal interpretation of local

happenings. In the words of a contributor on another discussion site, he exhorts

that the "more African nationalities assert themselves, the more the world will

know and understand us better. I believe other black-Africa power-houses, e.g. the

Yoruba, the Asanti, the Zulu e.t.c, should feel unashamed of being themselves"

(NVS, January 4, 2004).

If the above represents the analysis and how some contributors perceive

Nigeria (in relation to other Africa countries) as a nation, the writer of message #

405 is of the opinion that "[w]hen a government becomes totalitarian or tyrannical in nature, it becomes peoples' duty to overthrown [sic] such administration and another formed in its place" (NaijaElections, message # 405, 2007). This posting if read as a solution must also be read as conflating the state and the nation. In my view and from readings done around the subject a government is just a part in the representation of a nation. States with their different manifestations of authorities are not the nation and changing the government may not be a solution to creating the needed nation. But how did the contributors to online discussions come to their knowledge of what a nation is or what it is not? I now consider the second part of R1.Where do the ideas which influence Nigerians in the diaspora come from?

The search for origin of ideas is not new in ethnography. Jonathan Glassman (2004) lists a number of scholars who have shown interest in uncovering the source of particular ideas held or circulated by African intellectuals. He noted that "the emergence of a new literature that seriously engages with the thought of African intellectuals who debated the public good in ethnically specific discourses that were once dismissed as "tribalism" or "sub-nationalism" (2004, para. 17). The issue of ideas for this study is pivotal in many ways. It helps to develop the notion of 'knowledge nationalism' which was mentioned earlier in this dissertation. By knowledge nationalism, I mean people

of the same nationality helping to circulate ideas propounded by intellectuals from their nation. It is a concept derived from Mazurui's linguistic nationalism. Ideas (either universal or regionalized) shape our views of the world. The ubiquity of the media in the lives of individuals has been documented by scholars and revealed to play active roles in the way socio-relations are constructed, issues are framed, and opinions consolidated. To uncover the source of ideas or news which affect Nigerians in the diaspora, allows for a partial understanding of what feeds into certain concepts that show up during discussions. Glassman (2004) indicated that there could be multiple sources for the influence. The data collected in chapter 4 and subsequently analyzed in the next chapter, give a mirror of the news sources that are posted on the egroups. The interesting point to also note is that there is a preponderance of cross-posting to other sites. In fact this issue of cross-postings resulted in one contributor's screaming subject-line asking: IS CROSS POSTING KNOWLEDGE/INFORMATION AN ABOMINATION?? (Emphasis that of writer) (NaijaElections, June 23, 2009). The consensus was that the practice should be tolerated as part of the main objectives of discussion groups. There is an assumption that consistent exposure to news reports can influence the perspective of readers (who also act as producers) and affect the tone and direction of their contributions.

Table 2 in chapter 4, shows a breakdown of news/ information sources for the month of January 2008. There are 406 postings in January 2008; while Table 3, shows the number of posting during the month of June 2008. The table shows there were a total of 55 news report from the local media and 22 from foreign-based papers. The results show that in January 2008, local news predominates with a very wide margin. There were 299 local news reports from Nigeria newspapers compared to 54 from foreign sources like *BBC*, *New York Times*, *CNN*, *Financial Times* and others. In the two months (January and June 2008) participants to the discussion had direct contributions in their own words, either derived from the news-stories or totally unrelated to the news. There were just 14 in January and 40 postings in June 2008. These figures are not unexpected considering the primary objective of the group to exchange news reports about happenings in the homeland. Apart from the source, the content of what is also culled from the news stories helps the researcher understand the dynamics of how media exposures shape opinion. The message of most of the media reports tend to be on the negative side, if one takes news items about conflicts, hunger, and death as representing negative news items. Stories on killings, conflicts, corruption, immigrant news, and other social upheavals that make quick headlines form the bulk of the news items.

The picture of what influences ideas becomes sharper when the stage is expanded to include non-Nigerians. In USA African dialogue, membership is open to a wider range of interested participants. According to one of the postings circulated by the moderator we were made to understand that the moderator intervenes minimally (if at all) in who can join the group. Tables 7 and 8 show a preponderance of foreign news sources over the local news sources from the homeland but in terms of contributions the members come across as very active in their contributions to the group. In the contributions I reviewed, participants (most are academics or professionals) appear to be comfortable to copiously cite Western authors as the main planks of their arguments or as the leading quotation to their article. When Western authorities are not been cited; Western socio-political institutions become models for comparison with Nigeria. In the case of Dr. Saul Amdee (not real names), used to illustrate content and form of discussions online, it was apparent that Western influences in the form of concepts can be tracked in what contributors post (see chapter 5). It is not unexpected, since most of the participants function within Western institutions where such ideas/ authorities are important for their survival. Reinforcing this observation Maurice Maumba avers that "[t]here is no denying that an African who has been exposed to classical Western philosophy as the basis of his

philosophical training will always be influenced by the thought categories and

patterns of that way of thinking" (2007, pg. 31).

The exposure to news media materials must have a similar effect

on the minds of some of the participants in the discussion groups. Since this is a

textual analysis and not a psychological analysis, a closer look at a few articles

written and the source(s) of ideas on which the main arguments rest is logical. The

examples highlighted in this section represent a trend I noticed during my

observer-participation sessions. A binary opposition of home-based and North

American-based is used more as markers of locations than as referents to

something symbolic. For instance, while reviewing a textual exchange between a

home-based Nigerian public intellectual and a Nigerian university professor based

in North America. I observed the ease by which each of the Western-trained

contributors made use of Western codes and conventions. In one case, of six

references to individuals made, three are foreign authors. On the one hand, the

article started with Dante's infano and later Bob Garratt was introduced before

concluding the article with reference to Spiro Agnew. The implication of this

reliance on Western authors does not stand in the way of comprehension for those

familiar with the authors and their works. On the other hand, the article written by

the Nigerian professor based in North America, reference is made to the texts of

other commentators in the spirit of inter-textual dialogue and extension of ideas.

Issue of dysfunctional governance is the implicit sub-text of this narrative. The vision expressed in the article is that of a citizen for a country with weak administrative structures. The text does not contain authors unknown to a casual reader.

It is the May 19 2008, response by the home-based Nigerian public intellectual that brings to the fore how Western ideas embedded in the works of non-Nigerians (or non-Africans) shape conversations. Coincidentally, the same 'Dante's inferno' used in the article is the same one Asante casually dropped in his discussion of the "Afrocentric idea in education" (1991, pp.170-180). Asante used it as an example of the centrality of European ideas in the teaching of African-American students. In the article by the home-based professor it is also an off-handed reference deployed to illustrate the dilemma those who wish to contribute to national discourse but a scared away by long-distance nationalists who mis-represent the facts. The professor is of the view that staying away does not absolve them from the moral burden. As innocuous as this off-handed reference at the beginning of an article may first appear, its effect in settling the tone cannot be ignored. Dante's voice co-mingles with the narrative voice of the professor to an extent that one gets a Universalist reading of the text. As the narration continued more and more Western authors are included as scaffolding to support the entire text. When Nigerians are referenced it is not for what they

expressed but for actions taken. It is possible to argue that these references are imperative and cannot be avoided in a highly globalized world where the flows of funds follow the flow of ideas with a very subtle hegemonic agenda.

To be sure this is not just an observation limited to those in the homeland; I also looked at an article written on May 26 2008 by PA in response to the home-based professor's article. By the fourth paragraph the writer introduces Descartes without a reference to Africa's response in Mbiti (1969), the philosopher who argued that for Africans it is a case of "I am because we are" (1969, pg.109). This philosophical perspective is a direct linkage of the individual to the immediate community in terms of identity and spirituality. To readers who are familiar with the philosophy of Descartes but are not aware of the critique that followed the world-view, a portion of the nuances of the text will be lost, same for the other five other names mentioned in relation to the exposition on alienation.

The concept of alienation may be accessible to those in the academia but can the same be said for those whose vocation is not knowledge production? This very article asks the question of how the subalterns in Nigeria imagine the nation, the state, and the leadership but the writer infuses in the body of the work thinkers that are promoted as universal, those whose ideas should be acceptable to all cultures and differing socio-economic conditions. At another point in the article, it is the 'ways of seeing the world' that John Berger presents in his work that is

offered to prop the Benedict Anderson concept of a cross-section of society imagining their nation into being. Understandably the constraints of a popular medium imposes certain limitations the views of Berger are omitted. Whereas it is John Berger who argues that "the relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled" (2002, pg. 107). Though the text does not assist the reader to understand the symbolism of Berger and how sight (observation), orality, and knowledge are aligned in a linear or non-linear fashion. Had this been done, the writer would have offered a better service to his call on those without voices to base their imagination on what they see and what they say among themselves as valid points in the construction of nationhood or any other concept outside of their cultural reach. This omission is not as simple as it may appear in that not all cultures precede knowledge construction with sensory-driven observations; some base their observation on divination (magic) while some others base theirs on intuition. The placements and introductions of Western authorities sure have impacts on how concepts are transmitted using a popular medium like newspaper articles or postings to discussion groups.

The whole of PA's paragraph six carries within the text; a personal narrative, a methodology, identification of various non-official sites of knowledge production and the importance of the knowledges produced in aid of national understanding. Though Berger's singular idea tends to take the credit for holding

up the many streams in that paragraph alone. The conclusion in the next

paragraph is both a commentary on this study in general and to the research

question specifically. PA posits that "the discursive imagi-Nation of Nigeria

among beer parlour pundits in the aforementioned subaltern spaces is not in any

way inferior to the parallel imagi-Nations produced in cocooned, elitist, and

alienated spheres" (May 26, 2008, NVS, para.6). By extension, 'marginal' ideas

generated by a people at the fringe of society and outside the purview of academic

codes and conventions are as important as ideas/ theories that are in circulation

presently.

The perspective alluded to by PA is in alignment with what Watkins and

Swidler call "Hearsay ethnography" (2009, pg. 162). It is a method that goes

beyond the settled and stable sample sizes recommended in the Humanities and

Social Science disciplines. They, instead rely, on "conversational journals kept by

cultural insiders that permit access to the multiple and ongoing discourses through

which meaning is made *in situ*" (2009, pp. 162-163). The text produced by

ordinary folks who keep notes as part of their daily existence become useful data

that can be analyzed in a search for meaning. The relevance of PA's suggestion

and Watkins and Swidler's preposition lend credibility to the search by the

present study to seek out how Nigerians in the diaspora frame nationhood (and its

ancillaries) online in their 'everyday talk.'

The ideas which influence Nigerians in the diaspora come from a variety of sources as can be seen from the discussion above. The foreign news media, notable authors, and authorities located and approved by Western academy leave traces within texts produced online. In a non-codified form allusions are made to ideas from the margins of society in Nigeria. The Internet privileges media organizations that have a presence online yet there are still a few in Nigeria that do not have active links to most of the websites Nigerians in the diaspora frequent. The knowledge about the homeland is heavily influenced by media organizations that are known to a cross-section of Nigerians in the diaspora. Those who are not exposed do not have the same opportunity to influence their thoughts and imaginations. The concluding part of the research question focuses on how nationhood discussed in the postings and in the discussion threads among geographically dispersed Nigerians?

As earlier stated in this dissertation, there are three frames by which the nationhood is discussed. One is regionalism, true-federalism, and a rejection of both frames. The regional frame privileges ethnic nationalism while true-federalism is still a work in progress. There are those who are totally frustrated with the Nigeria project and cannot come up with alternative frames but instead canvass for dissolution of the country into tiny units. From the third frame, there are those who wish to convene a Sovereign National Conference (SNC) to discuss

and negotiate the basis of Nigeria's nationality. The process and procedure of the conference was exhaustively discussed online and offline. The summary of the conference amounts to resistance to, and insistence on holding the conference.

The above should not be taken as if nationhood, nationalism, and national identity are the only primary concerns of Nigerians who spend time in discussion groups. From my reading of the postings it appears the primary interest of most participants is discussion on how the country can become as functional as the countries of the West they live in. Next in the line of interest is how the political class misgoverns the country as exemplified in corruption, collapse of social infrastructures, lack of security, and occasional human rights abuses. Textual data collected for this study do not give one the confidence to conclude that great differences exist in the way geographically dispersed Nigerians and Nigerians 'still living' within the country discuss the notions of nationhood, nationalism, and national identity but there is a merger between how both groups express pride in the name of the country. The main site where this outward show of affinity with the name of the country is prevalent is in personal blogs or entertainment sites (which were not a part of this study). The official name of the country has also been shortened to Naija or 9ija[25].

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[25] See feature story titled "A nation's identity crisis" (Abati, Guardian newspaper June 26 2009)

The media in Nigeria which influences both publics (at home and in the diaspora) conflate nation with state and interchange nation with country[26]. Stuckey argues in his book on nationalist theory and the foundation of Black America that "African ethnicity, [is] an obstacle to African nationalism in the twentieth century" (1987 pg. 3). This is one of the prevalent ways in which nationhood is discussed among Nigerians in the diaspora. There is the talk of an Igbo nation, Yoruba nation, and nations of all the other nationalities that make up the geo-political space. A part of the 2000 data with the subject heading: "Why is a Yoruba nation" framed the concept of ethnic nationality in historical terms and concludes that in modern times nothing of such could legitimately exist. The contributor was silent on how legitimacy is conferred on a space for it to become a nation. Nationhood as far as this contributor is concerned resides in the state. This position is evident when it was stated that "the sovereignties of all the component ethnic groups of Nigeria were usurped when Nigeria became a colony of Britain and following independence in 1960 when the country became a republic" (OKQ, 2000, soc.culture.nigeria, para 2). Four years after (2004) this authoritative statement was made online another Nigerian posted an article which repeated the idea of an Igbo nation. The same idea was repeated in message # 739

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[26] Geertz (2004) has an essay in *Available Light: Anthropological Reflections on Philosophical Topics* in which he asked "What is a country if not a nation?" This is not a conflation of country and nation.

on the OmoOdua discussion site. The presenter of the speech gave an overview of

the Yoruba nation and took a position that comes across as Eurocentric in essence.

The posting returned legitimacy to the people when it stated that "a nation is a

people who see themselves as a nation" (GD, November 30, 2007,OmoOdua-

message # 739). This view is in agreement with that taken by Soyinka in his

March 2009 lecture. There are certain elements of a nation listed by GD. These

include "a common ancestry, shared heritage, language, identifiable and distinct

arts and culture" (Message # 739, para 6).

In one of the postings, a contributor asserted that Nigerians have common

shared values as any other people in the world (November 28 2008). The response

to this assertion was to ask for substantiation of the claim that majority (not all)

Nigerians subscribe to any known practice or observance like Americans do

during Thanksgiving ceremonies. The point of the posting was to establish the

dissimilarities among Nigerians as opposed to a common thread linking the

disparate regions. Earlier in the thread, a contributor had called for the dissolution

of Nigeria because it lacks shared values. Coincidentally, the initial posting to the

thread serves as the conclusion of this issue. The contributor of message # 93104

argues that "[w]hat is abundantly clear to me is that as the nation converges and

people move into the states from allover,[sic] we will start to see a bigger

emergence of a national cultural identity " (NaijaPolitics, November 14, 2007, message # 93104).

Disintegration as earlier stated is the third frame in which Nigerians, especially those in the diaspora apply to discussions. This position by those in the diaspora is not unexpected because the most consistent message from the press in Nigeria is that of a failed or failing state. The same narrative appears in other Western media outlets as earlier on discussed. But once in a while alternative perspectives are debated among interested participants. June 21 2008 was one of such. The exchange started by a presentation titled "The folly or wisdom of disintegration." The first presentation stated in unequivocal terms that dividing "Nigeria up into contiguous sovereign countries makes no sense within current global realities" (Nigeria Village Square website, June 21 2008). The global realities been alluded to in this statement refers to the different parting of ways by constituent parts of a once thriving nation. The country that is readily used as an example is USSR. This is position is in contrast to that made by 'UN' in his seven-part article where he called for the possibility of dividing Nigeria into different units.

A different debate, I found out was held three years before in 2005, on the TalkNigeria website. Unlike the pre-conditions always adduced by scholars for national formation, the discussants on the TalkNigeria discussion group argued

strongly that without justice to the people (as opposed to the elites) there is no

basis for nationhood. Using a comparative historical frame, one of the participants

disagreed with the notion that a nation comes into existence by the will of the

people. The discussant challenged his fellow participants to show "any nation on

earth that was the product of the express wishes of the people who inhabit it"

(TalkNigeria, message # 3062, April 30, 2005). In line with the perspective of

Ade-Ajayi, the historian cited in chapter 1 of this dissertation, there is an

agreement that the so called forced amalgamation of the Southern and Northern

protectorates that resulted in Nigeria is a myth[27]. The discussant also supported

the notion that "robust relational intercourse [existed] between the disparate

ethnic groups that populate Nigeria" (TalkNigeria, message # 3062, April 30,

2005). The copious historical evidence to support this premise was convincing. As

part of his conclusion he argues that the notion of similarity (between the various

ethnic groups) as a nation is buried in narratives out of the reach of majority. To

paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi it can also argue that a nation is a product of its

individual and collective thoughts. What they think is what the nation becomes.

    The debate took place in different places online and in the media. As an

observer participant I had my personal views I shared with a select few after

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[27] Ade-Ajayi posits that "Nigeria is a product of history, not of the artifice of colonial rulers" (1994, pg. 66).Ade-Ajayi supports his uncommon position by arguing that the country Nigeria would have still been founded despite the British or any colonial interventions.

reading a paper on the subject of nationhood. I have noticed in the last few weeks

that more and more public intellectuals are taking the concept of nationhood head-

on.

What is the Nigerian nation and how does it rate among other nations especially

among its neighbors? Reading this paper does not give me much comfort in a

couple of aspects. Have we as a people just taken a Western model and accepted it

for what it is or are there ways in which the concept bears a typical African

stamp? What will that African stamp be?

   This modernity and its many meanings still comes across as Westernization

to me and I think nationhood is part of the modernization agenda. I read

somewhere that you cannot have a modern nation without a modern economy.

Does Nigeria have a modern economic system? What if we do not have does that

make us a non-nation? If you ask me, I will say modern economy is the preserve

of the State and not the business of the nation.

      Something in me warns that I have mis-read Awolowo's position and

that the great man's agenda is totally outside of the Western paradigm. But what

is wrong if our concept of nationhood is a parody of the Western model. In the

words of one of the columnists " if the nation is an expression of the imperial will

of the few, it takes the collective heroic will of the many to turn it into a national

community of organic principles" Tatalo Alamu (Nation newspaper 2008).

I have searched everywhere for Afro-centric definitions of nationhood but my searches have not gone beyond my nose. I have read a lot of what a nation should not be but none yet about what nationhood means to a Nigerian and how the project of imagining a nation for us can start. I am convinced that issues such as these are beyond the political class (ok the present crop of political jobbers). I love Nigeria but I do not know why? I hate those who want Nigeria dis-membered just for the simple reason that I grew up knowing a place called Nigeria and I fear the change that may be imposed upon my consciousness if I have to think otherwise. I have allowed Nigeria to become a geographical impression on my heart and an expression in my (growing) art. Just to share with you my passion for the subject and also my ignorance.

R2: To what extent do news-media reports from the homeland reinforce (or displace) previously-held notions of nationhood and nationalism when immigrants relocate to Western countries. Are the shifts influenced by Western dominant ideas and media?

Diagram showing a linear relationship between press reports and knowledge production
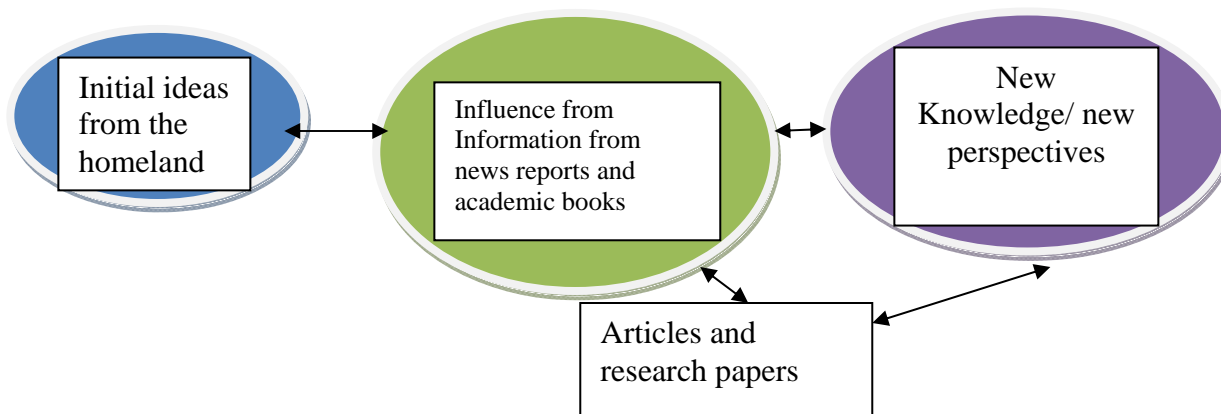
It has been shown that previously held notions have a way of coloring the interpretation of actual media representation (Ogundimu, 1994). Based on this premise, it is possible to assume that ideas that Nigerians brought with them to their host country will also influence how they re- interpret local and global news reports. If this assumption holds in any qualitative way, it will be possible to monitor within the text produced if such ideas have changed since relocating to nations where constitutionalism, rule of law, and democracy are values promoted in various official and popular narratives. Aside from direct personal experiences gained from host countries, most contributors to online dialogues have also trained within Western oriented institutions where rudiments of nationalism (or patriotism) are inculcated. To most Nigerians, the place of origin bestows the first

stream of identity before any other form of identity. According to Dmitri Van Den

Bersselaar "Igbo people are regarded, and regard themselves, as a people with

their own common culture and a shared history going back centuries" (2000, pg.

124). The same can be said of other 250 ethnic groups were brought together to

form Nigeria. There are scores of examples within the postings to illustrate this

point. For example, a posting dated December 6 2006; one of the contributors to

NVS had course to intervene in what appeared like a virtual war of words. He

wrote "I have noticed with total unhappiness the tribal war going on here"

(December 6 2006, WAZOBIA: Brotherly love on NVS, para. 1). He continued

the article by listing names and their ethnic affiliations as a way of showing the

ethnic diversity. He states that the online ethnic and tribal wars affecting the

quality of discourse and social interaction the site had as one of its objectives.

The issue of ethnicized public sphere is one of scholarly interest. Orji

Nkwachukwu (2008) reflected on the ethnicization, policization, and power

sharing strategies as a means of managing the public sphere. He identifies

different discursive moments in Nigeria along a certain time frame. He

categorizes the discourse starting from the discourse of 'unity in diversity' to the

1950s and 1960s as the period of 'discourse of ethnic competition' the 1970s as

the time of "discourse of ethnic collaboration." The nature of online discourse

has returned to the period of ethnic competition with the inter-mediation of local

and global news-reports that have played up on the crises. Steven Pierce states that"[i]n the international press Nigeria is represented almost exclusively as a state in crisis. Recurrent military coups, ethnic and religious sectionalism, a civil war" (2006, pg. 887) adorn the pages of papers and on screens. A content analysis of head-lines of news reports posted to the discussion groups supports this notion as earlier stated.

The extent to which news-media reports from the homeland reinforce (or displace) previously-held notions of nationhood and nationalism when immigrants relocate to Western countries can be addressed by looking at how the press in Nigeria frame ethnic diversity and national integration as typified by the notion of federalism. On the other hand, I will examine the data to uncover if there are indications of shifts in discourse influenced by Western dominant ideas and the media.

The robustness or otherwise of online conversations can be partially traced to the nature of the content of the news-media reports on which some of the issues of discussions are based. The narrative in most Nigerian newspapers, especially those with online presence, speaks about a weak state and a non-existent nation or a nation waiting to be constructed. When the news reports are read in tandem with academic postcolonial perspectives, a Nigerian in the diaspora, who relies on secondary accounts, can easily conclude that nothing has changed in the country

and in fact there is deterioration in the homeland. Since deterioration is a relative

marker, there is a need to compare the present with a past mediated by personal

memories and perception or by other places where the readers think are stable and

can be emulated. This can be illustrated better with a debate which took place on

Nigeria Village Square website in September 2, 2003. The contributor wanted

participants on the site to reflect on the future of Nigeria. It was a sort of devise to

get participants to reflect on why they left Nigeria when they did. To assist the

discussion contributor # 1, supplied two articles as launch pads for the discussion.

One news-report focused on the pledge of the former president of Nigeria to fight

corruption, while the other was a report on a visiting British Trade Mission to

Nigeria. Both reports represent major concerns for Nigerians. Contributor # 2

gave reasons why he thinks Nigerians leave the country. He wrote "[m]ost

Nigerians leave because they have a more satisfying life in foreign countries, and

can make long term plans that suit their personalities. They just do not have the

patience to wait for Nigeria with their 'one life to live and give' (Nigeria Village

Square website, September 2, 2003). A careful reading of this statement will show

that this writer accepts that the knowledge of the other nations Nigerians emigrate

to precedes their actions. What is not explicit is how that knowledge of other

places was developed.

Contributor # 3 commenting on the same subject falls on a combination of memory and new information coming from Nigeria when he submits that "I would have been very happy to stay in Nigeria if the opportunities that were available to professionals in the early eighties were still available now. But anyone in the diaspora reading this can give their own opinion-were you 'pulled out' or 'pushed out' of Nigeria?" Implicit in these self-confessions are indicators that this contributor left Nigeria with a set of views and still keeps to those views. The situation in Nigeria is getting worse can be a conjecture or a statement of fact based on secondary or direct information/ knowledge. In a third contribution to the same thread, contributor # 3 restates his position by comparing the reward system between Nigeria and the United States. The United States' system is better than what obtains in Nigeria. Contributor # 4 differs from the previous contributor; he narrates his personal story to reinforce his position. He wrote "I left Nigeria because my circumstances were getting worse and worse-still, the future looked much bleaker unless I chose to engage in practices that would have nullified everything I was raised and educated to believe in" (Nigeria Village Square website, September 2, 2003). Here again the past and the knowledge that supported the decision to leave the country can be gleaned from the excerpt. The combination of family values and education are aspects this immigrant came to his host country with. Though the contributions do not explicitly bring nationhood

to the fore but how the state of the country disappointed them is evident. They look back and reflect about the situation and wish things could be better.

There are hints of influences on their various contributions. Information from different sources can be attributed to contributing to their perceptions of the country and to an extent what they experienced while in the country and now how they perceive the same country during their relocation to their host countries must have been influenced. In the final question the implicit is made explicit.

Conclusion

This dissertation brings into focus how geographically dispersed citizens make use of different media forms for conversation, debates, and exchange of information derived from different sources and goes a step further to harvest one of the many fruits of the various online interactions and conversations. As a foreground to the study it became imperative to investigate the multiplicity of sources from which the participants draw their materials from. I sought to know what these sources are and what roles they play in the construction of knowledge about a distant homeland? One of the expected outcomes is that the research will make visible how the group makes "sense of events and transmitted information about them" (Schudson, 2002, pg. 483). At another level, paraphrasing Ali Mazrui, it will be possible to conclude if anything like knowledge nationalism exists in the mode of Mazrui's linguistic nationalism (1998, pg. 1). By knowledge

nationalism, I mean Nigerians in diaspora taking pride in knowledge that can be traced to people of their own country. This takes a stab at the politics of knowledge construction and dissemination. Can those at the margins world power also create their own ideas about concepts that already have wide acceptability in Western academia?

At another lever it raises the question of how geographical dislocation facilitates systematic displacement of a people's knowledge stock and a reliance on ideas and knowledge from other parts of the world.

As part of the analysis, the perspective about how governments in developing countries view the Internet as "another hegemonic tool for the export of Western cultural and political ideology" (Ebo, 1998) would not be totally discountenanced. Once the issue of hegemony is raised, it becomes logical to seek sites and actors capable of counter-hegemony in the service of developing countries against Western imperialism. It is pertinent to ask if Nigerians posting comments and contributing articles online are aware of the hegemonic and counter hegemonic possibilities.

In attempting to seek answers to these questions, I did not take the position that the Internet is a neutral tool without consequences. It is a discursive site and according to Johnstone discourse "is both shaped by the world as well as shaping the world. Discourse is shaped by language as well as shaping language" (2002,

pg. 3). Those who use the Internet for communication are shaped by it and they in turn shape the future of the Internet. Eriksen (1996) is of the opinion that the use of the Internet has both direct and indirect impacts on identity politics. It directly inspires "through the intensification of alienation and the weakening of the national sphere, which encourages sub-national and trans-national 'tribes' or other self-defined groupings to get their acts together in a serious way" (1996, online document). The seriousness of their actions is inscribed in dialogue and disagreements noticed online and throw back collective social intervention to colonial times when discursive spaces were militant in language and in tone. One other probable consequence, according to Ebo (1998), is the possibility of replacing traditional hierarchical global relationships by a combination of horizontal alignments of local and global transnational civil societies.

It appears Nigerians in the diaspora are unaware that this period of social realignments is yet another phase of adversarial politics that pitches the governed against those in authority. This assertion is supported by the view of Nigeria's foreign affairs minister, Mr. Maduekwe, who was quoted as saying "that time has come for a strategic 'truce' between Nigeria's intellectual class and its political class. The historical rupture in that relationship has created the adversarial traditions, which limits a potentially productive relationship between those two axes of power for the benefit of Nigeria" . In essence there is a call for meaningful

dialogue between the state and the citizens, either at home or abroad. In an

interview granted one of Nigerian new-magazines, Niyi Osundare, a professor

based in New Orleans expressed his view on what dialogue is not, and then stated

what it ought to be, before finally ending with a pre-condition for effective

dialogue. "Dialogue is not just a colloquial rhetorical exchange. Dialogue is

evaluative. Dialogue is qualitative. Dialogue is essentially a horizontal exchange

between people, things, and ideas that have a certain level of contiguity" (2007,

The News, para. 10).

It will be safe at this point to conclude that nationhood as a concept comes

across as a given (unproblematized) which needs little interrogation or reflection

by commentators to the various online conversations. The robustness or otherwise

of online conversations can be partially traced to the nature of the content of the

news-media reports on which some of the issues of discussions are based. The

narrative in most Nigerian newspapers, especially those with online presence,

speaks about a weak state and a non-existent nation or a nation waiting to be

constructed. When the news reports are read in tandem with academic

postcolonial perspectives, a Nigerian in the diaspora, who relies on secondary

accounts, can easily conclude that nothing has changed in the country and in fact

there is deterioration in the homeland. Since deterioration is a relative marker, the

need to compare the present with a past mediated by personal memories and

perception is evident in the postings. There is also the tendency to constantly compare Nigeria with other places which the readers think are stable and can be emulated.

A virtual nation, as opposed to a nation which exists in time and space, is normative in conceptualization. That normative essence is constructed through conversations and reflections and imposing how a nation structurally and functionally ought to be. The online narrative and its narrators depend on external ideas to a great extent and on intuition in very rare cases in adducing arguments needed to change direction or erect new constructions. The purpose of a virtual concept of nationhood acts as a parameter on which the real nation with all its imperfections and contradictions are judged. One issue the idea of virtual nationhood brings to the fore is that of legitimacy; who is qualified to discuss how a nation ought to be? Should the task be left to those who are within the malfunctioning national space? Or should the task be left to those who are located outside of the national space but depend on mediated communication and information for their knowledge? There is hardly any doubt that introducing a binary opposition of 'inside/outside' overly simplifies the situation in that those inside may also be outside of the system and thus alienated. While those outside the national space as immigrants in other countries may have 'inside' knowledge of the socio-economic system that runs the nation. Immigrants (or those in the

diaspora) have been known to take more than passing interests in the political affairs of their homeland. There are many examples of immigrant groups or diasporic populations that have facilitated changes in their homelands using different information and communication technologies to connect, mobilize, and organize geographically dispersed members. What is still obscure in certain instances is why diasporic groups expend so much energy to effect or sustain change(s) in their homelands. The situation of those who were forced to leave their homelands is understandable but what of those who left out of their own free volition to seek better fortunes abroad? Nations can only be renewed by ideas shared and discussed by a multitude of people who are bounded by common purpose and vision. It is not unfounded to expect that ideas for such renewal survive more in atmospheres of justice and freedom.

Whichever way the pie is sliced both actors need a public channel for the dissemination of their opinions to the public.

The story of how different kinds of information is produced and circulated by those in the diaspora is just a part of the story inherent in the struggle for meaning. On one side; is the political class with their tools of communication and propaganda, while on the other side; is the bifurcated civil society of homeland citizens and their twin in the diaspora who are far from the effects of mis-

governance and are free within the constraints of the technology and knowledge garnered from Western institutions.

Discourse on identity, nationality and ethnicity which is a never-ending debate online, is not an end to itself; it is a means for self-representation and exercise of freedom of expression. This consequence of exposure to a large body of knowledge from different geo-political spaces is one aspect of the digital culture that must not be overlooked. I argue that the Internet, unlike the print media, has a potential for instant re-construction of memory with the assistance of technology instead of reliance on human memory or hard paper copies that can be difficult to organize. This instant creation/recall of memory affected constant shaping of conversations and interactions online that are yet to be fully explored especially in cases of Nigeria's multiethnic and potentially volatile societies. What has been explored is the role of traditional media in constructing and preserving collective memory (Baer 2001). George Lipsitz (2001) is of the opinion that the mass media have a potential of creating crisis for collective memory in the way it re-presents happenings of the past in the present.

This study brought into focus how geographically dispersed citizens made use of different forums for conversation, debates and exchange of information derived from different home and other available sources. Foreign sources/ ideas played roles in the construction of knowledge about the homeland and concept of

what a nation is. The Internet is not assumed to be a neutral tool without consequences. Lipsitz avers that "[n]ew technologies do lend themselves to new forms of exploitation and oppression, but they also have possible uses for fundamentally new forms of resistance and revolution" (2001, pg. vii). The ongoing social revolution is symbolic with potentials to bear concrete socio-political fruits of transformation.

As a study of media use among Nigerian diasporic communities, it brings together concepts from inter-relating research strands: the study of the role of immigrants to a virtual public sphere, media use by immigrants, and the study of the social consequences of new communication forms. This study exposes the 'messy construction' of thoughts and ideas before they are fully formed and the role online newspapers play in facilitating dialogues in a public sphere where reason and emotions clash. The analysis of these conversations brings the public close to the working minds of those Hong Qiu refers to as "knowledge diasporas" (2003). They represent an intellectual class which has the capacity to influence national discourse and at the same time transform negative representations about their homeland in the media of their host countries. It can be concluded that a textual bridge from the homeland to the diaspora now exists for the circular transfer of ideas within both communities. What remains to be seen is how a

bridge from the diaspora to the mainstream media of the host countries will develop

Limitation of study

(1). Anna Everett (2009) mention of hyper-ephemerality of cybertext as a very real problem and I agree with her observation. Doing online research is reminiscent of what Michel Foucault might consider a history of the present. By this "a history that seeks neither to explain the present in terms of the past nor to interpret the past on the basis of present issues, but to grasp the present as present" (Smart, pg. 170). Though, there are cases when the object of study keeps changing by the addition of more layers of complexities that redefine the past in the presence of new knowledge. Every history is incomplete as long as there are points of views still possible.

(2). Method: One of the challenges of naturalistic research design is that issues unfold at their own pace. The method is unpredictable and it is time bound. It limits both the quality and quantity of data collected at any period of time.

(3). Disciplinary narrowness of media studies imposed a limitation on a richness of data and scope of what could be included in the study. It was not possible to give free reign to Geertz's intellectual curiosity of "what overall is happening, why it is happening and what it portends" (2004, pg. 577).

Issues for further research

(1). Thomas Henriksen traces the influences of African intellectuals on Black Americans and concludes that Edward W. Blyden and other West African intellectuals played significant roles in the historical development of Black Americans. Conversely, tracking how ideas from Nigerians in the diaspora influence Europe and America will be a logical step.

(2). Asking directly from Nigerians what views have changed about the nation since arrival in their host country. What is said will be compared with what is written by participants to online discussions.

(3). The effect of what happens online, within the homeland is one of the issues for future research.

(4). Comprehensive examination of data to uncover presence of indications of shifts in discourse influenced by Western dominant ideas and media.

APPENDIX A:

<u>Technology widens rich-poor gap</u>

By Philip Emeagwali (October 8th 2007)

OIL has made us billions and fuelled our economic stability, but oil has also become the bane of our existence. For some, it is a curse that has caused poverty and corruption, but for others it is an essential source of untold wealth and power. But as the gap between rich and poor countries continues to expand, it is clear that intellectual capital and technology rule the world, and that natural resources such as oil, gold, and diamonds are no longer the primary determinants of wealth.

Surprisingly, nations with few natural resources demonstrate greater economic growth rates than OPEC countries. Japan's economic growth, driven by technological superiority, outpaces that of Saudi Arabia; South Korea is growing faster than oil-rich Nigeria; and Taiwan's economy has moved well beyond that of oil-rich Venezuela. The United States and Norway are also rich in oil, yet their staggering economic growth comes from intellectual capital.

In reality, it is not money but intellectual capital that drives prosperity. More important, perhaps, is the reality that poverty is driven and sustained by a lack of intellectual capital. The intimate relationship between intellectual capital and economic growth is as old as humanity itself, and is well illustrated by this parable from ancient Babylon (modern-day Iraq). A man asked his children:

"If you had a choice between the clay of wisdom or a bag of gold, which would you choose?"

"The bag of gold, the bag of gold" the naive children cried, not realising that wisdom had the potential to earn them many more bags of gold in the future.

Seven thousand years later, Iraq - the cradle of civilisation - has its own private bag of gold as it sits perched atop the world's third largest oil reserves.

Meanwhile, Israel, tucked away in the hostile terrain of a barren desert, has the clay of wisdom - the weightless wealth of intellectual capital embodied in the collective mind of its people. The striking economic gap that persists between rich and poor nations has increased sevenfold over the past century to what is now an

all-time high. The accumulation of intellectual capital by rich nations has helped broaden this gap because it has enabled them to control technology and collect hidden taxes from less affluent nations. For instance, Nigeria pays a 40 per cent "royalty" tax on its petroleum revenues to foreign oil companies that are ripping out its family jewels - the huge store of wealth in its oilfields. These oilfields started forming when prehistoric, dog-sized humans - our common ancestor with the apes - walked African grasslands on four legs.

It's a shocking reality, but the deep oil reserves laid down by Mother Nature millions of years ago and nurtured through the millennia in Africa have been whittled away within decades. And, for the dubious privilege of surrendering its natural resources forever, Nigeria is required to pay half its petroleum revenue in the form of "royalties" to the rich kids on the global block, the United States and the Netherlands. That oilfield has been exchanged for a bowl of porridge, and the black gold that should serve the under-served in Nigeria is helping wealthy Westerners get wealthier.

Today, half the world's population - three billion people - live on an average of $500 a year. In contrast, Bill Gates earns $500 every second. By controlling technology and taxing computer users, Gates has become wealthier than each of the 70 poorest nations on earth and using his financial might has conquered more territory than Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great combined.

While Bill Gates is the new millennium's Prince of Technology, he is by no means the first to have taken on the huge potential offered by the realm of technology. The Romans used roads and military technology to expand their empire. And, for centuries, Britain ruled a quarter of the Earth due to its unparalleled ability to command maritime technology and conquer the Seven Seas. Britain undoubtedly established itself as the world's first superpower through its rapid and ruthless colonial expansion programme. The British raised the Union Jack over Canada and Australia, India and Hong Kong, Egypt and Kenya, and countless other countries - even the United States. The Union Jack cast its shadow in every global time zone, giving rise to the saying, "The sun never sets on the British Empire," a fact that was cold comfort to the colonised nations.

In the same way, the United States has embraced its technological supremacy, both offensively and defensively, to build its own global empire without a physical presence in any of its "colonies." The sole remaining superpower is at the forefront of every major technological advancement, which it has used to become deeply embedded in three-quarters of the globe. The U.S. has accomplished a

virtual economic colonisation manifesting its presence throughout the globe by harnessing the power of technology and capitalising on its clay of wisdom.

Africa's inability to realise its potential and embrace technology has left it at the mercy of the West. The time has come for Africa to seize the day and resist the efforts of America and others to leave their imprint and plunder its natural resources. Numerous examples throughout history support the idea that technology can be used as a tool of oppression. And there's little doubt that America's technological advancement has allowed it to exploit natural resources around the world.

This is particularly evident in Africa, where the U.S. is exploiting oilfields beneath the pristine rainforest - and being rewarded with a 40-per cent tax at the expense of the African people. This lends credence to history's assertion that those who control technology oppress those who do not, eventually enslaving them and, finally, wielding power around the globe.

- o Emeagwali, winner of the 1989 Gordon Bell Prize, the Nobel Prize of supercomputing, lives in the United States

Technology, wealth, and power
By Edwin Madunagu

I WAS attracted to the article, Technology widens rich-poor gap, (The Guardian, Monday, October 8, 2007) by its author, Philip Emeagwali. So, let me first present him. Emeagwali is a Nigerian by birth and an American, by citizenship. In America, where he has lived for over 30 years, he would be classified as a Nigerian American. He was born in 1954 and experienced the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1970) as a teenager. A version of his biography says that he served in the Biafran Army during the war. After the war, he completed his secondary school education and left for the United States of America. Between 1977 and 1986 he obtained a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, a master's degree in Environmental Engineering and a Master's degree in Mathematics.

Emeagwali has since become a world-famous computer scientist, working in America. In 1989, at the age of 35, he received the Gordon Bell Prize which The Guardian newspaper described as the "Nobel Prize of supercomputing". Several other awards and recognitions have since followed. It was these credentials that made me read Emeagwali's October 8 article almost immediately. His general propositions are in the opening paragraph which I beg to quote in full: "Oil has

made us billions and fuelled our economic stability, but oil has also become the bane of our existence. For some, it is a curse that has caused poverty and corruption, but for others it is an essential source of untold wealth and power. But as the gap between rich and poor countries continues to expand, it is clear that intellectual capital and technology rule the world, and that natural resources such as oil, gold, and diamonds are no longer the primary determinants of wealth".

In the rest of the article, Emeagwali tried to provide proofs for the three theses that can be distilled from the above. Although the theses about oil being the "bane of our existence" and source of both poverty and wealth are not new, they appeared fresh in Emeagwali's article. The third thesis, namely, that natural resources are no longer the "natural determinants of wealth is his main thesis. I take the "our" in the "bane of existence" thesis as a reference to Nigeria in particular and countries of the Organisation of Petroleum Producing Countries (OPEC) in general. Emeagwali did not say that he was presenting theses, much less placing them in an order. He was just writing as a scientist and a Nigerian/African patriot.

The population of the world is now estimated at 6.5 billion, that is, 6,500 million. Emeagwali says that about half of this "lives on an average of $500 a year". He then contrasted this existential fact with the world of Bill Gates, the American billionaire and "computer wizard" who earns $500 every second. Let us play around with these figures. By simple arithmetic, Bill Gates earns $43,200,000 a day while half of humankind lives on an average of $500 per year per person. If we divide the former by the latter the result is that Bill Gates earns in a day what 86,400 people live on in a year; or earns, in a day, 86,400 times what an average member of half of humanity lives on. How is Bill Gates able to do this? Emeagwali's answer: "By controlling technology and taxing computer users". With due respect to Emeagwali, this is pure mystification.

He then drew the connection between Bill Gates' stupendous wealth and his awesome power: "Bill gates has become wealthier than each of the 70 poorest nations on earth and, using his financial might has conquered more territory than Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great combined". There are 191 member-nations in the United Nations. Their Heads of Government gathered in New York last September to address the General Assembly. What Emeagwali is telling us is that Bill Gates, sitting at the gallery, could wave off 70 of these people as they rose to speak. I would suggest that Bill Gates' wealth and power rest, primarily, not on any wizardry, but on three pillars: America's political economy; the global neoliberal capitalist order, and his "connections".

We may rest that dimension of Emeagwali's submission for now and move to another: "Japan's economic growth, driven by technological superiority, outpaces that of Saudi Arabia; South Korea is growing faster than oil-rich Nigeria; and Taiwan's economy has moved well beyond that of oil-rich Venezuela". These are provided as illustrations of his submission that "it is not money but intellectual capital that drives prosperity"; that "poverty is driven and sustained by a lack of intellectual capital"; that "the intimate relationship between intellectual capital and economic growth is as old as humanity itself"; and that "those who control technology oppress those that do not, eventually enslaving them and, finally, wielding power around the globe".

Emeagwali escaped being accused of "either-or" fallacy by admitting that "the United States and Norway are also rich in oil". But he quickly added that these countries "staggering economic growth comes from intellectual capital". I however, searched through the article to see if either China or Russia was used as illustration. None of them was. Definitely Emeagwali could not have mentioned all countries. But I just felt that the omission of both Russia and China from an article that adopts a global perspective and mentions America, Japan, Norway, Britain, the Netherlands and Israel - as illustrations of the link between oil, intellectual capital, technology, wealth and power - is significant.

My present piece would not have gone beyond promoting Emeagwali's very useful article if there had not been a suggestion in the latter that African peoples had a choice of embracing technology, but did not, thereby placing themselves "at the mercy of the West"; or if some social forces were identified as responsible for this calamitous choice; or if there has been an explicit statement that, ultimately, technological advance and "intellectual capital" - in the given historical context - are sustained, reproduced and expanded by the control of natural resources and human labour (power). In other words, "they" appropriated our natural resources by means of their technological superiority; and thereafter they used this appropriation to sustain their superiority.

Emeagwali recalls that the British "raised the Union Jack over Canada and Australia, India and Hong Kong, Egypt and Kenya, and countless other countries - even the United States", and used its technological advantage to dominate them. The United States of America has now replaced Britain as the vanguard of the global plunder. But the critical point is that it was not just that technological superiority was used to dominate and exploit but also that, after the initial contact, technological superiority now depended on the perpetuation of domination and exploitation. It was our raw materials, cheap labour, and later, markets, that acted

as catalysts for further development of technological superiority. It is a dialectical relationship.

The "sole remaining super-power", the United States of America, according to Emeagwali, "is at the forefront of every major technological advancement, which it has used to become deeply embedded in three quarters of the globe". America has accomplished a "virtual economic colonisation" of the globe. But will the famous scientist be surprised to hear that the ruling blocs in most of the poor countries whose fate he is bemoaning accept and like the global arrangement or global division of labour as it is? Will he be shocked to learn that the ruling blocs of his country, Nigeria, prefer the way things are because their basic interests are met that way?

Will Philip Emeagwali regard it as impertinent or scandalous on my part, if I suggest that his call on Africans, and particularly Nigerians, to confront the West's use of its technological superiority to exploit, plunder and dominate us - and "embrace" technology - is a call for the social forces who are committed to this type of liberating mission to seek political power? Philip Emeagwali should however be commended for his social commitment. Afterall, he is not the only Nigerian-born scientist in America, even if he is a famous one. I am sure that some of his compatriots would be embarrassed by his article.

This point reminds me of an encounter I had with a comrade of mine in Calabar in 1982 or 1983 when I was still teaching mathematics at the University of Calabar. The comrade had just come to consult with me on an organisational matter. As we were leaving my office I complained bitterly about the "unseriousness" of a female journalist in performing assignments. The visiting comrade said nothing for a long time. But as he was entering his Volkswagen beetle car he appealed to me to take it "easy" with the woman who had simply volunteered to work with us. He argued that even if she could do not more than give us useful information gathered in the course of her fieldwork she would still be very useful to the struggle. What of her colleagues that had openly pitched camps with the "other side"? he queried me.

I have never forgotten that encounter. What he said about professional journalists can be said of other socially- committed professionals - lawyers, teachers, medical workers, architects, scientists, etc. I think Emeagwali is a member of that critically important and valued tribe. May that tribe grow in population and strength.

APPENDIX B

Full text of summary: of a particular thread

Post 1 name 21 turn 1
Sent: Tuesday, December 11, 2007 2:55:20 PM
Subject: USA Africa Dialogue Series - Reuben Abati and the Guardian
Newspaper

Summary of the posting

The contributor revisited an earlier article he wrote in 2006 about one of Nigeria's

newspapers. In the article he blamed the management of the paper for its

insensitivity to its workers against its stance on national issues.

Post 2 name 7 turn 1
Subject: USA Africa Dialogue Series - Re: Reuben Abati and the Guardian
Newspaper

Summary of posting

This contributor to post 1 responded with a slightly differing opinion. He named

ThisDay and *Daily Independent* newspapers as his preferred dailies. He too

agreed with the previous contributor that the Guardian appears alienated from the

Nigerian society because of its reliance on corporate and government patronage.

The main problem with the paper in his view is that most of its writers have lost

touch with public intellectualism and social discourse"

He signed off his contribution with a long chain of titles and responsibilities

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Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Abuja, Nigeria

234-803-329-9879

Director,

Center for Public Policy & Research

10 Awoniyi Elemo Street

Senior Policy Advisor

6th Sense Consulting

Abuja, Nigeria

Date: Tue, 11 Dec 2007 21:29:19 -0800 (PST)
Post 3 name 5 turn 1

 Summary of posting: It was addressed to name 7

Name 5 was the first person to veer off the discussion about one of the

newspapers in Nigeria and instead wanted to know "the job prescriptions or duties

of (a) Senior Special Assistant, (b) Special Assistant, (c) Senior Assistant and

presumably[sic] (d) Assistant to FGN Ministers. Are these "ad hoc" political

positions created by the executive or they are approved by any act of parliament

(NA)? How do you really function as both a SA and at the same time as Director

(CPP&R)- full time or part-time from two far distant locations (Lagos and

Abuja)?

Date: Wed, 12 Dec 2007 **09:41:26 -0800** (PST)
Post 4 name 7 turn 2

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 5

Name 7 responded that he is not an expert in what the duties entail but would take

a shot at the question from a personal experience of working with Ken Nnamani

[one of the former presidents of Senate in Nigeria]. He explained that he was one

of four consultants who set up the office in 2005 and gives very detailed workings

of government. He provides the number of aides each of the officers have in

Nigeria.

After the detailed explanation he then provides an answer to how he can be a

Special Assistant and Director of a Center simultaneously. In his defense he cities

colleagues in the United States of America do similar things and hold other

positions in different geographical locations.

Date: 13 Dec 2007 08:34:27 +0000 (GMT)
Post 5 name 20 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 4 and name 11

Using personal experience this contributor introduces another angle to the

discussion which actually started with commentary on one of Nigeria's newspaper

and then into the long titles of one contributor. This present posting is about 1999

elections and the fraud it soon turned into. He lists about four officers each of the

360 House of Representatives and 109 Senators were allowed to employ.

However, according to him the opportunity to employ personal staff by the

legislators became a source of fraud and waste of human resources

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 07:19:07 -0800 (PST)
Post 6 name 5 turn 2

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

He submits that the detailed explanation given by name 7 goes to show the

unnecessary financial burden borne by the generality of Nigerians. He includes an

appreciation to the former President of the Senate, to be delivered by name 7. In

concluding his contribution he advises name 7 to delete the extra titles in his

electronic signature and talks about his own personal predicament as an academic

in the diaspora. He wishes things were the other way around.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 12:36:59 -0500

Post 7 name 10 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

He identifies the location of name 7 and goes on to comment on what was written

about the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the boss of name 7. He narrates a long

personal story which details how he got involved with the pro-democracy

movement that was started because of June 12. Names of actors and organizations are included in this posting in good measure. It gives a background to the inner thoughts of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. He ended this posting with the word reminiscing above his name

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 08:41:48 -0800 (PST)

Post 8 name 7 turn 3

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

He also confirms his present location which is a Hotel in Washington DC just as name 10 had speculated. He then mentions a new Nigeria which he says it's about service and most citizens are passionate about. He tacitly responds to the issue of staffing and redundancy which name 20 introduced in post 5. He frames the staffing situation as that of efficiency in governance. He also explains how he moved from been a Special Adviser to his present position as Special Assistant to the Minister as one that resulted from his social networking.

Apart from friendship, he says a bond of intellectual exploration and a robust Christian theology links him and his Minister. He submits that they both believe in Nigeria. This assertion soon leads to the aborted third term campaign which was embarked on by the Aides of the last President of Nigeria. He was against the

campaign but the Minister who then was the Secretary to his party appeared to be for the idea.

He ended this particular posting while giving his reasons for the choice to work in government by invoking Edward Said's comment about intellectuals who are policy oriented and their possible immersion in the illogicality and" immorality of the hegemony." His position is to remain firm in his values and beliefs.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 10:27:55 -0500

Post 9 name 10 turn 2

Summary of posting; Addressed to name 7
He picks upon the issue of Aides of political leaders who do not have a budget to operate from. He thinks they are "gofers."

He also notes how the discussion moved from working as Special Adviser to Senate President to the present discussion on anti-Third Term campaign issues. He brings to light the contradictory roles played by the present Minister of Foreign Affairs on term elongation of the last administration and during the time of the last military dictator. He then posed the question about how name 7 chooses his employers or how they choose him.   In a light-hearted way he included an expression used by name 7 in his posting about "pragmatic politics"

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 **09:59:55** -0800 (PST)

Post 10 name 19 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

He sympathizes with his laboring to convince other participants on the forum about his position in government. He thinks most contributors are cynics. He compares the hard-hitting position of some participants in this conversation to a similar one about an American female activist who works as a representative of the Bush administration in the African Union. He identified contribution of citizens to their nation as the central thesis of name 7's discourse. Contrasting that position to those who think intellectuals must always be antagonistic to government. As if going back to the initial discussion, he brings back the issue of Guardian newspapers and its sordid labor relations. He condemns the double standard and the cynicism of some of the contributors to the conversation.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 13:35:43 -0500

Post 11 name 10 turn 3

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 19

This is a posting that attacks a pervious contribution. It makes references to past contributions and says the participant panders most times to the establishment in his contributions. He then digs into the archive to support his argument with something written by name 19. In the said posting name 19 seems to be in support of a flawed election. This is a case of how critics are perceived. Name 10 accepts

the fallibility of critics and posits that does not stop them from criticizing others.

To support his argument he quotes copiously from Maya Angelou's poem "When

I say I am a Christian"

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 11:51:47 -0800 (PST)

Post 12 name 18 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

She sends her congratulations gleaned from the long string of titles that set off this

thread. She makes reference to a piece written by name 7 on the issue of citizens'

diplomacy. An update on the position paper and other foreign affairs issues was

requested. She then ended by giving her opinion on what citizens' diplomacy

should be.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 11:54:10 -0800
Post 13 name 7 turn 4

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 19

This is a response to critics and criticism. He supports the position of name 19 and

posits that some contributors are comfortable with pessimism. He accepts that

criticism important in the running of the State. He thinks critics are heroes but

nothing more. He casts himself as one who believes in efforts that can bring about

results. He concludes that participants must not lose hope in Nigeria. He also

frames this moment in time for the country as one of rebirth which requires

quality engagement on which the rebirth is possible.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 19:44:44 -0800 (PST)

Post 14 name11 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name7
He sets the tone of his posting by acknowledging the efforts of name 7 in making

time out to respond to the postings and positions. He then links this to how

political conversations are conducted in Nigeria. He singles out Name 7 as a

cultured mind "amidst a throng of ridiculous characters" in the seat of power in

Nigeria. He dismisses name 19's contribution as incoherent distractions and starts

by recalling the contributions of name 4 and name 20 to the issue of political

jobbers. He explicitly states that his rhetorical device will be satire because of the

seriousness he attaches to the subject at hand. To reinforce this point he states a

non-English proverb and translates it for effect.

The issue dealt with first is what he terms "food-for-the-boys" which to him is

another method of political patronage. He cites his experience of governance at

the local government level where Personal Aides of the Chairmen who are

university graduates loiter around with little or nothing to do.

He differs on the comparison of Nigeria's system with that of the United States of

America especially in the area of knowledge production/ consumption of the

various think-tanks and other sites of political knowledge construction. Apart

from this, he brings in the hierarchical cultural difference issue.

In conclusion the compassion between Nigerians at home and those in the

diaspora comes to the fore. This reference is to the string of titles attached to his

electronic signature.

Date: Thu, 13 Dec 2007 21:06:28 -0800 (PST)

Post 15 name 7 turn 5

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 11

He acknowledges that the last 24 hours of this thread has provided him with a

better appreciation of the problems of Nigeria. He does not fall for the line in

name 11's posting that he is different from other Aides at the political seat of

power in Nigeria. He reiterates his position that all he wants to do, like

participants in the forum, is to make a difference.

He narrated his optimistic stance in a discussion with a relation about Nigeria's

possibilities. He avers that his closeness to government in the country makes his

views on Nigeria's predicament strong and at the same time radical. He thus

combines his optimism with his ability to criticize. To buttress his position he

narrates a lengthy story of his encounter with one of the state governors and uses

the opportunity to construct his biography and pro-democracy credentials. These

credentials, according to him, cast him as an outsider to politics. To ward such

idea off he frames Nigeria as a common patrimony that should be inclusive of all

shades of opinions and radicalism. Furthermore this posting goes into the inner

working of Nigeria's ruling political party-the PDP.

On the premise above, he concludes that the difference between him and those in

the forum is his insistence that citizens must get engaged in the art of making

Nigeria a nation. In analyzing the problem of nationhood he identifies a crisis of

citizenship as "the failure of ownership of the nation." His analysis then turns

generational. He posits that the younger generation has not shown the courage to

wrestle the nation from those he termed as the charlatans.

It is in this posting that he addresses, in passing, the issue of his string of

titles in the electronic signature. He thinks there are times commentators

"grandstand and avoid the difficult job of critical and constructive social critique."

In a rare moment of free expression he mentions the name of the former Chairman

of the ruling party when discussing charlatans within the system but it is done not

as condemnation but as part of the contradiction between those who see

themselves as saints and those they demonize.

In the posting, the tone of his language changes and he takes on his interlocutors

with phrases such as "loud-mouthed critics who think they are too clean and

everyone else a fraud or a fool." In making another point he compares the refusal

of the former Senate President's refusal to seek re-election into the senate with

that of Brown the governor of California who later became the Mayor of Oakland.

In a swift change, he sorts of adopts a reconciliatory stance with the inclusion of

brothers and sisters before he calls for a collective change of ways in building the

nation. He cites a few examples of people who have contributed to nation building

and have moved on to other responsibilities.

The metaphor for nationhood comes up as that of a project.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 12:04:28 +0100

Post 16 name 12 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to no one in particular but referenced to name 7

This posting by its admission focuses on two issues: One has to do with

channelization of anger in order to gain entry to make changes and the other is the

self-adulation in regards of the defeat of term elongation for the former President

and its effect on the Senate as a collective. Including the role played by the former

President of Senate.

This contributor takes a differing position by laying priority on education of the

mind on the problems at hand. He does not think there is a need to locate entry

points into the system before change is effected. He does not subscribe to the

notion that it is only insiders within the government who can make changes.

As an aside he constructs a user profile of forum members and their self-reliance.

On the second issue of the role of the former Senate President, name 12 is of the

opinion that Nigerians would have devised other means of frustrating the term

elongation campaign for the President. He cites antecedents to buttress his point

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:30:24 +0000
Post 17 name 9 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7 with cordiality

The opening line in this posting introduces cordiality and an acknowledgement of

the brilliance in the responses. He introduces the AFRICOM issue into the

conversation and wanted to know the reason for the policy reversal by the

president. He explicitly states that his question is based on news coming from the

White House. As background information he insinuates that the Secretary to the

Federal Government is a member of the Board of the Council on Foreign

Relations (CFR). This membership to him presents a potential conflict of interest.

He also wanted to know how much of name7's contact and connections "define

the quality of policy paper" handed to his boss the Minister.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 08:21:39 -0600
Post 18 name 4 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to the collective

He asks for restrain in what he terms the canonization of name 7 "as an eloquent

rebel within the Nigerian government." He points attention to the contrast made

between the role of the former Chairman of the ruling party and those name 4

reframed as "'reckless' keyboard critics" who are in the diaspora.

According to this contributor there is a distinction between engagement by

participation and engagement by co-optation. He then frames questions based on

the differences he pointed out. He wanted to know if "those who have chosen to

stand aside to comment critically on the rot in the hope of triggering a public

backlash against the predatory politicians and/or instigating a mutually assured

destruction among them are less patriotic than those who have chosen to bring

about cosmetic changes from within the putrid system?"

 In his opinion, to each his choice and no need to defend the choices made. He

does not believe in mere exhortation about commitment to Nigeria if the

experience of what politicians are saying and doing is used as a yardstick.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:31:06 -0500
Post 19 name 8 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to the collective

This posting starts by supporting one of the prepositions made by name 7 for

generational and attitudinal shifts by younger Nigerian intellectuals in the

diaspora. This contribution alludes reasons to why those in the diaspora may be

"ultra-pessimists and vitriolic critics" of the government. Despite that he posits

that there is nothing wrong in deciding to effect changes from within the system.

He supports the assertion, and justifiably so, that those in the diaspora pride

themselves in condemning the Nigerian political class and leadership without

doing much as a collective to rescue the situation. This sense of cynicism he

observes is pervasive online and offline. He concludes that the situation requires

both critics and those willing to constructively engage from inside. An individual

can occupy both spaces he asserts.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:38:44 -0500
Post 20 name 16 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 4

This contributor starts by identifying herself as a fellow academic and scholar.

She then explicitly states her disagreement with 'Name 4's' position and that she

agrees with name 7's position. She gives a summary of the thread so far. In her

opinion 'Name 7' has eloquently defended himself and in the process revealed

some complexities of democratic politics that seem applicable universally. Again

attention is drawn to Nancy Pelosi of the United States House of Representatives.

A reading of the thread is made by this contributor. She observed the dichotomy

into academics versus policy practitioners and keyboard critics during the

discussion. She introduces the nationalist term but does not elaborate.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:51:46 EST
Post 21 name 15 turn 1
Summary of posting: Addressed to name 7

The contributor starts by stating his name and goes on to advice 'Name 7' on the nature of the forum his has been contributing to. He states in a questioning mode if 'Name 7' realizes that the records of this forum are in the public domain and can be reproduced at any time. He then goes further to ask for clarifications on some assertions he thought he made earlier. He wanted him to clarify his reference of the former Chairman of the ruling party as one of the charlatans. The other issue has to do with his expressing that Gani Fawehinmi supported his joining the Obasanjo government.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 16:58:54 +0000
Post 22 name 14 turn 1
Summary of posting: Addressed to name 8

This contributor commended 'Name 8' and goes ahead to pose a few questions. He wanted to know what can be done as a collective to rescue the country. He admits that some participants "are very pessimistic about Nigeria."He makes reference to" Segun Osoba, the Marxist historian" who is credited with the saying that "Nigeria is presently in the grip deepening [sic] crises. Unless very drastic measures are taken - collectively by majority of Nigerians - the future looks very bleak."

He avers that even the pessimists among them have not given up on Nigeria but they are only expressing "deep pains about the tragedy of [a] nation"

To buttress his position that the conditions have gone worse he retorts to history as guide and posits that the country was not as terrible as it presently is. He concludes by stating that what is going on at the seat of power is banditry.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 11:11:24 -0600
Post 23 name 4 turn 2
Summary of posting: Addressed to name 16

A direct quote from 'Name 16's' contribution starts this posting. He interprets the statement as a subtle way of wanting to gag him. He asserts that he will not be gagged. He insists that 'Name 7' cannot have the argument both ways. On the one hand, asking for understanding and on the other hand, denying those he labeled as reckless critics, a measure of understanding. The issue he avers is about shades of patriotism. According to name 4 the term should not be narrowly defined as participation and co-optation. On the same premise he adds the demarcation between "constructive criticism from supposedly destructive criticism." In his opinion all forms of criticisms have their value and must not be devalued.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 09:47:00 -0800 (PST)
Post 24 name 13 turn 1
Summary of posting: Addressed to the collective

Using satire this contributor makes the point half in jest and wholly serious that Nigeria needs educated Aides like 'Name 7'. He tells a story about a big boss , in the cast of a Head of State, who requests that an illegal extra-budgetary

transaction be made and the subordinate officer complied to the request. He ends

his narrative by comparing a person like 'Name 7' with the officer in the story.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 18:50:34 +0100
Post 25 name 12 turn 2
Summary of posting: Addressed to no one in particular

The posting reinforces what some of the contributors to the thread already

expressed. He makes the point that "critics are also contributors to national

development and not thieves and hangers-on."

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 10:39:34 -0800 (PST)
Post 26 name 11 turn 2
Summary of posting: Addressed in response to 'Name 16's' posting.

He takes issues with participation in government as an equivalent of patriotism

but aligns himself to a previous posting by 'Name 4'. The light-heartedness of

some contributions cannot be missed. Using a metaphor of marriage he submits

that the wedlock of patriotism and what he terms "insiderism" would not be

allowed. Names of a number of Internet pundits are freely used in this posting and

he says that the contributions of the individuals cannot be minimized in favor of

that of politicians. By his own admission the forum is a market place of ideas

where each participant, including government officials, must be subjected to the

same intellectual rigor and scrutiny.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 14:21:47 -0500
Post 27 name 10 turn 4

Summary of Posting: Addressed to name 15

This posting commences with a defense and clarification of 'Name 7's' position on the former Chairman of the ruling party. He explains the functions of the quotation marks that accompany the word charlatan and that 'Name 7' did not allude the labeling to himself. However on the other matter of gaining support from Gani Fewehinmi 'Name 10' submits "that is another matter entirely"

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 21:51:15 +0000
Post 28 name 9 turn 2
Summary of posting: Reaction to name 11's posting

The posting starts with an excerpt from 'Name 11's' posting about accountability. He disagrees and instead avers that 'Name 7' be held accountable for what he does in public office or does not do. He thinks the question should not be whether he can be a Special Assistant or not. A re-statement of what he thinks is the crux of the discourse is then provided as the preponderance of Aides in different guises and not the choice to serve or not. Apart from service an officer should also be queried on the basis of his integrity or lack thereof. For instance he wants to know about certain specific foreign policy and name7's contribution to such policy issues.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 17:41:27 -0500
Post 29 name 8 turn 2
Summary of posting: Address to name 14

Agreement with the point of view of another participant is not uncommon in this

thread. Here again name 8 agrees with an early posting by 'Name 14' that the

situation in Nigeria is dire and needs all hands on the plough to correct the

anomaly. He argues that most contributors "have perfected cynicism and criticism

to the point where any signs of expression of optimism are now as a misnomer."

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 15:47:18 -0800 (PST)
Post 30 name 7 turn 6
Summary of posting: Addressed to name 9

This posting is used to correct a few misunderstandings. Principal amongst which

is distinction between the role of the critics and the politician or policy adviser.

He agrees that all roles are important. In answering the question about AFRICOM

he instead elaborates on the collegial nature of government. He explains that there

are as many positions as there are advisers with each pushing their own

perspectives and viewpoints. But the eventual choice is made from contending

positions by the Minster. In his word "[d]ecision-making resembles war by other

means. Anyone who understands policymaking knows that it is about negotiation

and influence peddling. You try to move the principal to accept your episteme

rather than that of your rival. I was a member of the inter-ministerial committee

on AFRICOM and our position is as progressive as can be."

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 22:57:28 -0600

Post 31 name 6 turn 1

Summary of posting: Addressed to name 8

In reaction to the issue of critics and politician this posting disagrees and proceeds

to use his personal experience as a university teacher in Nigeria before

immigrating to the United States. The narrative paints a picture of the conditions

that forced some intellectuals out of the country. The decay and social

disintegration in the country has been progressive with each change of

administration. In his words "preaching "love thy country" is actually easier than

retaining the guts to be her consistent critic." He then takes a look at the business

of governance and posits that "[p]roductivity was not one of the goals behind the

concept of this evolved government political enterprise." He suggests that the best

way to help Nigeria is to say the truth about Nigeria without bothering about who

will be affected.

Date: Fri, 14 Dec 2007 21:40:15 -0800 (PST)
Post 32 name 5 turn 1
Summary of postings: To no one in particular

He agrees that the thread has thrown up revelations about the inner workings of

government through the lens of one of the intellectual actors. He brings up three

posers distilled from the contributions so far. He wants to know why 'Name 7'

chose to join the ruling party as opposed to his former mentor's party. He also

raised the issue of running for senate and the advice he gave his former boss?

As to where and when to get involved with the Nigeria project he offers his

opinion that each individual must freely choose his or her style.

Date: Sat, 15 Dec 2007 10:00:30 -0600
Post 33 name 4 turn 3
Summary of posting: Addressed to the collective but mentions name 5

Once again the division between those in the diaspora and those at home plays

out. There seem to be a division between those who return home and those who

do not. Continuous and commitment to Nigeria can be demonstrated in various

ways and insider-participation should not be unduly eulogized as the best form of

patriotism. He concludes by expressing that "rhetoric of sacrifice, patriotism, and

nationalism is just that: a self-serving justificatory rhetoric."

Date: Sat, 15 Dec 2007 17:45:02 +0100
Post 34 name 3 turn 1
Summary of posting: Addressed to the collective but 'Name 9' is mentioned

The concern of the posting is the nature of briefing the President is given on

foreign affairs any time he is out of the country. There have been a number of

gaffs by the President. As part of the conversation, this contributor sends a

message through a representative of government who is interacting informally.

Date: Sat, 15 Dec 2007 14:14:25 -0500

Post 35 name 8 turn 3

Summary of posting: Addressed to 'Name 4 and 'Name 6'

This posting is a reiteration of past positions in previous postings and an opportunity to clarify issues. He accepts that "critics have their place in the equation but so are those who chose to effect change from the 'inside' or 'outside'." This contributor now introduces other political actors outside of the political class. 'Common' people should not be left out of the equation of blame. He concludes that there are individuals within the system who should be applauded no matter how minuscule their contributions. He then ends with this suggestion."While [been] critical when appropriate, I will ultimately engage on the more constructive approach by looking for the good in everything. The earlier we begin to do this, the sooner we begin the long and arduous journey to nation-building.

Date: Sat, 15 Dec 2007 15:15:55 -0800 (PST)
Post 36 name 1 turn 1
Summary of posting: Addressed to 'Name3'

The issue of re-colonization of the country is the focus of this posting. It recaps the various diplomatic blunders of Nigeria's leadership. The call for foreign powers to help Nigeria in times of crisis appears to have historical roots as traced by this posting.

APPENDIX C

FULL STATEMENT OF USA AFRICA DIALOGUE

This series creates a Pan-Africanist intellectual community drawn all over the world to examine serious and current issues about Africa. The third in the series examines the issues of interactions between the United States and Africa. USA/Africa Dialogue, No. 1 spells out some of the core issues to be pursued.

Dear all:

I want to initiate another major Internet dialogue, similar to what I did in two instances, one over the book by Keith B. Richburg, *Out of Africa*, and another about the *Wonders of the Africa World* by H. Louis Gates. Both grew energetic and passionate, drawing the best minds, from graduate students to Nobel winners, from young professors to college presidents. They were also Pan-Africanist in nature, as scholars from all over the world became involved. In both cases, the exchanges fed some journals and books.

What I have in mind is to use the Bush presidency and the American elections to provoke a number of issues as they relate to Africa and African American issues. As with the previous dialogue, I simply raise the issues, and let people respond. I serve as the clearing house, which means that all comments come to me, and I circulate to others. This way, those that are highly insulting and personal are either edited or not circulated. Also, the wish of those who want to be removed from the list can be respected.

If you want me to add your friends to the list, simply give me their email addresses. You are also free to forward to others.

Do please allow me to begin with a preliminary comment, which is not to establish the parameters or indicate the topics of dialogue/debate, but simply to start the discussion.

Democracy

President Bush started his term with a contested election. Similar to what happened in Nigeria in 1979 when the court declared Shagari the winner, Bush came to the office largely because of the decision by the Supreme Court. The Nigerian court in 1979 said that the case cannot be cited as a precedent. The American Supreme Court said the same thing. Que: what does a contested elections mean, and why is there stability in one place and instability in another? Should we spend our energies on the rule of law and accountability instead?

<u>Religion</u>
Are we exaggerating the case of religious divide in Africa? In the USA, Sunday is the most segregated day of the week, with whites going to their own churches and Blacks to their own, and migrants have created their own places of worship. Now, under the Bush presidency, the rise of evangelical churches and their link with the Republican party has introduced something far more political. Traditionally, the role of the Church has been to use God and the power of the outer universe to bring people of different political persuasions together in one building. With the American church, especially in the South, now identifying with one party, what does this say about religion? Suppose I were a Democrat, can I go to a Church that asks me to vote for a Republican? How can we relate this to Nigeria, Sudan, Senegal and other places?

<u>Ethnicity</u>
When the Soviet Union collapsed and other crises followed, the academic world that had crucified ethnicity in Africa began a process of revision. Are we exaggerating the divisions in Africa? Are we, as intellectuals, unable to contribute to nation building? The divisions along racial and religious lines in the US are sharp but why is there greater stability there than in Africa?

<u>Development</u>
I have met many people who do not see corruption in the United States. This view can be contested, as they may not be using the same word for what Africans call corruptions. Americans don't use the word corruption to describe the activities of lobbyists, the behavior of Enron, the use of political influence to get contracts, things that we routinely describe as corruption in Africa and the literature. I have advanced an argument that in the US, corruption is privatized, and in Africa we democratize it.

<u>Comparison</u>
Should we even compare? Can we begin the analysis with models internal to Africa and use those, as some have argued? If comparison is inevitable, how do we go about it?

These are just a few issues to start the debate and people can respond.

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