

An Examination of The Applicability Of Samuel Huntington's Clash of Civilizations Thesis to Tiv-Jukun, Jos North-Jos South, Aguleri-Umuleri, and Ife-Modakeke Conflicts in Nigeria

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Abstract:

Internal conflicts continue to grow in Nigeria, despite scholarly studies that prescribe empirical solutions to their abatement. This study therefore examined conflict from the theoretical paradigm of Samuel Huntington's thesis with the aim of determining its applicability with identity-based conflicts in selected states such as Plateau, Anambra, and Osun States. To achieve this, objectives raised were to: i. analyse the tenets of Huntington's Clash of Civilisation thesis; ii. identify the dynamics of the major types of conflicts in Nigeria; iii. frame conflicts in Nigeria using Huntington's thesis as a paradigm; iv. assess the relevance of Huntington's 'Clash of Civilisations' thesis to selected contemporary identity conflicts in Nigeria; and v. examine how Huntington's thesis can be adequately used to mitigate contemporary identity conflicts in the study area. The study employed survey and descriptive research design, using such instruments as questionnaire, and interviews with a cross-section of 400 respondents from the localities mentioned above. It was found that, in spite of the fact that civilisation is a cultural entity, the fundamental avenue through which conflicts are and will be expressed in this new world and in Nigeria is not primarily ideological or mainly economic, but cultural, with the conflicts being both inter- and intra-civilisation. Also, more than 66.70% of the respondents (particularly among the academics interviewed) pointed out that identity-based conflicts in Africa and Nigeria predated the two world wars and the Cold War. An average of 86.56% of the respondents under the third research objective agreed with Huntington that the farther one goes from his sphere of affiliation, the wider his sphere of affiliation. This suggests that identity is, to a Nigerian, a strong psycho-social garment by which he defines himself or herself. Furthermore, inadequate social structures, resources,

corruption, and politics are the most important root causes of conflicts. These root causes often use identity-based conflicts fought along the lines of religion, ethnicity, culture, etc. as means of expression. Similarly, Huntington's thesis applied to specific identity conflicts in Nigeria, such as Ife-Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri, Jos North and South, and Tiv-Jukun conflicts. All four conflicts were resources based, except for Jos North, and Jos South that predated the Cold War era. Also, all four conflicts are identity-based. Finally, all four conflicts are protracted conflicts. Conclusively, identity plays an important role in relationships, conflicts, interactions, and transactions in Nigeria, and thus, Huntington's thesis applies to Nigeria, albeit in a restricted sense. Recommendations include that the Nigerian governments at various levels continue to deepen the incorporation of cultural awareness programs, incentivising cross-cultural marriages between different ethnicities, reducing the root causes of conflicts by strengthening systems and structures, and ensuring peacebuilding initiatives by training not only security forces in integrated socio-cultural mediation and arbitration mechanisms but also community leaders.

Keywords: Civilisation, Conflicts, Ethnicity, Identity, Post-Cold War, Religion

Introduction:

Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* expands on his 1993 Foreign Affairs article, proposing a post-Cold War world order where cultural distinctions, not ideological or economic, drive conflicts. He argues, "The most important distinctions among peoples are cultural" (Huntington, 1996, p. 21). Nigeria, with its 216 million people (World Population Review, 2022) and over 500 languages and 250 ethnic groups, epitomizes this cultural complexity.

High population density fosters competition, which can drive innovation but also leads to ethno-religious conflicts (Hendrikson, 2020). Distinct cultural and religious identities among Nigeria's major groups—Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo—amplify this reality, shaping governance and fueling identity-based conflicts (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). Corruption further deepens poverty and exacerbates tensions (Ogbeidi, 2012; Dike, 2005).

This research investigates the extent to which Huntington's thesis applies to Nigeria, focusing on the intersection of religion, ethnicity, and conflict, and seeks to predict future conflict patterns.

Theoretical Framework: The Origins And Evolution Of The 'Clash Of Civilizations'

The concept of a "clash of civilizations" was introduced by Bernard Lewis (1990), who argued that Islam and the West hold irreconcilable principles, gaining prominence after Huntington (1993) adapted and expanded the idea. Huntington posited that post-Cold War conflicts would arise from civilizational differences, with the West clashing with Islamic and Sinic civilizations. His thesis gained traction post-9/11, as events such as the 1993 World Trade Center attack and the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings were seen as evidence of civilizational conflict (Marsden, 2018; Haynes, 2017).

Huntington identified core civilizations—Western, Islamic, Sinic, Hindu, Orthodox, Latin American, Japanese, and possibly African—and argued that fault lines between these civilizations would drive conflicts. This perspective, though criticized as reductive (Marsden, 2018), has influenced policymakers globally, especially in right-wing populist movements (Haynes, 2018; Vorländer, Herold & Schaller, 2018).

A Summary Of Samuel Huntington's 'Clash Of Civilizations'

Huntington's thesis, outlined in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, proposes a world where cultural and civilizational differences, not ideology or economics, are the primary sources of conflict. Below are the key elements of his argument:

1. **Civilizations as Central Actors:**
 - Huntington argues that civilizations, defined by shared cultural traits like religion, language, and history, are the primary actors in global politics.
 - These civilizations transcend national boundaries, making them more enduring than nation-states or ideologies.
2. **Cultural Identity as a Conflict Source:**
 - Differences in cultural identity are deep-rooted and harder to reconcile than political or economic disputes.
 - These differences create lasting divisions between civilizations, driving both cohesion within and conflicts across cultural lines.
3. **The West Versus the Rest:**
 - The Western world, particularly the United States and Europe, faces increasing resistance as it seeks to maintain global dominance and promote its values of democracy, human rights, and individualism.
 - Islamic and Sinic civilizations are identified as key challengers, opposing Western influence and values.
4. **Fault Lines and Core States:**
 - Civilizational fault lines—such as those between Islamic and Christian societies—are flashpoints for conflict.
 - Core states, like the U.S. for the West and China for the Sinic civilization, are central in managing or intensifying these conflicts.
5. **Kin-Country Syndrome:**
 - Countries within the same civilization align with each other in conflicts against external civilizations.
 - For example, Islamic nations often rally behind one another when in conflict with non-Islamic states, as seen in their support for Palestine.
6. **Islamic and Sinic Challenges:**
 - Huntington highlights Islam's demographic growth and resurgence of religious identity as sources of cultural and political challenge.
 - Similarly, China's rapid economic and military expansion makes it a significant counterforce to Western dominance.

7. **Modernization Without Westernization:**
 - Non-Western civilizations, especially Islamic nations and China, seek economic and technological advancement while rejecting Western cultural and political norms.
 - This creates tensions, as the West often equates modernization with the adoption of its values.
8. **Religion as a Key Factor:**
 - Religion is a fundamental aspect of civilizational identity, with Huntington emphasizing the Christian-Islamic divide as a central axis of conflict.
 - Religious resurgence in non-Western civilizations strengthens cultural identities and fuels opposition to Western ideals.
9. **Erosion of Western Identity:**
 - Huntington criticizes multiculturalism in the West, particularly in the U.S., as weakening a unified cultural identity.
 - This fragmentation, he warns, could leave Western civilizations vulnerable in the face of external challenges.
10. **Global Realignment:**
 - Huntington predicts a realignment of global power along civilizational lines as Western dominance declines.
 - Alliances and conflicts will increasingly reflect cultural divisions rather than political ideologies or economic interests.

Additional Notes:

- **Core Civilizations:** Huntington identifies eight primary civilizations: Western, Sinic (Chinese), Japanese, Hindu, Islamic, Orthodox (Eastern European), Latin American, and possibly African.
- **Clash Hotspots:** Civilizational clashes are most evident along cultural fault lines, such as the borders between Islamic and Christian societies in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- **Post-Cold War Reality:** With the ideological battle between capitalism and

communism over, cultural and civilizational identities now dominate global politics.

- **Islam's "Bloody Borders":** Huntington controversially claimed that Islam's borders are "bloody," highlighting frequent conflicts between Muslim and non-Muslim states and within the Muslim world itself.
- **Western Overreach:** Huntington critiques Western efforts to impose its values globally, arguing that such attempts provoke resistance from other civilizations.

Constructivism:

Constructivism, introduced by Onuf (1989), posits that norms, shared ideas, and social interactions shape global structures, rejecting realism and liberalism. Wendt (1992) argued that social relationships define state behavior, exemplified by the differing perceptions of British and North Korean nuclear weapons (Sarina, 2018). Constructivists emphasize the fluidity of identities and argue that changes in beliefs can reshape relationships (Wendt, 1995). This theory aligns with Huntington's focus on identity and cultural conflicts, as both highlight the role of shared beliefs in global politics.

Part One: A World Of Civilizations:

To Begin His Argument, Huntington Refutes Past Paradigms That Have Been Ineffective In Explaining Or Predicting The Reality Of The Global Political Order. Marking His Semantics Were Words Such As "Civilization", "Culture", "Multipolar" And "Flags". The Latter Referred Much Less To Nation States And More To Socio-Cultural Boundaries Which Sometimes Exceed Nations. For Instance, We See Islam, Orthodox, West, Etc., As "Flags" Under Which Many Find Their Identity. In Describing Multi-Polarity, Huntington Explains That While The Cold War Was Bipolar In Nature, That Is, Between

The West And USSR, The Post-Cold War Era Does Not necessarily see an end to the cold war, rather, the war is transposed to be a cold struggle between several civilizations and the west. For him, these wars are not based on ideologies but on identities. "We need a map," Huntington says, "that both portrays reality and simplifies reality in a way that best serves our purposes" (31). Huntington develops a new "Civilization paradigm" to create a new understanding of the post-Cold War order, and to fill the gaps of the already existing paradigms. To begin with, Huntington divides the world into eight "major" civilizations:

1. Sinic: the common culture of China and Chinese communities in Southeast Asia. Includes Vietnam and Korea.
2. Japanese: Japanese culture as distinctively different from the rest of Asia.
3. Hindu: identified as the core Indian civilization.
4. Islamic: Originating on the Arabian Peninsula, spread across North Africa, Iberian Peninsula and Central Asia. Arab, Turkic, Persian and Malay are among the many distinct subdivisions within Islam.
5. Orthodox: centered in Russia. Separate from Western Christendom.
6. Western: centered in Europe and North America.
7. Latin American: Central and South American countries with a past of a

corporatist, authoritarian culture. Majority of countries are of a Catholic majority.

8. Africa: while the continent lacks a sense of a pan-African identity, Huntington claims that Africans are also increasingly developing a sense of African Identity.

Huntington's Classification Of Civilizations:

Huntington primarily adopted rather than created the classification of civilizations. The researcher critiques this framework as arbitrary, particularly the grouping of all African cultures into a single civilization while separating the Japanese from the Sinic civilization. Huntington's classification appears colonial, as it overlooks Africa's diverse cultures. He defines civilizations as the broadest form of human identification (Huntington, 1996, p. 40). However, the researcher argues that Huntington conflates "broadest" with "largest," suggesting that cultural identity varies in scale and context. For instance, a Tiv person identifying with the Bantu reflects the broadest cultural grouping for them, even if not large on a global scale.

Relations Among Civilizations:

Huntington explains that before 1500 A.D., civilizations were geographically separated, with cultural exchanges occurring over centuries. By 1500, advances in Western ocean navigation accelerated cultural expansion and domination. Twentieth-century relations, however, are marked by "multidirectional interactions," where civilizations influence each other (Huntington, 1996, p. 53). Huntington rejects Western cultural hegemony and the idea of a universal civilization, arguing that modernization increases global cultural similarities while reducing Western dominance.

Part II: The Shifting Balance Of Civilizations

Huntington argues that Western power is declining, characterized by:

1. Slow Decline: The process is gradual and not an immediate threat.

2. Nonlinear Decline: Decline may pause, reverse, or accelerate depending on decisions by those in power.

3. Importance of Leadership: States' power depends on their leaders' behavior and decisions.

He highlights the resurgence of religion in global politics, filling the void left by the decline of political ideologies. Religion now provides identity, community, and moral guidance, as seen in both Islamic and Christian societies.

Economics, Demography, And Challenger Civilizations

Huntington explores the rise of non-Western powers, such as Japan, the Four Tigers (Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore), and China, which have achieved economic success without adopting Western cultural values. This supports his claim that modernization does not equate to Westernization.

In contrast, Islamic societies assert their cultural identity through a resurgence of religion. Factors such as economic failures, youthful populations, and authoritarian governance have fueled the rise of Islam as a political and cultural force (Huntington, 1996, p. 110).

Part III: The Emerging Order Of Civilizations:

In the post-Cold War world, civilizations now align based on cultural commonalities like ancestry, religion, and values. Regional organizations such as ASEAN, the EU, and NAFTA reflect this trend. Huntington describes "torn countries" (e.g., Russia, Turkey, and Mexico) as nations struggling to align with a specific civilization.

Core states, such as France and Germany for the EU, dominate within their civilizations. Huntington argues that the Islamic world lacks a core state, hindering its ability to modernize and develop cohesively.

Part IV: Clashes Of Civilizations:

Huntington emphasizes the need for the West to retain its power by exploiting divisions among non-Western civilizations, promoting Western values, and limiting non-Western immigration. He identifies three areas of conflict between the West and non-Western civilizations:

1. **Military Superiority:** Preventing emerging powers from challenging the West.
2. **Promotion of Values:** Universalizing democracy and human rights.
3. **Restricting Immigration:** Limiting non-Western immigrants into Western societies.

Huntington predicts small fault-line wars, such as those between Islam and the West, and potential inter-civilizational wars involving core states like the U.S. and China.

Islam and the West

Huntington outlines the historical and ongoing tensions between Islam and Christianity, identifying five factors exacerbating their conflicts:

1. Rapid Muslim population growth, creating dissatisfied youth susceptible to radicalization.
2. Resurgence of Islam, reaffirming its relevance and resisting other religions.
3. Western universalism, seen as imposing values and military dominance.
4. Absence of communism, positioning Islam as the West's new rival.
5. Increased communication, highlighting perceived cultural differences (Huntington, 1996, p. 211).

Asia, China, and America

Economic development in Asia and China has led to heightened tensions with America. Huntington predicts that the economic successes of East Asian nations and China's growing military strength could lead to major global conflicts, intensified by alliances between Islamic and Sinic civilizations. He cites the Soviet-Afghan war and the First Gulf War as early examples of civilization-based conflicts.

- **Soviet-Afghan War:** Marked as the first successful resistance by the Islamic world against a foreign power, boosting Islamic confidence and fostering anti-Western coalitions (Huntington, 1996, p. 247).
- **First Gulf War:** A Muslim conflict opposed by non-Westerners but supported by the West. Islamic fundamentalist groups viewed it as a war against their civilization by Western "Crusaders and Zionists" (Huntington, 1996, p. 249).

Fault Line Conflicts

Huntington describes fault line conflicts as:

- Communal conflicts between civilizations.
- Rooted in religious differences.
- Prolonged, violent, and identity-based.
- Often financed by diaspora communities.
- Rarely resolved permanently without third-party intervention.

Part V: The Future of Civilizations

Huntington examines external and internal challenges to Western dominance:

- **External Challenges:** Emerging non-Western cultural identities.
- **Internal Challenges:** Erosion of Western values, principles, and beliefs.

He warns against Western complacency and advocates for the renewal of Western identity to maintain global influence. Huntington predicts that the clash of civilizations poses the greatest

threat to world peace and stability (Huntington, 1996, p. 321).

Critique of Huntington's Thesis

The researcher critiques Huntington's focus on conflict rather than harmony among civilizations. Key points include:

- The difficulty of defining civilizations due to their inherent heterogeneity.
- Huntington's framework, influenced by Western perspectives, may oversimplify cultural dynamics.
- Identity-based conflicts are significant but cannot fully encapsulate the complex interplay of civilizations.

The Post-Cold War Multipolar World

Huntington's thesis argues that the post-Cold War world is becoming multipolar, defined by competing civilizations rather than nation-states. Civilizational commonality, shaped by ethnicity, religion, history, and values, drives global alignments and conflicts.

- **Decline of Nation-States:** Huntington argues that nation-states are losing relevance as civilizations provide stronger cultural identities.
- **Western Decline:** The West faces challenges from the economic rise of Asia, the demographic surge in Islam, and non-Western cultural resurgence.

Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Nigeria

The link between religion and ethnicity is a key driver of conflict in Nigeria. Obasi (2008) highlights how deviations in religious practice, often supported by elites, fuel violence. Radical Islamist groups like Boko Haram aim to establish a theocratic state governed by Sharia law. Sectarian clashes between Sunni and Shiite Muslims, as well as Christian-Muslim conflicts, underscore the deep divisions within Nigeria (Adesoji, 2010; Elavgwu, 2005).

Modernization Without Westernization

Huntington distinguishes between modernization and Westernization, emphasizing that non-Western civilizations—such as Islamic and Sinic cultures—can modernize while rejecting Western cultural values. This has led to a rise in cultural identity and power in non-Western societies.

Civilizational Alliances and Conflicts

Huntington predicts potential alliances between Islamic and Sinic civilizations against the West, driven by cultural commonalities. He warns of increasing global polarization between Western and non-Western civilizations.

- **Core Civilizations:** Huntington identifies eight major civilizations: Western, Confucian (Sinic), Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Orthodox, Latin American, and African.
- **Cultural Identity as Unifying Force:** Shared cultural heritage fosters stronger bonds than nation-states.

Identity, Conflicts, and Political Mobilization

Identity plays a crucial role in shaping affiliations and conflicts. Using an analogy, the further a Yoruba individual travels from home, the broader their sphere of affiliation becomes, highlighting identity's evolving scope. This dynamic often exacerbates conflict and aligns with Huntington's theory.

Religion is a major factor in Nigeria's identity and conflict, with the nation split between a predominantly Christian south and Muslim north. Historical events, such as the Jihad, the Shariah law debate, and Nigeria's membership in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have contributed to tensions. Religious radicalism, exemplified by groups like Boko Haram, further escalates conflicts. Boko Haram seeks to overthrow Nigeria's Western-influenced state and enforce Sharia law, reflecting a clash between Islamic and Western civilizations.

The Clash of Civilizations Framework

Huntington's thesis posits that post-Cold War conflicts would center on cultural and civilizational divides rather than ideology or economics. He classifies the world into eight civilizations: Western, Islamic, Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Orthodox, Latin American, and African. While Huntington's framework has been critiqued for oversimplifying identity, it highlights the role of culture in shaping global conflicts.

Conflicts Under Review

Aguleri–Umuleri Conflict

This conflict, rooted in land disputes, has persisted for over a century between the Aguleri and Umuleri communities in Anambra State, Nigeria.

- **Causes:** Contestation over land ownership, historical grievances, and resource competition (Okolie-Osemene, 2015).
- **Key Events:** Violent clashes in 1995 and 1999 necessitated military intervention (Nnam, 2018).
- **Resolution Efforts:** Government mediation, court rulings, and peace talks have been attempted, but sporadic violence persists.

Ife–Modakeke Conflict

A long-standing dispute between Ife and Modakeke communities in Osun State, this conflict stems from issues of land tenure and identity.

- **Causes:** Historical grievances, political exclusion, and land disputes (Akinwale, 2017).
- **Key Events:** Major clashes in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in over 5,000 deaths (Akinwotu, 2019).
- **Resolution Efforts:** Government dialogues and community reconciliation have reduced tensions but failed to address underlying grievances.

Jos North–Jos South Conflict

This ethnic and religious conflict in Plateau State involves indigenous groups (Berom, Afizere, and Anaguta) and settler communities (Hausa-Fulani).

- **Causes:** Competition over resources, political power, and land (Ostien, 2015).
- **Key Events:** Major outbreaks in 2001, 2008, and 2010 resulted in significant casualties.
- **Resolution Efforts:** Interfaith dialogues and government peace initiatives have achieved limited success (Mang, 2020).

Tiv–Jukun Conflict

This inter-ethnic conflict between the Tiv and Jukun communities in North-central Nigeria centers on issues of land and political representation.

- **Causes:** Competition over resources, ethnic animosities, and citizenship disputes (Ortar, 2018).
- **Key Events:** Notable violence occurred in 1991, 2001, and 2019, displacing communities and causing over 1,200 deaths (Uji, 2020).
- **Resolution Efforts:** Peace agreements and government interventions have had limited success due to entrenched grievances.

Conclusion

Identity, religion, and cultural affiliations are key drivers of conflict in Nigeria. Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* framework offers a lens to understand these conflicts but oversimplifies the complexity of identity and culture. A nuanced approach that considers Nigeria's unique historical and cultural contexts is essential for sustainable conflict resolution.

An Examination of the Applicability of Huntington's Clash of Civilizations Thesis to Identified Conflicts in Nigeria:

The researchers conducted a research to determine the applicability of Huntington's

thesis to selected conflicts in Nigeria. Below are the results as identified and analysed.

Dynamics of Major Conflicts Contemporary to Nigeria: From the findings an overwhelming average of 82.40% of respondents both strongly agreed or agreed with Samuel Huntington's definition of civilisation as a cultural entity. Specifically, they agreed with Huntington's definition of civilization as the broadest classification of identities. Before the deployment of the questionnaires, the researcher took time to discuss the key tenets of Huntington's propositions on the clash of civilisations focusing first on the global perspective, and then the Nigerian context. The findings suggest an overwhelming consensus that a civilization is a cultural entity; the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic, but cultural. More than 66.70% of the respondents (particularly among the academics interviewed) pointed out that identity based conflicts in Africa and Nigeria far predated the two world wars and the cold war. For them, the only point sticking out of the puzzle in the 'Huntingtonian' thesis was the 'post-cold war' variable – since most identity-based conflicts pre-dated the cold war itself. Another slight departure from Huntington's paradigm is the variable of identity. The respondents argued for intra-civilisational conflicts, not only inter-civilisational ones as Huntington proposed. For them, identity plays the greatest role in civilisational conflicts, or better put, what

Huntington called “clash of civilisations” are better known as “identity-based” conflicts. Under the latter, conflicts within sister tribes or kinsmen can be prevalent as they are in Africa and Nigeria, but not based on ideologies.

The respondents generally agreed that nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations; conflict between civilizations will be the latest phase in the evolution of conflict in the modern world on the global scene, but as pointed out earlier, this has already remained a reality for Sub-Saharan Africa and for Nigeria mostly.

For the respondents, while it is true that culture and religion also form the basis of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which brings together ten non-Arab Muslim countries, similar socio-cultural set-ups were constituted in the past: for instance, The defunct USSR. 14.70% further argued that alliances will be forged for security and economic gains by nations of similar organizations, even though they may not be tightly constituted as the Arab Muslim countries. This can be seen in NATO, BRICS.

Framing Conflicts in Nigeria Based on Huntington’s Theses as Paradigms: The previous research objective focused on the global scene. The research also focused on the local context – Nigeria. With an average of 86.56%, the majority of respondents agreed with Huntington

that the farther one moves away from his home or base of identity, the wider the sphere of his affiliation. This suggests that identity is, to a Nigerian, a strong psycho-social garment by which he defines himself or herself. This probably shows that these interactions among peoples of different ethnicities in Nigeria (or civilizations by Huntington’s broad definition) enhance the civilization-consciousness of people that, in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep into history.

The findings also suggest strongly that interactions between Nigerians of different identities are increasing through trade, education, technology, music and entertainment; these increasing interactions intensify civilization consciousness and awareness of differences between cultures and commonalities within civilizations. As such, the most important medium of expression of conflicts in Nigeria is ethnicity and culture. Here, mostly the academics, peace ambassadors and NGO officials amongst the respondents were quick to point that there are other important sources of conflict such as politics, economics, human rights, corruption, etc. In fact, some argued that in tracing the root causes of most conflicts, the most important causes are related to inadequate social structures, resources, corruption, and politics. This is especially highlighted and emphasized by Osaghae (2005). These root causes often use identity-based conflicts (fought

along the lines of religion, ethnicity, culture, etc.) as means of expression. Thus, one would experience a religious pogrom by a religious group carried out against another religious group, fueled by a politician for political gains. We will pick this up later in the next chapter and explore the extent to which this could be abated.

In effect, most respondents agree unanimously that religious conflicts are the most devastating in Nigeria, though not often the root causes of conflicts but rather the means of expression or tools. This suggests the importance of identity in a culturally-laden heterogeneous context such as Nigeria. This is also suggestive of the reason Nigerians may not rally together against corruption or bad leadership, but will fight to preserve an identity. As such, any poison served in one's religion, culture or tribe tastes the sweetest.

The Relevance or Applicability of Huntington's Thesis to Selected Contemporary Identity Conflicts in Nigeria: This sub-section measures the direct applicability of Samuel Huntington's thesis to Nigeria from the perspectives of diverse respondents. The survey shows about 87.61% agreeing that civilizations are differentiated from each other by history, language, culture, tradition and, most important, religion. This means that Huntington's 'Clash of Civilization' applies to Nigeria to a great extent. Some respondents explained that the many ethnicities within Nigeria can be likened to 'micro-civilisations' which are substantially distinct

from one another. They believed that there are distinctions between the different ethnicities' views on variables such as God and man, citizen and State, Parents and Children, husband and wife, in short, different value systems. Some went on to explain that these views are part of the reason achieving a truly united Nigeria may be impossible. This is, for the researcher, the point where the theory of Constructivism as highlighted in Chapter two would work for a highly heterogeneous country like Nigeria. It is more pertinent to be united by similar value systems than to be disunited by them.

Thus, this is a more potent framework which dismantles Realism (which places so much importance on the anarchic nature of the state). A few respondents argued rather, that systems would supersede values even when the values are unified. In countries like Peru, Uganda, DR Congo, Liberia, Madagascar, Cameroon, Chad, etc., with an average of 86% – 90% diverse based on ethnic, religious and linguistic fractionalization, and which are almost as diverse as Nigeria, one would see a relatively more unified and better structure. As such, they stick to a Structuralist theory as the panacea to Nigeria's seemingly 'dysfunctional' diversity. For the researcher, there is no single framework (taken alone) which may work for a complex country like Nigeria. Structuralism, Functionalism and Constructivism are systems which could be forged into a synthesis especially for countries like Nigeria that could be divided

by many fundamental values and beliefs including life and death, but would be united by things as 'trivial' as entertainment and sports. Many of respondents were not sure if the processes of economic modernization and social change in Nigeria separate people from longstanding local identities and affiliations. For some respondents, this stems from the fact that economic modernization does not logically and simply change one's outlook to life nor his identity. An economically viable Lagos does not make it any less a "Yoruba-dominated" state laden with south-western Nigeria's value system. For others however, economic viability would, in great length, reduce the likelihood that conflicts would occur in certain developed cities. More research on this variable could break the tie on the differing opinions.

In line with our expectations and with Osaghae and Suberu (2005), most respondents agreed with the fact that differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence. However, over the centuries, differences among the micro-civilizations within Nigeria have generated the most prolonged and the most violent conflicts in Nigeria which often seem to be protracted and less easily resolved than political and economic ones. For this reason, some conflicts which pre-dated pre-colonial times may still fester in many forms and intensity such as Ife-Modakeke, Aguleri-Umuleri conflicts. We will discuss these conflicts in greater detail shortly. There was also

a stark division among the respondents on the question that culture and religion also form the basis of the Economic Cooperation Organization, which brings together Nigerians with same identity. The reason for this division is that for a heterogeneous nation like Nigeria it may be tricky and difficult for religion and culture to form the basis for Economic Cooperation Organization. In fact, for some dissenting respondents, the recurrent question was, 'what specific culture would form the basis for the economic cooperation?' We will discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter to proffer viable solutions.

Another point which this study uncovers is the relationship between socio-cultural and religious expressions in Africa and Nigeria and the nature of their conflicts when compared to the other civilizations. While conducting some snowballed KIIs, some respondents, particularly scholars in the field of History and Political Philosophy explained that Sub-Saharan African communities relied more on oral tradition than written history as practiced in the West. When it comes to communications, most other civilizations used direct communication with a focus on clarity, content and meaning, most African communities communicated indirectly with a focus on harmony and relationship. Time and strategy (long-term planning) were priorities for the Western civilizations while responsiveness, and flexibility were priorities for most African cultures. These are important in

understanding the nature of conflicts in Nigeria which stems from the cultural expressions. This implied granulated understanding and affiliation rather than a unification of values for most Nigeria and African cultures. This granulated distinction of cultures created a deep-seated “us-versus-them” form of identity, long preceding Huntington’s prediction. In the next sub-section, we will discuss the applicability of Huntington’s thesis in the light of four identity popular conflicts in Nigeria: Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, Ife-Modakeke Conflicts, Tiv-Jukun Crisis, and Jos North-Jos South conflicts.

Identity Conflicts in Nigeria: While still discussed under the fourth research question, this research would not be complete without a concrete test of the thesis against some Nigerian conflicts. This sub-section therefore considers some select Nigerian conflicts to measure against the ‘Huntingtonian’ thesis to ascertain its viability in the Nigerian context. The findings are interesting.

The researchers attempted to determine that the root cause of the Aguleri-Umuleri conflict and the responses were as anticipated. An interesting average of 92% of respondents agreed that the Aguleri-Umuleri conflict was fought along the lines of identity, even though the root cause of the conflict was on resources (land). A numerical preponderance of the respondents on this conflict believed that the socio-cultural differences which exacerbated this conflict still exists till today. This conflict features

communities which are united along the lines of religion, values and culture, but separated by ancestry and heritage, but still managed to maintain a protracted feud over a piece of land. To the researcher, this shows the extent to which people are willing to go when it comes to defending that which they regard as their identity.

The Ife-Modakeke Conflict: This conflict is a particularly interesting one because it long predates the two world wars and the cold war. As such, it loosely applies to Samuel Huntington’s categorization as to the identity-based or civilizational conflicts. According to Joseph Toriola (2001), The conflicts between Ife-Modakeke took off from mid-19th century and are many and varied: the two bloody battles of 1849, the communal war of December 1882, the conflict over selection of Imam by the Modakeke in 1934, the Isakole (Land Rent) dispute of 1946 – 47, the confrontation over the reception of a British parliamentarian (Rev. Sorenson) in January 1949, the conflict over the establishment of Modakeke High School, the conflict over the establishment of Olorunsogo Plank Market, the opposition to self-help development projects by a Fund Raising activity of Modakeke in 1980, and the request for a separate Local Government Council with began in 1950s.

The survey shows more than 94% of respondents believing that this was fought along the lines of identity. Even more is the fact that

the root causes of this division still subsists till today. 83% of respondents believed also that the conflicts would have been addressed reasonably if proper social structures, good governance, and community-led arbitration schemes were promoted. The findings suggest that the Ife-Modakeke fits into Huntington's intra-civilizational conflicts which is also evident in the case of Aguleri-Umuleri conflict highlighted above. However, the conflict had nothing to do with Huntington's timing – the post-cold war. For them, this reality had subsisted in Nigeria since medieval, modern and contemporary times.

Jos-North and Jos South: Esther Nyam (2017) reports that the conflicts in Jos are struggle over political, social, economic, religious and ethnic, with great effects on residential, worship places, intergroup relationships leading in new trends of community polarities. This paper found out that peace building, public enlightenment, advocacies, addressing segregated settlement are possible solutions. Our investigation revealed that 88% of respondents agreed on the ethnic undertones of the Jos North-Jos South Crisis. A community leader in a Semi-Structured Interview observed:

It seems we are heading towards a state –where most of [our] ethnic identity, qualifications are secondary when it comes to employment, admission into higher institutions of learning and even elections or appointment into executive offices, where your ethnic identity stands [are] far more important; the

certificate of “belongingness” is your qualification (Survey Report, 2024).

The assertion above was further echoed by a religious leader who stated, “The hi-tech, ethnic chauvinism done today is more than the primitive age “public offices are becoming ethnic enclaves where office holders surround themselves with their ethnic people and the use of their dialects in official transactions, dominate discussions in public places” (Survey Report, 2024). The findings indicated that ethnicity was mostly held within religious cleavages in Jos. This was also echoed by McGarvey (2009), in that the majority of the non-Muslim ethnic groups in the North were Christians, whereas the Muslims were usually Hausa-Fulani. The differentiation is the fact that there is no difference between religious and ethnic allegiance. Inter-ethnic problems usually ended up being inter-religious ones in the sense that whenever there was a quarrel between a non-Hausa and a Hausa, both looked to their religion for support. What may have begun as a tribal misunderstanding ended up with a religious dimension (McGarvey, 2009).

The findings indicated that ethnicity is mostly tied to religious cleavages in Jos. It looks coincidentally surprising that the 20% Hausa/Fulani, from the responses, were all Muslims while the Afizere, Anaguta, Berom and others constituted the Christian majority. The problem of the indigene-settlers' dichotomy came out very strongly in all the various

segments of the data findings. A respondent explained, "It all started when Frank Taddi was elected the Chairman of Jos North LGA in 1999. He declared that any person in Jos who was not Afizere, Anaguta or Berom was not an indigene of Jos and should not be entitled to the certificate of origin because they were settlers." Since then, the minority has always fought to maintain dominance in Jos North and South.

Tiv-Jukun Conflict: Just like the Ife-Modakeke crisis, the Tiv-Jukun crisis predates Samuel Huntington's timing of the eruption of civilizational conflicts – the post-cold war era. Historians peg this conflicts to the mid-19th century (precisely 1860). 84.01% agreed that this has remained an ethnic crisis with occasional outbreaks which took place even till 2021-2022. For most interviewed responding residents, the presence of armed security operatives has quelled the conflicts, but they fear that the underlying source of the conflicts have yet to be resolved.

A report in Agenzia Fides (2023) explained that the conflict between the Tiv and Jukun peoples is just one of many ongoing land conflicts in various parts of Nigeria, some of which date back to British colonization. It is probably the oldest conflict in Nigeria, as some studies suggest it dates back to the 1860s. Mr Lawrence, a respondent and lecturer in Taraba State University further explained that historically, the Jukun were the first settlers in Wukari, while the Tiv are viewed by them as immigrants who have

no right to live in Wukari. However, the two peoples used to maintain a friendly relationship that lasted for centuries. During the colonial period, the British assigned Wukari to the Jukuns at the expense of the Tivs.

As a result of this decision, the Tivs denied their rivals' claims to exclusive ownership of the land and, among other things, rejected the Jukuns' customary procedures for the distribution of land rights by their traditional chiefs. In 1959, on the eve of Nigeria's independence from the United Kingdom, the conflict also broke out in the House of Representatives in Lagos following the victory of a Tiv against a Jukun representing the Wukari Federation. Since then, the conflicts between the ethnic groups have been intertwined with political maneuvers for the control of the government of Taraba State and for the federal elections. The most violent episodes were recorded in 1959, 1964, 1976, 1990-1992, but the conflict reached its peak between 2000 and 2001, resulting in loss of life and property, including the displacement of several thousand people from Wukari. There have been further recent outbreaks of violence since 2019.

Summary and Conclusion:

Despite the debate sparked by Samuel Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" thesis on global politics and cultural conflict dynamics, its relevance in diverse contexts like Nigeria remained underexplored. This research investigated the application of Huntington's theory as it applies to Nigeria's complex socio-

political landscape, shaped by ethnic, religious, and regional diversity, examining historical narratives, current events, and stakeholder perspectives to understand potential civilizational clashes.

Nigeria's socio-cultural heterogeneity is evident in identity-based conflicts, such as the conflicts between Tiv-Jukun conflict, Ife-Modakeke conflict, Jos North-Jos South conflict, Umueri-Aguleri conflict and the Biafra secessionist movement and ongoing regional and religious clashes in places like Southern Kaduna, illustrating struggles for resource control and identity among various groups. This research has clearly demonstrated that most conflicts in Nigeria are fought along ethno-religious lines. The root causes of the conflicts however, may not be always pinned to the socio-cultural divides, but to other factors such as resource control, political, socio-cultural, economic, etc. The ethno-religious conflicts are merely modes of expression.

Huntington's theory posits that future global conflicts will be cultural rather than ideological or economic, centered on civilizational fault lines. Scholars have debated its applicability, particularly regarding Islam and the West. In Nigeria however, we have seen in this research that though civilizational clashes are replete, they have little to do with the post-cold war.

This study built on Huntington's ideas, suggesting that many Nigerian conflicts are mainly expressed through identity and ethnicity

rather than ideology. Despite critiques for oversimplification, Huntington argued that cultural differences would define future global politics, influencing both academics and policymakers.

Some authors in this research have argued that Huntington's reasoning, while compelling, is too linear, too simplistic, and insufficient to explain conflicts in the new world order, according to this study. "Culture and cultural identities, which are civilizational identities at their broadest level," he claims, "are creating patterns of cohesion, dissolution, and conflict in the post-Cold War era" (Huntington 1996). He did not, however, provide a quantitative study of the argument. He solely gave case studies and provided qualitative analysis as a back-up. Many studies, including this one, have been carried out in response to his clash of civilizations concept, with post-Cold War hostilities being quantitatively evaluated. Many of the researchers have found varying degrees of evidence backing Huntington's postulation. This study's findings show that when it comes to definition, Huntington may have been correct to have describe 'civilization' as the broadest classification by which people define themselves. However, 'broadest' is not the same concept or share replicable meaning as largest. For instance, the Nigerian scholarship may view the Yoruba nation as a belonging to the larger Bantu group of tribes. And this, for them represents 'broadest' classification or otherwise

known as civilization. But this does not fit into the Huntington's classification of civilization where Africa managed to be classified as a single civilization.

I agree with Suberu (2005) who reports that the absence of vehicles of social control that were characteristic of traditional African societies, such as kinship, religious and political systems concerned with the well-being of the community, has led to the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts. The failure of these institutions is partly to blame for the ethnic and communal conflicts witnessed in Nigeria today. Broken families and the inability to make ends meet in many homes have led to an increase in the level of immorality while at the same time providing a reservoir of youths who readily take up arms to execute ethno-religious conflicts at a fee.

Identity theories in international relations highlight the importance of collective identities in shaping state behaviors as presented in Constructivism, complementing Huntington's thesis in nuanced ways. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed with statements regarding civilization as a cultural entity across multiple questions, with mean scores indicating strong agreement in most cases. For instance, a majority strongly agreed or agreed with statements such as cultural characteristics being less mutable than political and economic factors.

The majority of respondents expressed strong agreement with statements regarding the dynamics of major conflicts in contemporary Nigeria, indicating a significant consensus on issues related to conflict intensity and underlying factors like religious and ethnic tensions.

Huntington's thesis on civilization and identity conflicts received strong support from respondents, with a high percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing across questions. This suggests a perceived relevance of Huntington's ideas to understanding and addressing identity-based conflicts in Nigeria. Regression analyses revealed significant relationships between variables such as Conflict Type (religious, cultural, social, ethnic) and conflict dynamics, indicating that these variables account for a substantial variation in conflict intensity ($R^2 = 0.62$). Similarly, the application of Huntington's thesis showed significant predictive power in explaining the relevance and mitigation of identity conflicts in Nigeria.

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the applicability of Samuel Huntington's clash of civilization thesis as a paradigm to contemporary conflicts, with emphasis on Nigeria's conflict. So far, this research has made some important findings. First, we had, in the book review exhaustively presented in Chapter 4, presented the basic tenets in Huntington's thesis, but also underscoring its weak points. The researcher

highlighted that Huntington's thesis was more of an academic prophecy than a scientific scholarship. This is largely due to the fact that Huntington relied heavily on extrapolation from secondary sources and the context of the post-cold war era. On the global scene, therefore, major global or globalized conflicts were fought along ideological lines, but since this was going out of fashion with the cold war, a new trajectory was to be presented. Civilization for him was the broadest form of categorization, but this, for the researcher is rather simplistic and thus, weak. The reason, as highlighted earlier, is because 'broad' was often mistaken for 'large'. If then, this is to be considered on any merit, there are many more civilizations going beyond the eight major civilizations as identified by Huntington. On the contemporary scene, Huntington may have been correct if he is to be assessed by the lens of current major crises: Russia and Ukraine, Israel and Palestine, Israel and Hamas, etc. starting with the Russian war, Global identities have been shifting at an unprecedented rate since the first World War. On this ground, Huntington was correct after all, but not based on any scientific measure which he employs in his argument, but by sheer extrapolation (intelligent guess). The chasm between the civilizations is widening along economic lines with Russia leading the charge to dismantle the economic superpower that the West had wielded only too long, while the Israel battles along the rugged religious lines against Islamic hegemonies seeking to weaken it or

dislodge its stranglehold on the Israeli nation (also perhaps because Israel represents the ideals of the West as its religious origin).

We have also seen how the responses on Objectives 2 – 4 addressed the Huntingtonian thesis with a focus on Nigeria. First, the research points unequivocally to the fact that there is a strong link between Huntington's thesis of ethno-religious divides as the lines along which conflicts are to be fought. Huntington's focus on the West and his desire to see America maintain its dominance on the global scene inadvertently blinded him to the relationship his thesis has on other parts of the world – Nigeria for instance. Nigeria, a notoriously heterogeneous nation has had pre and post-colonial wars and conflicts fought mostly along ethno-religious lines.

We have seen how the study found that Huntington's thesis could provide a valuable framework for understanding contemporary identity conflicts. The responses regarding the concept of civilization as a cultural entity suggest a strong agreement among participants that distinct cultures exist at various levels of cultural heterogeneity. The analysis of major types of conflicts in Nigeria demonstrates that a substantial majority of respondents agree with the dynamics of these conflicts, emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural differences in conflict resolution. Additionally, the relevance of Huntington's thesis to contemporary identity conflicts in Nigeria is affirmed by the significant agreement among

respondents, indicating the applicability of his ideas in understanding and mitigating these conflicts.

Furthermore, statistical analyses show that the type of conflict in Nigeria significantly predicts conflict dynamics, and the application of Huntington's thesis has a meaningful impact on mitigating identity conflicts. Thus, Huntington's thesis provides a valuable framework for analyzing and addressing contemporary identity conflicts in Nigeria, highlighting the enduring influence of cultural and civilizational differences in shaping conflict dynamics.

The research determined that unlike Huntington's prediction that this is to proliferate from the Cold War, it was already a festering reality in Africa and in Nigeria. In addition, we must reiterate the fact that the ethno-religious conflicts fought in Nigeria are often not the root causes of the conflicts but merely its mode of expression. They are symptomatic of deeper issues such as weak social structures and systems, corruption, politics, scarce resources, amongst others. Ethno-religious conflicts are rather easily roused in Nigeria partly because the country, as argued by Akinwale (2017), we lack a uniting ideal, social values that bind us as one. Nigeria is mostly joined by a constitution designed from colonial times with a lot of unresolved differences which are often weaponized. A well-defined value system, presence of social structures, enforcement of the principles of justice, equity and fairness, and

equitable administration, management and distribution of resources are some of the pillars which could ensure that cracks along ethnic lines do not yawn even deeper and are not weaponized.

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