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Empire, Then and Now: Examining Imperial History in Nigeria with a Game-Theoretic Framework

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Introduction

The fields of political science, gender studies, ethnic studies, international relations, economics, and sociology are rife with varying and often conflicting understandings of imperialism. Well-regarded works from each of these fields argue that imperialism is over but its effects remain, or that it continues today the same way it always has. It is generally understood that imperialism and imperialist history have shaped the development of the Global South and presented challenges to it today. However, the origins, solutions, and even natures of these problems are a continued source of debate. In order to conceptualize meaningful anti-imperialist work in all of the aforementioned disciplines, we need to ask ourselves; how can we accurately understand the historical development and current nature of imperialism?

To answer this question, this paper uses an interdisciplinary approach within a game theoretic framework. It argues that imperialism can be divided into four eras, defined by the interactions of three groups: an imperialist, an in-power local group, and an out-power local group. These groups are not necessarily continuous across time but will instead change given the motivations of these actors. It further argues that the nature of imperialism today traces back to the legacy of each of the previous three eras as well as the active mechanisms of the fourth. To evaluate this framework, it uses the case of Nigeria– examining the country's history and illustrating the causes for major shifts in imperialist relationships between Britain and other Western powers and local groups within Nigeria such as the Hausa, Fulani, Igbo, Yoruba, and Ijaw.

An historical analysis is necessary to draw direct connections between past imperialist actions and today's Nigeria. The case of Nigeria will show that in today's society, various aspects of development challenges can be tied to different historical eras of imperialism. The first era– prior to exogenous physical ownership of the land– was critical in defining the ethno-religious geography of Nigeria and also various degrees of erosion of indigenous governance structures and cultural ideologies. The second era– in which the imperialist exerted power through direct political control– created or entrenched in-power local groups, modified governance systems, and developed much of the physical infrastructure of imperialism. The third era– encompassing the power struggle following the return of direct political control to indigenous groups– widened the gap in power between the in-power and out-power local groups and established an economic structure conducive to continued British extraction of resources. The fourth and current era has demonstrated stable exploitation of the out-power local group through the economic power of the imperialist and the political and military power of the in-power local group.

The importance of this framework lies in its usefulness to understanding the imperialist reality of Nigeria and the rest of the Global South. Many development strategies approach the challenge of reclaiming imperialist space through undoing the impact of a single era, in effect

applying a band-aid solution to a more complex wound. With a broader but detailed historical framework for imperialism, we can start on root-and-branch, multidisciplinary changes to entrenched imperialist structures.

This paper will add to the existing literature on colonial legacies and postcolonial studies by clarifying aspects of development outcomes today that result from historical mechanisms. It will also aid the discussion of neocolonialism by looking at the mechanisms by which imperialist powers continue to exert control and extract value from the developing world. To both of these it will add the context of the other, bridging two often conflicting readings of imperialism. Finally, this paper will add to ethnic and other intergroup studies by examining the role of malicious exogenous actors on local intergroup relations.

Literature Review

There are two primary explanations for the contemporary experience of former colonies: colonial legacies of institutions past and continues structures of neocolonialism. Much of the current scholarship sees the existence of one as a consequence of the other, rather than these elements as two interrelated but distinguishable systems. The greatest advances in anti-imperial thought have generally come from outside of the political science and economic development fields. The challenge we are presented with is amending the political science framework established in the literature in such a way that it will accurately describe the nature and history of imperialist relationships. To this end, we'll look at the current scholarship on imperialism as a whole as well as the case of Nigeria's imperial history and contemporary status.

Within the established political science literature, research on Nigeria generally ascribes to an historic mythology around which arguments such as the "Great Aid Debate" revolve. Generally this mythology includes two important aspects, to which scholarship generally accepts one or both:

1. *Imperial history can be divided into two eras: colonialism and neocolonialism, and only one is chiefly relevant to today's imperialism;*
2. *Imperialism is fundamentally the interaction of two groups: the imperialist and the imperialized, and membership in these groups is roughly static across time*.

These claims may seem disjointed, but within a two-player framework it would be logical to only divide imperial history into these two sections, because eras defined by the relationship between local groups wouldn't be taken into account. In other words, when one is looking only at the imperialist and the local group, it is easy to see the breakage of the colonial "relationship" as the only era-defining shift in the status quo. Taking a deeper look at the scholarship will show us how exactly these notions are employed, and later this paper will attempt to dispel them.

Much of the scholarship on imperialism revolves around examination of development outcomes, yielding two "camps" among those who accept the continuing influence of

imperialism. One group we might call the "postcolonial scholars," who argue the most pressing factor with regard to development outcomes is colonial legacy and are generally in favor of reforming aid relationships and increasing international investment in developing countries to help combat this legacy. On the other hand, the group we might call "neocolonial scholars" argues that contemporary imperialism is the most pressing factor and that therefore aid relationships should be largely abolished and international economic and political interference in developing states should be curtailed.

Postcolonial scholars– including authors such as Brautigam, Knack, Ajide, and Adogamhe– claim that the structure left behind by colonialism is primarily responsible for imperialist relationships today, and that the West has a responsibility to aid countries in overcoming this legacy. They argue that relationships between states would soon be on a more even setting if this colonial legacy were erased. Within the foreign aid sphere, many acknowledge the existence of aid dependency, which Brautigam and Knack (2004) define as;

> a situation in which a government is unable to perform many of the core functions of government, such as the maintenance of existing infrastructure or the delivery of basic public services, without foreign aid funding and expertise (provided in the form of technical assistance or projects) (p. 257).

Nevertheless, this group supports the reformation of aid relationships rather than their abolition. They cite poor governance and ineffective administration of development programs as the cause for their inefficacy, but often don't look at the reasons behind those issues themselves. For example, Brautigam and Knack cite a colonial history of governance as one of the prime reasons for this poor governance, but also put the blame on one-party states, rentier-state reactions to economic crises, political instability, and, ultimately, improper aid. Adogamhe (2009) cites similar causes for Nigeria's status as a rentier state: "big government, corruption, and poor governance" (p 227). These scholars generally also hold liberal beliefs on the entrepreneurial opportunities of the global market. "Economic globalization opens up economic opportunities for individual entrepreneurs and promotes African growth inclusiveness" (Ajide et al., 2021 p. 707). Ajide et. al's (2021) study goes on to say that African nations should relax tariffs and other international trade barriers and open up their markets as fully as possible (p. 708). Because of the nature of their work, postcolonial scholars have given us more of an understanding on how the lasting effects of colonialism influence developing countries today; however, these frameworks generally take for granted that Eurocentric multinational organizations such as the IMF and WBG are acting in the best interest of African nations, and their proposed solutions generally do not solve the effects of what the latter group would call neocolonialism. In the context of our work, this section of the literature often acknowledges the past relationship between the imperialist and local groups, or the current relationship between groups, without addressing the current actions of the imperialist.

Neocolonial scholars, such as Okon, Ojakorotu, and Moyo believe that actions taken by Western governments today are primarily responsible for continued exploitation of Africa and the rest of the Global South, and that countries would heal the scars of colonialism if the West would stop interfering with them. Nigerian Enoch Ndem Okon and Victor Ojakorotu (2018) write, "in spite of structural changes, the processes and objectives of imperialism remain same [sic] as they were in the late nineteen and twentieth century" (p. 228). Dambisa Moyo (2009) discusses how, contrary to the argument of many postcolonial scholars, that aid can substitute certain sectors of domestic production. This substitution of domestic products contributes greatly to the rentier state status of states such as Nigeria. Much of our understanding of how post-independence imperialism survives is from the work of these scholars, who generally argue that aid, Foreign Direct Investment, and other development programs should be discontinued to cut off neocolonial relationships. However, these works often eschew important historical developments that have contributed to the state of contemporary imperialism by socially stratifying local groups or otherwise entrenching imperialist institutions. A useful example of this examines gender and sexuality in Nigeria. The in-power and out-power groups I'll discuss in the below theory section generally refer to real or created ethnolinguistic groups, but the creation of stratified society in any form serves imperialism in the similar sense. Okon and Ojakorotu (2018) make the claim that "Homosexuality [and genderqueerness are] an abomination in African societies… because procreation is the essence of marriage" (p. 246). However, an historical analysis of African society shows that this understanding of gender and gender relationships is actually an imperialist mindset, as described by Oyeronke Oyewumi (1996); "Since the colonial period, the way in which Yoruba history is being reconstituted has been a process of inventing gendered traditions. Men and women have been *invented* as social categories" (p. 264, emphasis added).

This paper attempts to move beyond band-aid solutions to development challenges in Nigeria by using a historical and cross-disciplinary examination of the imperialist systems at playi. Imperialism doesn't survive based on only one factor– it is the result of centuries still being exercised today. Furthermore, it exists by creating hierarchical structures of power, and has vested interest in the success of a local group large enough to maintain its interests. By creating these in-power and out-power groups, imperialists retain the ability to exert power over both. By this token, understanding the imperialist role in ethnicizing, gendering, and otherwise stratifying social spaces and institutions should be taken as seriously by political scientists in understanding development outcomes as resource-driven models.

Theory– A Four-Era Hypothesis

This paper will argue that imperial history is more accurately divided into four eras. These eras are defined by differences in the interactions of three groups. The eras I've titled:

archaic, classic, hegemonic, and cosmopolitan (in order). The groups (players) are the imperialist, the in-power local group, and the out-power local group.

The imperialist is the exogenous power involved in extracting value from the locality for its own benefit. The in-power local group constitutes those indigenous to the locality which maintains some amount of local power through the systems of imperialism. The out-power local group constitutes those indigenous to the locality who are deprived of most power through the systems of imperialism. Membership in these groups is not necessarily consistent over time, nor is their relationship to each other. However, these elements are generally stable within an era. It is also important to note that members within a group are not necessarily aligned with each other– rather the out-power local group, for example, represents simply the set of people deprived of power as stated above.

The first, or archaic, era is when the groundwork is laid for these groups to exist. Locally, ethnic grips compete for power until a few arrived in establishing nations. The in-power groups are those which have established such nations and therefore have political control. The out-power groups are those who don't have control within these societies. Some of these groups may cease to become groups as they are assimilated into the culture of the dominant group, while others will remain distinct but have little power. The imperialist during this era will often play a role in the development of these nations, by expanding different religions and cultural values to different nations and otherwise impacting cultural or political outcomes. This occurs through the imperialist powers either trading with or raiding these local nations and is not strictly accelerative in nature; rather, the imperialist can provoke important cultural changes despite not being seriously interested in political domination of the locality. It's also important to keep in mind that our understanding of this locality today doesn't apply in this first era but will be drawn by the imperialist in the second. With respect to today's states, this era is important to the demographic makeup of the locality, as well as being instrumental in the beginnings of cultural and political rifts between its peoples.

The second, or classic, era mostly constitutes what would be called "colonialism" in the current literature. In fact, colonialism really describes the mechanism through which second-era imperialism was carried out. It begins when the imperialist decides to lay claim to the land and people of a certain area, creating a colony. Using primarily military power, the imperialist establishes itself as the directly ruling group in the locality. The locality will now be defined by the borders created by the imperialist which mark the administrative area of the "colony." The extent of these borders in turn is generally determined by a combination of the imperialists' administrative capacity, evaluation of the locality's resources, and relationships with other imperialists acting in nearby localities. As the colony solidifies, we are presented with the first strategic game of imperialism. The imperialist is presented with a choice: hoard or delegate power. If it chooses to hoard power, there are only two groups: the imperialist and the out-power local group. In this scenario, the imperialist attempts to exert power directly, using only the

human resources of its own group. However, it has only the human resources equivalent to its own nation, and therefore would find this a costly strategy. In this scenario, no local groups have been empowered, so there is only one other player– our out-power local group. This group is now presented with a choice of its own: submit or rebel. If it perceives its chances of success as high, the local group will choose to rebel, ultimately leading to the colonial endeavor being costly enough to the imperialist that they will choose to withdraw.

If, on the other hand, The imperialist delegates some of its power, it creates three groups in total: itself, an in-power local group, and an out-power local group. Delegating this power to a group works to split the costs of maintaining control while adding to available resources. For their part, the prospective in-power group can choose to accept this designation or not. Where the benefits of accepting are sufficiently distinct from the status of the out-power local group and the costs of rebellion are high, this group will accept.

And so this hierarchy is created, where a group is given preferential treatment by the colonial regime. To ensure that both local groups would rather have them in power than the other, the imperialist plays up differences between the groups, ensuring that any ire is directed towards local foes rather than the colonial authority. This can often be done through having the in-power group be the face of local government and carry out some of the more unpopular policies of the new regime. In the meantime, the imperialist extracts what resources it wants, creating institutions which develop colonial seats of power to ensure they live in luxury. Again, the in-power local group may also see some of these benefits, as they may surround these loci of power and the extraction will likely be targeted primarily towards the out-power local group. The result of this is that the in-power group may become more culturally similar to the imperialist (although the imperialist may also have gravitated towards, while the out-power group may attempt to contrast itself culturally from both other groups.

The third era, hegemonic imperialism, arises when the imperialist has more to gain from adopting a different type of power than the colonial system, shifting to a more indirect interaction that still allows them to extract value from the locality but without the cost of direct rule. This can develop when local groups overcome the second-era attempts to divide them and initiate resistance, or when the cost of maintaining the allyship of the in-power local group is too high to warrant continuing to pursue the benefits of direct political control. When it perceives the physical and social infrastructure it has put in place to be sufficient to continue to gain economic and strategic value from the locality at a lower cost, the imperialist will cede political control to the local groups. The third era, then, is a transitional period which constitutes a period of power struggle or at least a realignment of the power differential between the groups. Either local group can now be the in-power group, although generally the in-power group from the second era will be set up with an advantage in this struggle. Regardless, one group will feel the remnants of its strong political and, ultimately, social, ties to the imperialist. Given the insecurity in power of whichever group is now (temporarily) the in-power group, and given the relative lack of military

power in the locality compared to in imperialist states (because during the second era imperialists made sure that they were the ones with the upper hand militarily, even with respect to the in-power local group), this group may reach out to an imperialist for aid in maintaining power over the locality at the expense of the out-power local group. If it was also the in-power group in the classical era, it will reach out to the original imperialist. If not, it may reach out to a different imperialist power.

Generally, though, this group won't even need to reach out to either. As long as a reasonably genuine struggle for power exists between the local groups, the imperialist will generally support whichever group was more aligned with them during the classical era (that is, whichever was the in-power local group in the second era), to the extent that they believe this group will accede to the economic and political policies it desires in order to extract value from the locality. The other group is again faced with a choice: continue in a power struggle against the other group and its imperialist backers alone or align themselves with another imperialist. Where the probability of being successful alone is low, the second option will often be preferred. This military and economic support does not come free of strings to either side, however. The local group is expected to adopt what economic policies the imperialist wants it to, and otherwise make policy changes in line with the goals of the imperialist. If it does refuse this, the imperialist will have a strong incentive to support another group that will be more amenable to its economic and political goals. On the local stage, this also results in a lasting restructuring of political debate in the locality as being on the axis defined by the imperialists. This represents a larger trend whereby elements of first-era (that is, inherently local) culture are adapted to a third-era imperialist interpretation of such, When the power struggle has subsided and a local group is clearly secured as the in-power local group, the resentment between it and the out-power local group will have only risen. Many within the out-power local group may have been economically, physically, or mentally burdened through the power struggle, creating disadvantages for them. If there was a war, areas once controlled by the out-power local group may have been destroyed, and their populations reduced. These aspects ensure that even in the most balanced attempts at reconciliation, the out-power local group will continue to face structural barriers from not just the classic but also the hegemonic era. Generally, the locality will have lesser economic, democratic, and social development from an imperialist perspective than those imperialist states due to the power struggle having been played out between local groups as well as changing investments made by imperialist powers during the era. This period ends when a more stable system of power becomes established and the imperialist no longer needs direct military or political power in order to exert economic and cultural influence over the locality.

The fourth, or cosmopolitan, era is the most recent era of imperialism to have developed and represents the situation of most (though not all) imperialist relationships today. During this era, the imperialist may have a number of stated or unstated goals, but they principally can be reduced to this; make the locality as similar to the imperialist as possible, but in such a way which also accelerates the growth of the imperialist and keeps it ahead of the local groups. This

is basically a summary of the goals of imperialist-driven "development" programs in these localities. This cosmopolitanization of the local groups essentially serves to promote ideals held by the imperialist and stabilize economic processes used to extract value from the locality. The imperialist at this point consists of a number of states, often operating in larger, multinational organizations. With the turbulence of the previous era having passed, the expectation of both the imperialist and in-power local group is that the hierarchy established is now more stable. This can lead to serious exploitation of the out-power group where the perceived risks of antagonizing it are low. This exploitation will spark resistance from the out-power group, despite low chances of success, if the payoff for accepting the status quo has become low enough. Again, because of the dramatic asymmetry developed at this point between the power levels of groups, this resistance may not provoke more lenient policies from the imperialist and in-power local groups if that resistance doesn't dramatically affect the costs of maintaining said policies. Imperialist states will have developed investments in resource extraction within the locality– taking resources out of the locality and, theoretically, pumping money in. However, the value ultimately created from these resources often far exceeds the economic benefit of the investment within the locality. Furthermore, the cash influx is distributed according to the terms of the in-power local group, and so the benefits of these interactions are often not seen by the out-power local group. Similarly, the decisions made about where, how, and how much resources are extracted, are made largely without the input of the out-power local group. With respect to development programs, similar issues exist. Development programs are generally established between the imperialist and the in-power local group. The out-power group, which likely has the most need for resources involved in development, will not have input as to how these programs are carried out. The resulting effect can be at best useless to the out-power group and at worst damaging by replacing said groups' economic niche with development supplies. Generally, the result of all this is that the perceived benefits of continued imperialist input to the in-power local group outweigh the cost of accepting the imperialists' terms. As a result, the imperialist continues to be seen as the model society which should be emulated while also continuing to benefit from power it exerts in the locality.

All in all, each step of this process reinforces the power of the imperialist, and also projectes the imperialist's culture as superior. This is done by changing how it acts towards local groups to benefit one segment of the population just enough that this group will follow its lead. None of this is to suggest that imperialism is at all the fault of the in-power local group– it is simply following its best (and often only) course of action. Nevertheless, division between local groups is a nearly ubiquitous factor in the imperial world, and these four eras are distinct historical clues to understanding the relationship between today's groups.

Now, why is this so important to anti-imperialist scholarship? Most simply put, it most accurately provides context for the important questions to which anti-imperialist scholarship tries to provide answers. As demonstrated in the literature review, incomplete descriptions and analyses of imperialist relationships have produced band-aid solutions to the problems current

nations face due to imperialism. Putting the ideas of members of marginalized groups into the framework of accurate imperial history unlocks an important piece of the puzzle and should be our goal as political scientists. This paper will not propose a magic bullet because there is none. However, it is my hope that it will provide the beginnings of a road map to show us where and how to start the work.

The First Era– Imperialism before Colonialism

The Archaic Era of empire is so named because this is where the first establishment of relations between groups exists, as well as the first divisions of these groups. Understanding this era is also important to give ourselves a sense of indigenous society and politics as a reference point for the goal of "re-Africanisation" in the Hegemonic and Neoliberal Eras. Because this period encpompasses the largest amount of time chronolgoically, it would prove difficult to evaluate these elements exhaustively; we will instead look at some of the most important developments prior to the official European colonization of Nigeria which marks the transition to the Classical Era. As with each transition, we'll also look at why and how this era ended, its role in the development of latter eras, and its legacy today.

> The State was not a universal category in Pre-Colonial Africa. From a political point of view, the continent of Africa was a miracle of diversity ranging from empires to Stateless societies, from elaborate thrones to hunting bands, from complex civilizations to rustic village communities (Mazrui, 1983, p. 114).

Ali Mazrui's description of local polities leaves us with much to explore. First of all, what was the nature of local Archaic empire in Nigeria (and what is meant by "empires")? Second, how do polities that existed in this era in the region of Nigeria relate to the Nigerian state today? Third, to what extent and how were these polities influenced by European powers prior to the formalization of transcontinental empire at the advent of the Classical Era? Mazrui (1983) goes on to tell us, "State formation has been linked to the broader triple heritage of Africa's history and culture– the heritage which encompasses indigenous, Islamic, and Western traditions" (p. 115). The Nigerian state today demonstrates all three heritages, but understanding the Archaic polities from which today's demographic map of Nigeria springs is important to answering our above questions.

Ehiedu Iweriebor (1982) identifies two broad categories of political system in existence in Nigeria during this period, which he dubs the Centralized State System and the Stateless Society (p. 507). "In pre-colonial Nigeria, the Yoruba, the Hausa, the Kanuri, the Edo, the Jukun, and the peoples and societies influenced and/or conquered by them had the centralized forms of state" (ibid.). For our purposes, those influencers/conquerors mentioned above constitute the in-power local groups in their respective polities. Of particular note is the fact that this type of society was established predominantly in what is now Northern and Western Nigeria. Igboland

and the Niger Delta did not generally subscribe to this iteration of statehood. Exogenous influences related to state construction were particularly strong early in Northern Nigeria, where Islamic influence dates back to the 14th century. Much literature on pre-colonial Northern Nigeria relates to the political status of the region in the 19th century under the Sokoto Caliphate, created by the Fulani jihad starting in 1804. The Caliphate is well documented to have established a strict, slaveholding, and hierarchical society. However, there is evidence that pre-Sokoto Hausaland up until at least the 15th century followed more egalitarian and less exclusivist policies;

> Under a communal set up in which was obtained a system of administration controlled by a council of village elders, land was always available as and when needed. It had no owner; meaning that it had no scarcity value as a factor of production… the dominant culture in that period of the history of Kano [i.e., pre-Islamic Hausa] did possess certain redistributive mechanisms that thwarted tendencies to reproduce inequalities in a cumulative fashion (Mamdani 1996, p. 41, as cited by Gwadabe 2010, p. 25-26).

City-states such as Kano developed higher centralization and autocratic control as Islam was introduced to Hausaland and land use was reimagined. Under kings such as Muhammadu Rumfa in the 15th century, land became used as a status symbol awarded to members of the king's court, and as Kano in particular became more urbanized with an influx of immigration more authority was needed (Gwadabe, 2010, p. 25-26). The autochthonous governments stood until the Fulani wars unified most of Northern Nigeria under the Sokoto Caliphate, "a new political order equally centralized, but now grounded on Islamic principles of government" (Iweriebor, 1982, p. 508).

In Yorubaland, Islam was not introduced to the region until the seventeenth century, and its cultural influence at least prior to the Fulani wars is debated (Adédíran, 1985, p. 546 & Law, 1976, p. 70), however sources agree that practitioners of Islam never constituted a majority in Yorubaland outside of the northern reaches such as Ilorin which was annexed by the Sokoto Caliphate. Nevertheless, Arabic writings from Yoruba scholars in the 19th century do exist, suggesting some extent of Islamic influence, and a substantial Muslim minority in the Oyo kingdom (constituting what may be considered the heartland of Nigerian Yorubaland) is documented, suggesting some Islamic influence in at least that immediate century. Perhaps the most salient first-era influences on Yorubaland include Christianity and English, presenting difficulties to unbiased literature on first-era Yoruba which is generally written in like frameworks. Yoruba historiography owes its roots to Samuel Johnson, who wrote from the perspective of a Christian Saro, a group of liberated Yoruba who were formerly enslaved and settled in Sierra Leone. Later first-era Yoruba culture and perception thereof was influenced heavily by the repatriation of Saros to their ancestral Yorubaland, bringing Western and Christian

traditions (Oyewumi, 1996, p. 265). Johnson's 1921 *History of the Yoruba* is the first universal transcription of an oral tradition (Oyewumi, 1996 & Law, 1984). As Robin Law (1984) points out, there are problems inherent in this act;

> In oral societies, since the different traditions are not seen as applying to the same context, their contradictions are not felt as important, or even readily perceived. Reducing these traditions to writing, on the other hand, tends to expose these inconsistencies and create pressures for their elimination. As a further corollary, oral traditions normally exhibit much less concern for linear chronicity than do literate histories (p. 198).

Oyewumi (1996) also critiques Johnson for his assumption that all but one Oyo *alaafin* (ruler) was male (p. 266). Both Law and Oyewumi indicate the imposition of Western epistemic frameworks (derived from British and Christian traditions) on autochthonous Yoruba cultural institutions by Johnson. In contrast, she discusses the lack of gender in the Oyo kingdom. Historiographers of Yoruba culture have noted that the Yoruba pronoun *o* presents a "problem" because it is an ungendered third-person singular pronoun.

> Despite this "problem," a survey of the documentation of Oyo history shows that all the categories that were gender-free have become gendered and male-specific. *Omo* (offspring) have been turned into sons, aburo/egbon (siblings) into brothers, *alaafin* and *oba* into male rulers popularly known as kings (gendered male) (Oyewumi, 1996 p. 265).

While there is evidence enough to determine the anatomical sex of some *alaafin*, Yoruba language (and by extension culture) does not recognize gender. "The most important point in the discussion of gender in Oyo historiography is that gender categories did not exist; as such, sex was not a point of reference" (Oyewumi, 1996, p. 271).

Johnson wrote during the second era; however, the Western epistemization of Yorubaland through Christianity, written English, and other Western cultural frameworks was already at work during the latter part of the first era. Yorubaland was a target for both slavers and missionaries, and both these groups and the repatriated Saros brought imperialized ideologies which solidified hierarchical social structures such as rulership and gender.

We can turn our attention to Southeastern and Delta cultures. During the first era many of the polities existing in this region fall under Iweriebor's "Stateless Society" characterization, including the Igbo, Ibibo, Annang, Idoma, and Tiv (Iweriebor, 1982, p. 508). Iweriebor (1982) goes on to describe the general elements of these societies:

> The exercise of power was diffuse and did not rest entirely with one family or group of families… In some places the system of government was gerontocratic… The elders were generally heads of wards, age groups, occupation, or lineages. In these stateless societies important political and social decisions were taken either in an assembly of the entire community or by a broadly representative council (p. 508).

Similarly to pre-Islamic Kano, these decentralized societies were generally democratic in comparison to more centralized states (Iweriebor, 1982, p. 508). While generally smaller than their centralized counterparts such as Oyo, Benin, and Sokoto, these communities "performed and exercised the same powers and responsibilities that the more centralized states performed. In other words, they were not rudderless, anarchic entities" but instead simply community- rather than leader-driven polities (Iweriebor, 1982, p. 508). Both contemporary and historical evidence illustrates communitarian ideologies and institutions in Igbo societies. One example of this is in communitarian perspectives around justice, which are still used in some parts of Southeastern Nigeria;

> In line with Igbo egalitarian worldviews, crime is viewed as a conflict between community members. As primary stakeholders in the conflict, victims, offenders, and the community are actively involved in the definition of harm and the crafting of solutions acceptable to all stakeholders. The quality and effectiveness of justice are measured through the well-being of victims and the community. Conflict creates opportunities for the education, socialization, and resocialization of offenders, victims, and all community members. Conflict also creates an opportunity for the re-evaluation of community values and social conditions (Oko Elechi, 2008, p. 395-396).

O. Oko Elechi (2008) makes a compelling description of Igbo justice systems, and goes on to describe how Igbo society, though it may in some cases fit the definition of constitutional monarchy, protects the autonomy of local communities, which make decisions based on consensus, checks and balances, and utilitarianism (p. 397). Contrary to Yoruba society, autochthonous Igbo communities do have delineated gender roles, conforming to that conception of checks and balances. Where men have dominance in the political sphere, women have dominance in the social sphere, which carries considerable weight in a communitarian authority. Furthermore, women have constitutional rights including to bring forward marital issues to the community and sanction men in government, and also have analogous political institutions to patriarchal ones that provide accountability and promote women's perspectives (Oko Elechi, 2008, p. 397). One drawback to Oko Elechi's analysis is that it is based upon observation of contemporary Igbo society where Igbo autonomy exists as well as oral tradition, rather than written historiography of the first era. However, as we know regarding Yoruba historiography,

there would be other problems if we did have access to this type of source. Regardless, their analysis of surviving aspects of autochthonous Igbo society, justice, and institutions demonstrates key indigenous Igbo values: social responsibility, restorative justice, acephalous governance, participatory democracy, and communitarianism. Furthermore, Igbo political systems operate largely without abstract institutions that exist in their Western counterparts, such as the "Court" as an entity itself, or representative institutions such as Parliaments. Igbo justice, then, consists of only three institutional roles: the victim, the offender, and the community (which is present generally in close to its entire population). Furthermore, its goal is the definition and redress of harm. By contrast, most Western justice systems have the institutional roles of: accused, defense, prosecution (as a representative of the government, which in turn is a representative of the people), arbiter or judge, and jury (as a representative of the community). Its goal is the determination of guilt and evaluation of punishment. In short, Igbo polities with respect to justice and other state functions did not require representative or hierarchical institutions because they did not consist of enough people to require them. Decisions were made for the good of the community and guided largely by tradition, though any member of that community had the ability to speak on these decisions (Oko Elechi, 2008). Because this region interacted less with exogenous influences than did its counterparts to the North and West, it kept its acephalous and autochthonous social structures largely up to the second era. In the following chapter, we will see how this influenced imperialist strategies for maintaining control in the region, as well as outcomes to these strategies.

These groups had various degrees of interactions with each other and with imperialist powers, as we have seen. However, our understanding of this era gives us two important general points of knowledge: one, that we understand the institutions of autochthonous governance prior to imperialist interaction and can see its differences to the Nigerian state today; and two, that we can see the beginnings of those interactions and influences. This is perhaps most prominent in the case of the Hausa in what is now northern Nigeria, where cultural ideas of land ownership, slavery, hierarchy, and empire were all introduced to and adopted by the Hausa prior to the British colonization that would mark the beginning of the second era. As we have seen, the interaction between indigenous and imperial culture was already exhibiting change on the former prior to the formalization of colonialism. This is why I shy away from centering colonialism in this periodization by using terms such as pre-colonial, colonial, postcolonial, or neocolonial. It is more helpful to understand this era of influence as the first imperial era than pre-colonial; this is not to say that these Nigerian groups did not have political autonomy during this period, but that imperialist interactions were already at play. Understanding this era throughout what is now Nigeria is important because it helps us define to some extent what the goals of contemporary anti-imperialist movements such as pan-Africanism and re-Africanization might be in a Nigerian context. Furthermore, it helps us understand the institutional framework which was in place when Britain colonized the area. We can also clarify that the influences from outside of the locality during the this period are not defined as imperialist by their exogeneity alone, but by

their hierarchical nature: land ownership, slavery, gender, and centralization (which have proven to be a first-era rather than second-era invention in Hausaland and Yorubaland) were all concepts which contributed to the creation of these in-power and out-power groups, sparking an imperialized ideology which, as we will see, would be utilized efficiently by imperialists in the second era.

The Second Era– Empire as We Know It

The second era of imperialism is what I have called the Classical era, representing the "classical" notion of imperialism in the current literature. It encompasses what we know of as the colonial era of imperialism. With respect to our framework, colonialism is the mechanism of second-era imperialism, whereby the imperialist group asserts direct or quasi-direct political authority over the locality. From a game theoretic standpoint, this era began when Britain was in a position to gain more value out of the direct subjugation of Nigeria than through first-era avenues. The first colony in what is today Nigeria, Lagos, was established less than two decades after the formal abolition of slavery Britain, and was won through the outsing of a pro-slavery *oba* (ruler) in favor of an anti-slavery, but pro-British, selection. Britain had a significant opportunity to gain power relative to other imperialist nations by owning the land and not simply stealing its people, and so began the colonization of Nigeria. As Abiodun Afolabi (2010) puts it, "After the imperialistic moves against Nigeria had been concluded in the late 19th century, the British then went on to impose the system of indirect rule on the entire people of Nigeria" (p. 63-64).

Because of the extractive nature of the colonial system, imperialist policy revolved around two aspects: elimination of resistance and wealth creation. More specifically, the goal was to extract as much wealth as possible from local groups without sparking unified resistance. To that end, the British Empire did not write a new system of governance upon an entirely blank slate; rather (where possible), it incorporated extant hierarchical structures from the first era while inserting itself at the head. In this respect, second-era imperialism could not have existed in the manner it did without the foundation laid during the first era. This system of indirect rule was devised and codified by Frederick Lugard, a British administrator who would become the Governor of Nigeria. While each of what would become the three regions of Nigeria had similar institutions: a Native Authority which had direct control but still answered to the British governorship, and a Native Treasury which extracted taxes for it; "indirect rule" took whatever form was most effective based on the extant first-era institutions. This section will endeavor to illustrate the continuity and change in the relationship and composition of our imperialist, in-power, and out-power groups with respect to this and other mechanisms, rather than presenting an overall history of the period.

The policy of "indirect" or partially localized rule served three functions for Britain as an imperialist power, aiding the aforementioned goals of suppression and acquisition. For one, it added a semblance of legitimacy to the occupation of Nigeria, by allowing Britain to claim that

their leadership was a reinforcement rather than a usurpation of local political structures. For another, it helped with the problem of administration for a vast empire ruled by a tiny island. Britain did not have the might to exert its will against the coordinated union of its colonial possessions– therefore it succeeded by empowering the smallest number of locals it needed to in order to maintain political dominance. This action created the in-power and out-power local groups of the second era, which would be partially inherited from the groups in first-era institutions and partly a creation of the imperialists. This in turn set the in-power groups as the face of colonialism, shielding Britain from the ire of the out-power group. For the third, it ensured that colonial management could be done regionally, preventing local organization across a nationwide scale and streamlining the administrative undertakings involved in resource extraction. Again, the name of the game for the imperialist is creating division, and while the vertical segmentation of society within each region was crucial, so too was the lateral division of the population into regional and local units to whom policies were applied uniquely. As we will see, this strategy worked most effectively where strong hierarchical systems from the first era were already in place. In these cases, costs for establishing a novel system of governance were low for Britain, incentives were high for the in-power local group to retain their status, and the probability of a long-subjugated out-power group successfully rebelling were low. Where there were less first-era imperialist influences, Britain's administrative costs were high, the newly empowered set had little legitimacy or political wherewithal, and the out-power group was discontented at their disenfranchisement.

Northern Nigeria suited the establishment of this "indirect rule" perfectly precisely because of that prevalence of first-era imperialism. The Emirate structure of the Sokoto caliphate was the perfect framework for regional administration within the British Empire. Britain reinforced the power of the individuals and groups that had been empowered by the Sokoto– i.e., men, Muslims, and Hausa-Fulani (Miles, 1987, p. 239). Looking at our game-theoretical framework for this era, we can understand why this was particularly effective in this region. Due to the existence of imperialized hierarchies, Britain needed little investment to create the terms by which the in-power group would maintain its privileged status while contributing to imperialist authority. The in-power group had a strong incentive to accept this deal and maintain wealth and a fair amount of regional power, rather than completely yielding its authority. Lastly, the out-power group had little incentive to rebel against the in-power group which had already subjugated them previously and now had the backing of what was at the time the most powerful military in the world.

There were, however, some important shifts between groups in Northern Nigeria during this period. First of all, the primacy of Fulani declined sharply. The Sokoto Caliphate had presented perhaps the most steadfast opposition to the British military invasion, and was thoroughly broken by British intervention. In its place, the sedentary and more populous Hausa were elevated to the status of the in-power group. This can be observed in a documentation of literature– literature prior to the colonization of Northern Nigeria consisted predominantly of

Fulfulde (i.e., Fulani). Following colonization, Hausa was made the official language of the Northern Region, and Arabic-script Hausa literature became the most commonly written, supplanting both Fulfulde and Arabic. This process included the British-led transcription of pre-Islamic Hausa oral tradition (Dobronravine & Philips, 2004, p. 86).

> The real objective of the colonial officers at whose request the Hausa manuscripts were provided was probably twofold: to prepare reading material for government examinations in Hausa… and to acquaint Hausa-speaking officers with local Islamic traditions and the history of their subjects (Dobronravine & Philips, 2004, p. 86).

The selection of Hausa to this role also strengthened the position of Hausa people and weakened the legacy of the Sokoto Caliphate, an effect that– intentional or not– reconfigured the social landscape of the North. The Fulani tradition was largely ignored by colonial officers, which is not to say that it was necessarily erased, but certainly not elevated in the manner of the Hausa. Similarly, the British Empire imposed taxation on the Fulani-dominant Sokoto province, which previously had only existed in the form of tribute from Sokoto's provincial holdings, and had never existed in Sokoto itself (Jumare, 1998, p. 86).

Aside from the shift of groups along ethnic lines, many other first-era imperial structures extant from Sokoto were upheld under British rule. Despite Britain's supposed commitment to ending slavery, the principle of "indirect rule" aligned with the hierarchical goals of imperialism such that, with the justification of maintaining local traditions, the institution of slavery and in particular concubinage remained in existence:

> Slavery itself was not abolished nor were [enslaved people] as such emancipated. Instead, the British initiated policies to reform slavery with the intention of minimizing social dislocation and unrest. As a result, keeping [enslaved people] in their place was a major concern, and because many [enslaved women] were concubines, reinforcing the submission of women to men inevitably became an unintentional but crucial dimension of British policy (Lovejoy, 1998, p. 248).

Concubinage was re-imagined under colonial law as a sort of marriage-adjacent institution. Within the British legal ethos of the time, women could be compelled to stay with their husbands, and this "logic" was applied to concubinage as well, essentially whitewashing the institution of domestic slavery to keep it sanctified under the new imperial regime. Again, since slavery was a first-era imperial institution in Northern Nigeria, we can see that the British system put in place was an augmentation of that philosophy.

Western Nigeria, consisting primarily of Yorubaland, also had established rulership systems, although as discussed in the previous section these had more historically autochthonous

status than their imperial counterparts to the North. Nevertheless, Britain appropriated the *obas* in the West the same way they had the *emirs* in the North, putting themselves at the head of the administrative system of kingdoms such as Oyo and Benin, Abiodun Afolabi (2010) describes the extraction-oriented nature of British colonialism in Yorubaland:

> Right from the onset, the British economic policy in southwestern Nigeria was centrally based on the achievement of two objectives: to derive revenue from the mother country and to make the Crown Colony of Lagos and the Western Protectorate as financially self-sustaining as possible (p. 63).

To this end, the colonial authority demanded that the *obas* or *baales* (village leaders) collect taxes on their behalf, redirecting resentment towards changes in taxation policy to these indigenous leaders rather than to the colonial administration. Aside from solving the administrative problem presented by the governance of the entirety of Nigeria, this served a critically important role in increasing division between segments of the population– that is, creating in-power and out-power local groups along class lines to diffuse what would have been organized resistance to colonial overlordship. “The Native Authority was the visible Black Hand servicing the seemingly inaudible voice of the white master” (Afolabi, 2010, p. 65). As we have seen, this is also the time when the literation of Yoruba tradition took place. Since only English was given official status in the region, much of this tradition was translated entirely into English, enforcing the gendered imperialist perspective on Yoruba traditions (Oyewumi, 1996); this created a further divide in local groups along gender lines.

Hidden behind the empowered local group constituting the Native Authority, Britain was able to economically throttle wealth generating areas such as Yorubaland, which produced cocoa. “Available data shows that the cocoa farmer who had to pay four shillings cocoa tax, invest their labour and capital, pay produce price of four pounds per ton and still pay transport fare was operating at a loss!” (Afolabi, 2010, p. 66). In line with what we today think of as the resource curse, the more wealth an area was able to create, the more impoverished it would be by colonial taxation. Furthermore, the chocolate export market was oligopolistic, consisting of a cabal of a few companies which forced these cocoa producers into selling their product for as little as possible. It was also during this era that the supplanting of subsistence farming in favor of cash crops such as cocoa began in the region; “Local industry was not even encouraged while the production of raw materials for the capitalist market was limitlessly boosted, sometimes at the expense of food production to the extent that a number of people complained of starvation” (Afolabi, 2010, p. 66). The colonial system of capitalism had arrived in full force in Yorubaland, moderately benefitting a small group of local capitalists while impoverishing much of the local workforce. Taxes were also levied only on men, furthering the nascent gender divide (despite this in theory providing an economic privilege to women, it mostly contributed to the gendering of labor).

All of this said, Yorubaland did see developmental "benefits" not enjoyed in other regions, as investments made by the British to streamline the efficiency of extraction from its most materially wealthy areas also yielded public good.

> Although the infrastructural facilities put in place by the British colonial government were simply meant to facilitate the evacuation of raw materials from the interior, the Yoruba speaking areas still experienced development in the areas of communications, agriculture, water resources, industry, power supplies, transportation and telecommunications. The educational, medical, and health services also improved tremendously (Afolabi, 2010, p. 72).

All of these investments are certainly improvements to quality of life, at least from a contemporary Western perspective. This presents us with something of a contradiction; simultaneously advanced infrastructure was being put in place in the Southwest improving the lives of local groups while also taxing them to the point of operating at a loss. These elements of colonial infrastructure would lay the legacy for the financial success of Lagos and the surrounding areas in the third and fourth eras, and in the second era was already elevating the importance of the Southwest and placing the Yoruba in an in-power local group status throughout Nigeria.

Due to the nature of first-era society in Southeast Nigeria and the fact that it had been less affected by first-era imperialism than its neighbors, the application of "indirect rule" in the region took on a different course. As discussed in the previous section, the Igbo, Ijaw, and other Delta societies did not have an analog to the rulers or state systems established by the Hausa, Fulani, Yoruba, or Edo. Despite this, the imperialists still attempted to create the same hierarchy and simply invented these "traditional" rulerships.

> Among the Igbo, colonial chiefs were at times strongly resented by the population… Igbo chieftaincy has few pre-colonial roots, and even its colonial foundation is comparatively weak. If the term "tradition" is applied to Igbo Traditional Rulers, one has to be aware that it does not refer to pre-colonial historical facts, but primarily constitutes a strategy of gaining legitimacy for a rather contemporary phenomenon (Harneit-Sievers, 1998, p. 58-59).

Essentially, the colonial authority charged each village and village group with producing some kind of chief– these became known as the Warrant Chiefs. The nominated leaders often had little prior significance beyond being simply a member of the community, but suddenly found themselves elevated in status as the Igbo Native Authority. Local systems of justice were supplanted by Native Courts controlled by these Warrant Chiefs, and they also controlled the division of labor. "By 1920 the Warrant Chiefs were synonymous with greed and corruption, and

British administrative officers were increasingly aware of this" (ibid, p. 61). Finally, in 1929, an uprising of Igbo women overthrew many Warrant Chiefs and their Courts, sparking British intervention and reconfiguration of the Southeastern Native Authority. The 1930 solution the British established was in theory more representative of autochthonous government in the region– consisting of councils of elders and prominent local figures– but was still a representative system far removed from the direct democracy of first-era Igbo society. These councils represented artificial conglomerations of villages created by the British, and quickly also developed their own reputation for corruption (ibid). Furthermore, the British institutions erased the social and traditional power of women and removed women from whatever governance roles they had held in the previous administrative structure (ibid, p. 62). This process of introducing representative government created an in-power elder male group and younger, increasingly Western-educated men and women were relegated to an out-power position until the latest parts of the era;

> Thus, at the end of the period of direct British colonial influence in Nigeria in the late 1940s and early early 1950s, for the first time, there was a conscious move in the field of local administration away from the legitimizing principle of "tradition", towards the legitimizing principle of "democracy"; both principles were perceived to be contradictory at the time (ibid).

The British administration had established democracy and tradition as opposites in Igboland through the mechanism of second-era imperialism. Of course, we know that this is a completely untrue characterization of indigenous Igbo society, but it is one that would carry forward into the following eras, and drastically affect notions of what decolonization means in Nigeria. Igboland is a good example of the increased costs of second-era imperialism where the foundation of first-era imperialism was weaker. The instigation and ultimate success of the 1929 women's rebellion shows that British administration was spread thin, the in-power Native Authority was inept, and out-power groups like women had the incentive to reclaim their role and the organization to successfully oust the chiefs.

In every case, Britain's actions served the purpose of reinforcing and streamlining whatever hierarchies were in place, creating those that were necessary, and installing itself as the ultimate power at the head of each chain. As we have seen, each hierarchical structure created classes of in-power and out-power local groups, as members of the Native Authority did wield considerable power in their respective regions. Furthermore, by governing Nigeria as a semi-contiguous colony with distinct regional institutions, Britain laid the groundwork for the conflict in the third era, when the ethnic groups we've been discussing would be forced to interact in a far more direct manner than they had previously. We'll discuss the decolonial, or hegemonic, era in the next section.

The Third Era– Tension and Transition

The third era of imperialism exists primarily as an era of transition. It comes to be when the imperialist no longer has the incentive to continue trying to exert direct political control but still attempts to indirectly control policy outcomes through force. During the ensuing period, there is a struggle for power in which local groups vie for standing through alliances with hegemonic imperialist powers. For their part, the imperialist powers also act strategically to promote the groups which, in power, would represent their economic and political interests best. In the middle of the 20th century, Britain had these changing costs with respect to Nigeria. The costs of continuing to administer rule within a growing empire were starting to outweigh the marginal benefits of direct political rule over economic and military domination. And so Britain made the choice to return political power to the indigenous population, albeit within a governmental framework conducive to the continuation of second-era extractive mechanisms.

Nigeria's First Republic from 1960 to 1966 was a bourgeois liberal democracy and, as such, maintained the power groups inherited from colonialism.

> [W]hen the British embarked on their programmed decolonizations, there was no mistake about whom the "anointed" heirs were. The Nigerian power elite included, [sic] merchants, traders, businessmen, property owners, lawyers, doctors, journalists…the political structures and traditions developed under colonialism and bequeathed to the new power elite were authoritarian in essence and in fact (Iweriebor, 1982, p. 510-511).

The power groups created during the second era were held onto during the third, despite the theoretical shift in power from the imperialist to the in-power local group. On a practical level, those who had benefited the most from imperialism saw themselves maintain this power, and similarly maintain a strong economic and cultural relationship with that imperialist. Representation in the newly established Parliament in 1960 gave predominance to ethnic groups from the North, who represented the largest percentage of the population and had experienced the least direct rule from Britain during the second era. The Northern People's Congress, a political party representing primarily Hausa-Fulani interests, formed a coalition with the Igbo aligned National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, with the Yoruba-aligned Action Group taking the position of opposition party. In an effort to keep the developed and Westernized Lagos and the rest of Yorubaland in control, the new government worked towards the centralization of federal power at the expense of the states, serving the practical purpose of consolidating Hausa-Fulani and Igbo control. However, by the 1964-1965 election, a new census had taken place which essentially eliminated the northerners' need to form a coalition, by giving the NPC a full majority in Parliament. From here, political power rested squarely with the North, and the government quickly gained a reputation, particularly in the South, for rampant corruption (Uche, 2008, p. 116-117). This is important because it shows the well-known policy of strategic political

coalitions playing out strongly attached to a regional and ethnic framework. Since each of the three regions had always had divergent cultural backgrounds since the first era, and had been administered distinctly during the second, their political goals and loyalties were starkly divergent from each other and localized to the respective regions and ethnic groups.

It is worth mentioning at this point that a parallel consolidation of power happened within each region, whereby these dominant regional groups that we have been referring to: the Hausa-Fulani in the North, the Yoruba in the West, and the Igbo in the East– came to dominate the local governance within each of these respective regions. It is for this reason that this paper and much of the literature focuses primarily on both the histories and current situations of these groups, besides their also being the most populous. However, we will touch on the importance of these local minority groups such as the Edo, Kanuri, and Ijaw in parts of this paper, particularly with respect to those in the East.

This Northern-dominated republic lasted only a few years until a coup led primarily by Igbos attempted to take control of government in 1966. Ultimately, governmental control was reasserted by the Igbo general Johnson Aguiyi-Ironsi, whom despite being an Igbo himself was slated for execution in the coup. He ended up managing to seize control of Lagos and eventually the entire federal government. For their part, the British, now acting once again as an exogenous force, helped Ironsi to consolidate power. Despite not having had a hand in the original coup, the British saw Ironsi as preferable to the chaos of coup plotters and helped secure his power (ibid,, p. 117). This showcases a prominent example of a key imperialist goal during this era; preference towards the preservation of a known, stable, and ultimately manipulable in-power group, protected often by force. During this period of power struggle, the imperialist's motive, as always, is to protect itself and its interests, and given the benefits it has accrued from the legacy of the second era, this will generally mean preserving the status quo. For imperialist powers new to the relationship during this era, such as France in the case of Nigeria, we will see that there is instead incentive to promote chaos because there is something to be gained from *in*stability.

Despite the coup having technically not succeeded in gaining power, it did succeed in eliminating much of the government in power at the time and bringing about a military dictatorship under Ironsi. Furthermore, it had succeeded in returning Igbo leadership to government, and was popular even outside Igboland for ousting the corrupt government. Furthermore, the change was considered a decolonial move away from the former government which had had such close ties to Britain, having inherited its position of status from the second era (ibid, p. 118). Following the coup, a message to the British parliament from its High Commissioner in Nigeria said of the coup, "We can expect increasing criticism of the number of British Officers serving in influential positions and the climate may induce acceleration of retirements, with a decline in British influence" (quoted ibid., p. 118). Ironsi quickly moved to consolidate federal power, which now would mean stripping more authority from local leadership in the North. This would not stand, and a counter-coup later that year returned a Northern leader, Yakubu Gowon, to power, albeit still within the framework of military rule.

It is clear from this pattern of revolutions that during this period there was significant incentive for an out-power group to rebel in order to seize power. Without the same presence of the imperialist, in-power groups were much more fragile, so the risks associated with rebelling were low. As the other side of that coin, each of the major groups involved in these struggles had been the empowered group locally under the tripartite British administration of the second era.

In addition to the continually and increasingly ethnically-aligned nature of these power struggles in early third-era Nigeria, the power vested in what was a imperialist-designed institution (the military, a concept alien to all but Sokoto in the first era, and even then different drastically in organization and role) ensured the further consolidation of power among groups valued by second-era Britain. Yes, there was exchange in power between Hausas and Igbos, but that these struggles took place within the context of the upper echelons of the military ensured power was always distributed among a group that was largely wealthy, from upper-class background, and above all male. The importance of this is often abstracted from the literature due to the aforementioned primacy of ethnicity in these conflicts; however, it is critical that the set from which the politically powerful chose themselves was at this point far diminished from the similar set under autochthonous conditions.

Gowon, perhaps seen as a moderating factor being a Northerner but also a Christian, was also held as pro-Western. Though his coup originally held the goal of the secession of Northern Nigeria, Gowon folded under pressure from British and American ambassadors to preserve the union. British officials also worried that Gowon's planned adjustment of state borders which would separate Igboland from the oil-rich Niger Delta would lead to Eastern secession (ibid, p. 120). Here is where the as-above-so-below understanding of demography in this region crops up again. The Igbo-dominant part of Nigeria is in the interior of the Eastern region, centered loosely around Enugu. The part of the region found to be oil-rich (by Shell-BP in 1956) is the Niger River Delta, in which the small Ijaw ethnic group is predominant. The Ijaws represent less than 2% of Nigeria's overall population and so did not at the time have the political might to enforce much of their will on the national level, and were also greatly outnumbered in Eastern regional politics. However, Gowon's proposal to split the Delta into a separate state represented a change in this status quo, where instead of one Igbo-dominant Eastern Region there would be an Ijaw-dominant, oil rich, but still politically meek coastal state and an Igbo-dominant, resource-bereft inland state. This fragmentation of Eastern economic and political power would represent a step up in relative power predominantly for the rural and underdeveloped North, which would see the bulk of federal oil revenue under an increasingly Northern-dominated government. In the end, despite threats of secession from leaders in both the East and the West, Gowon did decide to implement the redrawing of state borders (ibid., p. 120-123).

In response to this and citing the massacre of Igbos in the North following the 1966 coup, the governor of the Eastern Region, Chukwuemka Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared the independence of the region as the Republic of Biafra after meeting with a council of local elders and leaders (Ojukwu, 1969). The federal government immediately blockaded Biafra with the

exception of oil tankers. The position of oil in Biafra was of immense interest to the British government, who was the majority owner of Shell-BP and the primary trade partner for Nigerian oil. The Biafran government, almost immediately upon its declaration of independence, demanded a royalty payment in excess of 3.5 Million GBP (equivalent to 6.8 Million GBP or 9.3 Million USD in 2021) from Shell-BP. While it was originally going to pay this royalty, Shell-BP was convinced by the British government that doing so would cause the federal government to extend the embargo to oil as well. As a result, Shell and the Biafran government agreed on a 250,000 GBP payment under duress, pending the resolution of the accelerating political crisis (Uche, 2008, p. 123-124). Despite the lower sum, Nigeria did extend the embargo, placing Britain in the uncomfortable position of not being able to import Nigerian oil; "All along, one of Britain's main interests was to ensure a conducive environment for the flow of Nigeria's oil to its territories. Nigerian oil was particularly important to Britain at the time given the disruptions in the Middle East [the blockade of the Suez Canal" (ibid., p. 124). Here we can see as clearly as ever Britain's incentive as an imperialist power. While the method of control and extraction is very different here from second-era power, the method of control is not of primary importance to the imperialist so long as resources are still being extracted as efficiently as possible. Britain's vested interest in Nigeria was, to make no mistake, in its oil and other strategic resources.

At this point, Britain and Gowon's federal government each had something the other wanted. Britain had the military capability to defeat Biafra, and Gowon had the power to lift the embargo and allow Shell-BP to continue to extract Biafran oil. Without knowing Ojukwu's mind, we can speculate from his actions with Shell-BP that he expected that Biafra's control of Nigeria's oil-producing regions would secure Britain's neutrality if not her allyship. He was wrong. As Uche (2008) puts it–

> Once the oil flow stopped, sitting on the fence ceased to be an option for the British government… [it] calculated that that supporting Nigeria was the safest option if it were to preserve its oil interests in the country, largely because the Cold War and the rivalry among some Western European states made it likely that other foreign powers would wade into the conflict (p. 125-126).

Other imperialist powers did indeed have some stake in the nascent Nigerian Civil War, and involved themselves to various extents based on this. The United States, for example, despite their earlier diplomatic pressure on Gowon, had oil interests only in drilling offshore from government-controlled Yorubaland. Consequently, beyond continuing to pay their oil royalties to the federal government, the United States took little interest in the Civil War. The Soviet Union began to support Gowon, forcing Britain to continue doing the same to prevent Nigeria from fully becoming a Soviet ally.

On the other side of the conflict, standing with Biafra, was France. France occupied the position we discussed above with respect to having more to gain from subverting the status quo. In other words, France really joined the war against Nigeria rather than for Biafra. Former

French West Africa had been split up much more geographically following the end of the second era than Nigeria had, and this put the British-aligned Nigeria in a position of power in West Africa which was unrivaled by the smaller, less-populous Francophone (and French-aligned) countries. France saw the opportunity to break up the consolidated power of Nigeria and took it (ibid., p. 128). Furthermore, France also had considerable investment in Biafran oil. An important distinction between France's SAFRAP and Britain's Shell-BP is that SAFRAP's primary investments lay in the inland, Igbo-dominant areas rather than the coastal, Ijaw-dominant Delta oil reserves. France therefore decided to side with Biafra in the hopes of both keeping their operation in the Biafran heartland going and taking over Shell-BP's stake in the region in the event of Biafran victory (ibid., p. 128-9).

This is why the third era can be called the hegemonic era. We first see local power struggles in the wake of the vacation of the top political tier from the second era. We then see strategic action on the part of various imperialist hegemons to secure their economic or (as in the case of the USSR) strategic interests in the region, utilizing the shifting nature of the in-power and out-power local groups as a method to assert their own power by proxy. What is further important to note is that Shell-BP played a large part in the Civil War as an entity distinct from (although closely related to) the British government. In fact, the needs and goals of Shell-BP informed much of British and Nigerian policy and strategy throughout the war. This went as far as prioritizing oil-rich areas as primary targets such as the Island of Bonny for Nigerian reconquest of the region, and utilizing tactics which would preserve the capital assets such as pipelines, drills, and even administrative centers which had been overtaken by the Biafrans (ibid., p. 131).

Ultimately, with the backing of imperialist powers and the advanced infrastructure of the Western Region, the Nigerian government would prove successful in preserving the union. There was significant opportunity throughout this era for not just the local groups to trade off in power status, but also for the dominant imperialist to change. Had Biafra succeeded in securing independence, it would have tremendously boosted both the prestige and economic power of France in West Africa, asserting it as the dominant imperialist in at least Biafra. The conflict in this era was predicated on second-era borders and dealt with first-era cultural differences, ultimately deciding third-era imperialist resource control. Following the Civil War, an equilibrium was re-established, and the power structures by which Britain would continue to exert influence in the region would be further changed. We'll examine this fourth and current era in the next section.

The Fourth Era– A Neoliberal Equilibrium

In the wake of the Civil War, two important things were true in Nigeria. One, that equilibrium had been re-established with regard to the power hierarchy: Britain stood (now largely unchallenged) as the imperialist, Northern and to a lesser extent Western men were the empowered local group, and Easterners and women occupied the out-power local position. Two,

that the re-establishment of this hierarchy came with a period of unity, which really can be more accurately described as unilateral in-power group control. When, even by force of arms, unity is re-established after a power struggle, usually the out-power group is no longer in a serious position to continue their challenge. With domestic affairs (momentarily) settled, the early part of what would become the fourth imperial era in Nigeria was focused largely around Nigeria's relationship with the rest of the world, both in kind and degree. As can be imagined, Britain– being the single most influential exogenous force in Nigeria– had a large stake and took extensive interest in this process. What we'll discuss here of the fourth era will barely scratch the surface of the complex machinations of contemporary imperialism. To do a suitably in-depth analysis of this most current era would take another paper of probably more than this length, because the layers of imperialist history are entrenched at this point in so many intersecting ways. Overall, though, important takeaways from these aspects of fourth-era imperialism are that:

- Stable group membership and intergroup relationships do not necessarily translate into overall political stability– in fact, manageable resistance from out-power groups is seen as an acceptable cost by the imperialist in in-power group
- Britain has taken advantage of previous-era institutions to perpetuate contemporary imperialism
- The in-power local group may still attempt to move away from imperialist influence, but the imperialist uses soft power to subtly enforce their economic and social framework

During the 1970s the Nigerian government embarked on a campaign of economic indigenization– that is, turning foreign-owned capital investments and corporations into Nigerian businesses. Since the primary foreign owner of Nigerian resources was, of course, Britain, this move represented a threat to British profit margins in the country. Another game-theoretic problem cropped up; how far could the Nigerian government go in their indigenization program before Britain intervened, and in turn, to what extent could Britain influence Nigerian decision making through soft power before having to protect their interests with hard power?

The good news from an imperialist perspective was that the extractive institutions of three previous eras of imperialism were so efficient that Britain had ground to lose while still maintaining solid profits from Nigerian resources. As quoted in another paper by Chibuike Uche (2012), a British memorandum described their margins at the dawn of the fourth era as "traditionally high… (some would say excessively so) and… provided the new measures [were] not implemented in any punitive way, [saw that there was] still money to be made, albeit less than before" (p. 748). Nevertheless, the indigenization campaign would be met with contention and bargaining from not just British companies but the British government as well. The indigenization programme was based generally on the idea of government-mandated sale of shares of foreign-owned companies to Nigerians. When the military council passed the decree in early 1972, it stipulated that by April 1974, 22 businesses would be entirely in Nigerian hands

and another 33 would be capped at 60% foreign ownership or complete Nigerian control if their profits were under certain thresholds (200,000 GBP share capital or 500,000 GBP turnover) (ibid., p. 754).

Within our strategic framework, the British government obviously recognized the importance of preserving British profits during this period but wanted to do so as subtly as possible. To this end, it did not act through official supranational mechanisms such as the European Economic Community, to forego the risk of drawing international ire for suppressing a decolonial scheme. In keeping with this tone, British overtures to the Nigerian government to, for example, extend the window of time during which ownership could be transferred were couched in reassurances about British support for the programme overall (ibid., p. 756). The British further explored other avenues of control as the months counted down to the transfer deadline, as best described in deplorable quotes like this one from Cyril Pickard, the British high commissioner in Nigeria at the time; "Have we no levers on the Federal Government which might be used to minimize the scale of nationalization and undermine the influence of the Permanent Secretaries [i.e., Nigerian executive department heads]? Our aid programme is rather feeble… but there must be other ways in which the Nigerians are beholden to us" (quoted ibid., p. 757). As far as evidence to show the deliberate application of imperialist tactics through development regimes in the contemporary era, quotes like this are pretty damning. This epitomizes the self-interested nature of fourth-era economic and political pressures exerted on imperialized nations in the name of democratic or economic development.

Of course, this meant British companies still needed a workable solution to maintain extractive power in Nigeria through the indigenization process. The solutions dreamt up in conjunction with the British government were manifold. One threatened to leave Nigeria for Ghana unless granted an exemption, another hiked their share prices by capitalizing retained earnings to turn a 400% profit on the shares sold. Many others sold their shares to Nigerians under the tacit agreement that they would maintain true control– a move called fronting (ibid., p. 760-761).

It should be noticed that while the in-power and out-power groups have stabilized at this point in time, this does not necessarily equate to political stability. In fact, Nigeria has seen important regime changes during the fourth era. For example, in 1975, Gowon was overthrown by a coup which installed Murtala Mohammed to power, who would be followed after his assassination by Olusegun Obasanjo. This was an important turning point in Nigerian history overall which led to a transition to a more democratic system of power in 1976; however, it did not represent a shift in the groups or the type of imperial power wielded by Britain. Mohammed was from Kano and represented a continuation of Northern and Western control, as evidenced by his succession through the Yoruba Obasanjo. In fact, though the new regime was somewhat more relaxed in its indigenization policies, this was largely because Northerners preferred foreigners in control of finances compared to Yorubas or Igbos (ibid., p. 766). In other words, imperialist nationals were able to maintain control over larger portions of Nigeria's economy to deny this

from out-power groups. Regardless, however, the economic policy drafted by the government in 1977 did close many of the previously mentioned loopholes under the 1972 scheme, and so was on the whole more successful in forcing out foreign ownership where that goal was still extant. Unfortunately, many of the Nigerian professionals who had taken over these firms didn't have the administrative or technical savvy required to operate them, since these ventures had been withheld from them during previous imperialist eras (ibid., p. 769). In 1978, the government passed the Land Use Act, which established all land as a trust owned by the Nigerian people, managed by the respective governor in each state. In practice, this meant that the state governments could now sell oil-produicng land directly to foreign companies without those companies needing to ask permission or grant compensation to local communities. Nevertheless, oil revenues and other important economic sectors began to decline under the democratic government, unknown as Nigeria's Second Republic, which was installed in 1979. To be frank, the institutions of over a century of imperialism in Nigeria by this point were incompatible with democratic political authority and indigenous economic authority. The hierarchical structures in place prior were the work of eras, unable to be written over in just a few years of economic wrestling with unwilling British corporate giants. The Second Republic government was overthrown in 1983, replaced by another autocratic military government. By 1989, this government had eroded the indigenization policy to the degree that new corporations could be 100% owned by foreigners (ibid., p. 170). The attempt and ultimate failure of Nigerian governments to indigenize the economy speaks to the very real institutional nature of the previous eras, while also demonstrating the continued actions of imperialist forces in the fourth era.

A study of the Nigerian economy from 1970-1995 by Janet Olatundun Adelegan (2000) found that the spike in Foreign Direct Investment following the 1988 and 1989 liberalization policies increased imports and consumption but had no effect on gross domestic income or imports and had a negative effect on economic development (p. 21). A consumption-oriented and import-heavy economy is precisely the ripe environment for imperialists to continue extraction and maximum profits, at the direct expense of domestic growth in Nigeria. We can see how British material interests in Nigeria were protected through hard power and military support in the third era, and soft power and economic pressure (often spearheaded by the corporations themselves) in the fourth.

Despite this era representing more of an equilibrium compared to the transitional third era, there have been challenges to the status quo in recent years, due in large part to the inequitable distribution of resources and power. The Land Use Act mentioned above, for example, has had a profound impact on communities in oil-producing regions, as has the 1969 Petroleum Decree, which establishes federal control over the entirety of oil in Nigerian land or sea territory (Ebeku, 2002, p. 207-208). As one can imagine, the effect has been that oil-rich Eastern Nigeria has had to sacrifice the material wealth of its land to the federal government. In theory, this might not sound like a bad or unusual idea– many national governments distribute

the wealth of a resource throughout the entire country through tax and other economic systems. However, since the peoples of Eastern Nigeria are underrepresented in the power structures of the federal government since the fallout of the third era, they do not have much of a say as to how those resources are allocated. Furthermore, oil ventures in the Niger Delta and elsewhere in Eastern Nigeria often have a negative effect on the environment of the surrounding areas. As of 2013, local governments received only 20.6 percent of oil revenue produced in the Niger Delta, with the Federal government taking 52.68 percent and state governments taking 26.72% (Uwasomba & Alumona, 2013, p. 22). Nigeria would still see another four regime changes in the slate of coups and counter-coups between Northern and Western leaders that would ultimately see the Fourth Republic installed in 1999. While each of these was important in the overall scheme of the country, none represented a significant opportunity for the de-imperialization of the former Eastern region. All the while, British and other European oil companies operating in the Delta such as Shell have continued turning enormous profit off of Nigerian oil.

Because of this continuing lack of change in the status quo, many resistance movements, largely calling for the self-determination of ethnic groups in the Niger Delta. In 1991, for example, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni people (a Delta people residing primarily in a small area east of Port Harcourt) presented to the Federal government the Ogoni Bill of Rights, petitioning both the government and the international community to recognize right to self-determination of the Ogoni people. The declaration calculated that since the discovery of oil in Ogoniland in 1958, 100 Billion USD in wealth had been created from the area. “In return for this, the Ogoni have no pipe-borne water, no electricity, very few roads, ill-equipped hospitals and schools and no industry whatsoever” (MOSOP, 2016). The Bill also cites the manifold environmental harms to the land and people that the oil trade has wrought, including the local extinction of many species of flora and fauna critical to the self-sustainability of the region, creating food insecurity in the region. The Kaiama Declaration, issued by the Ijaw Youth Council in 1998, cited similar reasons for what amounted to a declaration of independence. The Declaration estimated that 65% of Nigeria’s GDP and 70% of its foreign exchange earnings came from Ijawland (Ijaw Youth Council, 1998, Art. E). While resistance groups in the Niger Delta have served as a nuisance towards the Federal government, neither of these movements nor other liberation movements in the Niger Delta have represented a serious threat to the status quo in the past three decades.

To step back and track the entire extractionary imperialist processes still employed in the Niger Delta, we can look at the flow of oil revenues, starting in the Delta. Oil is extracted by an imperialist-owned company, exploiting second- and third-era ties to local land that were defended during fourth-era political machinations. About 20% of the revenue paid to the government for this right goes to local government, which is built on a shaky second-era adaptation of decentralized first-era governance, and is therefore prone to corruption and anti-indigenous. 25% goes to the state government, which since 1991 may mean one of six states in the Delta, which were split up to further weaken the collective power of Eastern Nigeria, a

tactic utilized in the second era by the British and attempted by the Gowon government in the third. The remaining 55% or so goes to the Federal government, which due to the second-era borders arbitrated by the British and the administrative capacity of the Northern region inherited from as early as the first era, largely goes towards serving Northern interests. The oil is exported, likely using the skeleton of second-era industrialization in the area around Lagos, providing enough income to the Yoruba population of the area to keep Western-oriented development viable. It is then exported to companies in Britain, the Netherlands, and the United States, who refine it and then either sell it domestically or back to other countries, *including Nigeria*. Nigeria, despite being a rentier-state level oil exporter, imports more refined oil than any other resource as of 2020 (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). Particularly with respect to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, this cyclical dependency generates enormous profits for those imperialist countries. A petroleum product bought in Port Harcourt may have originated from just down the coast, but traveled around the world, destroying the environment and making money for imperialists and empowered local groups along the way, before being sold to an Ijaw or Ogoni person for prices they can't afford due to a tariff on oil imports in Nigeria (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2022). Any resistance to this status quo has been so successfully weakened over the eras that it is considered a worthwhile risk by the profiting groups. This is evidenced by the fact that despite some occasional negotiations, insurgency in the Niger Delta has continued as of 2022 (Bulduk et al., 2022, p. 46). Bulduk et al. (2022) begin to example proposed peace solutions to the continued violence in the Delta. They critique neoliberal propositions for development oriented around FDI as a "negative peace economy" which would perpetuate structural violence through economic incentives (p. 50), and instead promote engagement with out-power local groups such as women.

> Duncanson (2016), for example, criticizes Hudson et al.'s (2012) argument, presented in their *Sex and World Peace*, that gender equality is necessary for peace, claiming that such an argument frames women's rights as a means to an end and falls into the trap of instrumentalising women. Instead, she suggests an understanding of gender equality as mutually constitutive with peace and emphasises the significance of framing women's empowerment as a goal in itself (Bulduk et al., 2022, p. 53).

Bulduk et al.'s use of Duncanson's definition here is critical to understanding what fourth-era anti-imperialism must look like given the nature of fourth-era imperialism. Imperialist structures must be challenged at their core with respect to any system through which an imperialist hierarchy is put in place. Just as in the ethnographic sphere, Hausa have been empowered by imperialism at the expense of Igbos, so too in the gender sphere have cisgender men been empowered over womxn. This points to the importance of multidisciplinary and intersectional anti-imperialism as promoted by these scholars as well as other indigenous scholars like Oyewumi.

As we have seen, the fourth era of imperialism continues to promote new structural challenges to out-power groups while preserving institutional hierarchies established in previous eras. As stated above, the complexity of our current era requires more detailed examination within the context of our four-era, three-player game theoretic framework. In the following section, we will begin to examine where this further research may be effective, as well as considering the universalizability of this framework outside the Nigerian context.

Conclusions– Where to Go from Here?

To a hammer, everything looks like a nail. The complexity of imperialism in Nigeria is such that any political scientist looking for evidence of a theory may find it. Somebody who wanted to argue that the developmental and human rights challenges facing Nigeria are entirely the result of past crimes could easily find examples to show how the situation today could not possibly have existed without the framework of second-era imperialism. Similarly, somebody who wanted to argue that those challenges are entirely down to active imperialism could find numerous examples of that as well. Whatever nail we are looking for– or whatever nail best suits the frame we're trying to build– we will invariably find. This paper works to demonstrate that while both stories are to an extent true, neither is complete. Furthermore, it hopes to adequately explain the contradiction inherent in a country which is showing one of the fastest development rates on the continent while also experiencing inordinate financial hardship and social unrest. These and many other contradictions in Nigeria are not outliers from the trend but a part of it; as we have seen, imperialism at its most insidious appears benevolent, and to some extent will serve a large portion of the population. It won't survive without the actions of all three of the groups we've talked about, which are fluid in composition depending upon the era and the relationship being examined. Understanding this aspect, and the layered nature of imperialist history in Nigeria, is an important first step into creating decolonial and ultimately anti-imperial spaces.

So what are the next steps to go from this foundation? Essentially, further research can go in two directions: deeper and broader. The former would mean examining further the intricacies of imperialism in Nigeria and working to develop strategies to untangle entrenched imperialist institutions, ideologies, and groups. For example, how do Northern extremist groups in Nigeria such as Boko Haram relate to the history of imperialism? Another question to examine would be, how does the arrival of new neoliberal imperialist powers on the global scale (such as China) affect fourth era imperialism in Nigeria?

Expanding this research in breadth would mean examining how universalizable this historization of imperialism would be with respect to other countries in Africa and the rest of the Global South. Given that the case of Nigeria bears out the game theoretic framework of this theory of imperialism, we can start to examine if other countries will do the same. Obviously, there are nuances specific to individual cultures, histories, and geopolitical situations that have drastically changed development outcomes throughout the world. But the strength of this model is that it is not necessarily tied to points in global history but to changes in dynamics between

groups within a specific set. For example, the Central African Republic in relationship with France may be seen as being in the third era of imperialism, whereby there is significant power struggle between two distinct groups and the imperialist is backing one with force of arms. Understanding that the movement from one era to another only occurs with a significant change in incentives for one or more of the sides helps us to analyze not just the situation a set of groups may currently be in, but also what things may look like in the future. Of course, many other imperialist relationships (if this framework does hold on a larger scale) *are* probably likely to be in the fourth era, as to a certain extent it is also true that many of the significant imperialists have evolved loosely together in terms of their goals and strategies.

However, for effective research into anti-imperial strategies, it is perhaps most helpful to look at differences between countries rather than their similarities. Are there local groups that have escaped this periodization, in part or in whole? Is there a fifth era on the horizon or already in existence for some countries? This latter question can help with predictive approaches to geopolitics, and observations about other differences can hopefully show us what strategies have proved more or less successful for combating fourth-era imperialism and eroding the legacy of past eras.

Another area to expand this research would be examining other social structures beyond ethnicity in more detail. This paper has focused primarily on social groups creating along ethnogeographic lines, but has attempted to illustrate similar imperialist divisions imposed with regard to gender, class, and sexual orientation. Ensuring that any further work acknowledges the intersectionality of imperial hierarchies for these groups, particularly by engaging with indigenous feminist and queer scholars is critical to establishing a truly anti-imperial framework for development, peace studies, and international relations.

Clearly, there are many places to go from here. Importantly, though, we now have a more complete framework for the nature of entrenched imperialism in at least Nigeria than we have in the past. Further work, particularly by or in conjunction with indigenous scholars, will help us to begin to pull apart the threads we have revealed here. Because imperialism is the work of generations, anti-imperialism is as well. Hopefully, though, the path forward may be just a little clearer in the future.

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