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Geopolitics of Nigeria: A Politically Divided but Socially Connected Country

Muhammad Abdullahi Maigari¹, Dikko Umaru Radda², Ibrahim Arafat³

¹Al-Qalam University Katsina, Nigeria; kariyoma2@yahoo.com

²Al-Qalam University Katsina, Nigeria; dikkoradda3@gmail.com

³Gombe State University, Nigeria; arafat200912@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: kariyoma2@yahoo.com

ORCID ID: [0000-0002-7928-029X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7928-029X)¹, [0009-0004-4809-8171](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4809-8171)³

Abstract

Nigeria is among the world's most ethnically divided countries, with more than 250 ethnolinguistic groups coexisting. The objectives of this paper are to examine the influence of domestic borders on Nigerians. It also analyzes how the country has remained undivided despite the existence of colonial, post-colonial, and political borders. The researchers approached this problem by collecting secondary data from documented sources and analyzing it using content analysis. The study found that Resource allocation, political appointments, and electoral contests are among the considerations, along with religion and ethnic affiliations. On the surface, geopolitical and ethnoreligious factors are blown out of proportion in Nigeria, where some citizens politicize almost all government policies, programs, and projects. Despite overt political boundaries created and institutionalized by those in government, beneath the surface, citizens interact without considering such demarcations. People carry out their routine financial transactions with customers from different regions of the country without considering geopolitical and ethnoreligious divisions, which aligns with the constructivist theory of border studies. Therefore, this article concludes that politicians create tangible boundaries to realize their political motives. Still, ordinary citizens, in their daily interactions with people from different political divides, move across those boundaries without knowing they exist.

Keywords: Political Boundary, Social Interaction, Colonial Amalgamation, Geopolitical Zones

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*Corresponding author: Correspondence: kariyoma2@yahoo.com

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Introduction

Nigeria is a country where three protectorates were merged and given the name by British colonial administrators. This is because, before 1914, there was no country called Nigeria. In January 1914, the colonial administrators decided to amalgamate the three protectorates under their rule that had existed independently. Sixty-three years (1960- October 2023) after independence and one hundred and nine years (1914-2023) after the amalgamation of the three protectorates by the departed British colonialists, Nigerians have continued to transact and interact both socially and economically without barriers arising from the borders created for colonial political and administrative convenience as a result of the amalgamation. This further underscores Nigeria's fluid border situation in citizens' daily encounters. Still, strict in official/government activities, (Abayomi, 2024) argued that borders are transient elements of social life that change with the situation rather than being indelible components of human society. Rather than remaining fixed and unchanging throughout history, the status of borders often changes. Borders, whether within Nigeria or between Nigeria and its neighbors, are not rigid; people living in Cameroon, the Niger Republic, the Benin Republic, and the Republic of Chad move in and out of Nigeria through unmanned borders because of the existence of mutual and filial relationships that predate the coming of the European colonialists to Africa. Those borders change, leak, and have different meanings for different individuals. Whether the state in question is the Congo or even France, no one could naively assume that a person's basic identity is always rooted in those living within its borders. Introducing the idea of defined boundaries among communities in Nigeria, a European phenomenon of colonialism that historically was used to demarcate the administrative units in Nigeria, is one of the causes of boundary conflict that began in Nigeria. The British Government adopted a twin policy in Nigeria, combining its various administrative units into a single country while simultaneously balkanizing Nigeria into smaller hierarchical administrative units, called divisions, each under a Division Officer (DO).

Since Nigeria's independence from Britain in 1960, the country has witnessed a series of internal boundary disputes and religious conflicts, resulting from the colonial government's policy of territorial expansion, which post-independent leaders continued. Farmer-herder conflicts in Africa were triggered by resource shortages, marginalization, ethno-religious and political variables, as well as institutional and governance shortcomings, which contributed to the wars (Famous Nwankwo, 2025) More than six decades (1960 to 2026) after independence, the post-colonial Government in Nigeria did not end the system of colonial rule; instead, it reinforced the

colonial strategy of divide and rule along ethnic, regional, and religious lines in the creation of States, Local Governments, and the allocation of resources. In post-colonial Nigeria, oppression, marginalization, and government influence, unequal distribution of wealth and resources, nepotism, and socio-religious bigotry are to be blamed for the local conflicts over control of the natural resources, which have, over time, led religious groups, communities, local governments, and States to deadly protracted border disputes (Bazzi & Gudgeon, 2021). The objectives of this paper are to examine the influence of domestic borders on Nigerians. To analyze how the country has remained an undivided country despite the existence of colonial, post-colonial, and political borders.

Geographical locations have occupied a central place in politics and administration before independence, and they continued to wield significant influence in post-independent Nigeria. In extant literature, geographical politics, or geopolitics, is viewed from an imaginary perspective. That is, it constrained or influenced the lives of ordinary citizens who go about their daily transactions on the streets. Nigeria is among the ethnically divided countries in the world, but these divisions are most evident in politics, in the mobilization of the electorate for votes or the sharing of government benefits; beyond such desires, they are not reflected in citizens' interactions and movements.

In research conducted in Indonesia, (Bazzi & Gudgeon, 2021) found that the creation of new districts for ethnic reasons, driven by political interests or motives, has been a major cause of social tension in the country. Ethnic districts are very important under a democratic government, where district leadership indicates that such ethnic groups dominate and control the territory under their jurisdiction. This is similar to the rationale for the creation of States and Local Government Areas in Nigeria, based on ethnic, political, and religious considerations. However, in naming the States, geographical landmarks and historical names were used instead of names that reflect ethnic ownership of the States and Local Government Areas.

Cameroon is a country sharply divided by linguistic differences introduced by the British and French colonial administrators. The linguistic differences between French- and English-speaking regions affect the social and transportation systems within Cameroon. These linguistic differences are reflected in the daily life of many Cameroonians (Kučera, 2022). This difference has been politicized and transformed into an agitation for an independent country, Ambazonia, by the English-speaking region of Cameroon. The colonial border remains relevant and restricts

movement between French- and English-speaking regions. The remnants of colonial borders drawn by Europeans in Nigeria are the continued recognition of the three protectorates established by the British during colonialism (North, West, and East). This is used to rotate the President's seat among the three former protectorates, despite the presence of multiple ethnic minorities in each region. In political arrangements in Nigeria, religious and ethnic minorities in the North, West, and East are struggling for political influence and relevance, similar to the way the English-speaking part of Cameroon is agitating; in Nigeria, the agitation led to civil war in 1967.

Similarly, (Charles, 2017) observed that since 2008, the South African government has faced public protests over claims that residents are dissatisfied with the delivery of municipal services. Community protests in the Limpopo province's Malamulele and Vuwani settlements occurred from 2014 to 2016. Both groups desired their own municipality to be separate from other ethnic groups. Ethnicity was used to determine internal boundaries, which translates into chaos and violence in the country. (Khadiagala, 2010) has examined the nature of borders between communities in East Africa and their impact on the lives of the inhabitants. The study examined how borders drawn during the pre- and post-colonial eras contributed to population stability in the sub-region while simultaneously adversely affecting communities that had previously lived together but were divided by these boundaries. These limits, however, are products of human ingenuity and have developed into natural formations that set bounds for citizenship and the outward reach of authority.

(Carmichael, 2006) has assessed how ethnic boundaries became major triggers of war in Bosnia and of the separation of some Eastern European countries along religious, ethnic, and political ideological lines. The Bosnian Serbs and Croats unleashed a cleansing of Muslims, conveniently because of the existence of boundaries, which made it easier for the attackers to identify the locations that Muslims occupied. The study explored how ethnic and religious boundaries within a country had aided or eased the perpetration of crime against a target population based on their age and sexual orientation. Also, (Duijzings, 1999) analyzed the situation in Kosovo over internal boundaries, which led to ethnic violence. He stated that, although there was significant free movement across the racial and religious divide in Kosovo's past through trade, cultural diffusion, religious interchange, and conversion, such movement continued. The shared cultural characteristics among different racial and religious groups have never been completely impermeable throughout history, despite divisions. The literature from Eastern Europe has described a context similar to Nigeria's, despite the civil war and subsequent ethnic and religious rivalry, mostly politically motivated; Nigerians from different parts coexist and interact.

Connected to the above discourse, in Northern Kenya, for example, the issue of domestic boundaries, which has ethnic interpretations, was a cause of concern because it often degenerates into an outbreak of violence. The creation of land boundaries in the Isolo country has exacerbated the age-long dispute between farmers and pastoralists. The Kenyan Government's decision to construct public infrastructure has ignited land and ethnic identity politics, as land for livestock grazing is central to the lives of rural farmers and herders. In this sense, domestic boundaries among ethnic nationalities determine or influence the movement of people within the affected places. The boundary-making in Northern Kenya is not only artificial but also reflected in the daily activities of the residents. People are not allowed to travel or settle in certain places because they have crossed their physical and ethnic boundaries. The interaction between the nomadic Fulani and farmers in different parts of Nigeria is characterized by the farmers referring to themselves as the owners of the land and Fulani herders as settlers who migrate seasonally with their livestock, grazing on farmland and destroying crops. This developed into ethnic hatred among the Fulani and other ethnic groups who are predominantly farmers. This has created a unique contest over land as a resource for farming and livestock grazing between the two occupations that depend on land for survival in Nigeria.

In Ethiopia, internal border issues have become a concern in the political and administrative circles. (Yang & Umar, 2026) found that urban landscapes in Jigjiga, the capital of Ethiopia's Somali Regional State, have been used to divide the city along ethnic lines. The politics of identity in the city have affected settlement patterns and interactions among residents. The internal border regime in these areas forms the basis of political value in government, as it affects the movement of people and the circulation of national resources among citizens. Conflicts over possession of Babile Town (between the Oromia and Somali regional states), between the Somali and Oromia regional states, between Gujji Oromo in Oromia regional states, between the Oromia and Benishagul Gumuz regional states, and other ethnic boundary-related disputes are some examples or illustrations of ethnic boundary-related conflicts in Ethiopia (boundary determination conflicts) (Akhavain et al., 2026) This literature from Ethiopia has highlighted the importance of domestically drawn borders in shaping the daily lives of people in some countries. In contrast, in others, they serve merely political and administrative convenience and the fulfillment of the vested interests of leaders and political elites in Nigeria. The inability of the border division to negatively affect Nigeria's internal relations has contributed to the country's survival as an indivisible entity.

Methods

The researcher has utilized secondary data from different sources. The data were obtained from a wide range of research articles and institutional documents, enabling the researcher to address the study's objective. In line with the established tradition in social research that adopts secondary data, which is the use of data already collected by different researchers for a different purpose, existing documents were generated from different sources and analyzed based on the objectives of the study. The inclusion criteria are that the document/article must focus on the geopolitics of citizens' domestic lives. The researchers adopted content analysis to analyze the secondary data. The method is considered appropriate because it employs techniques to analyze documents and communication materials by recognizing patterns, themes, or biases.

Result and Discussion

The domination of some ethnic groups over others in political affairs and religious considerations in different parts of Nigeria cannot be denied. It has led to some violent conflicts, which have destroyed life and property from 1960 to 2022. Ethnicity and religious domination were triggers or causal factors of some violent conflicts in different parts of Nigeria, such as Plateau State, between the Hausa people, who are predominantly Muslims, and the Berom, together with other ethnic groups who are predominantly Christians. The Hausa Muslims are regarded as settlers in Plateau State by some ethnic groups who consider themselves indigenous. Any attempt by the Hausa Muslims to occupy leadership positions or appointments either in the Government or in the monarchy was violently resisted by the ethnic groups that considered themselves indigenes. The appointment of a Hausa Muslim as a Coordinator of a National Poverty Eradication Program (NAPEP) in Jos North in 1999 was rejected by the indigenous ethnic groups and led to an outbreak of violence in Jos City. The spillover effects of what happened in 1999 led to episodes of armed violence in Plateau State in 2002, 2008, 2010, and 2011, where some people were killed and many displaced. According to (Okonkwo, 2026) the Nigerian government has given local authorities the power to deny or allocate social amenities and rights to Nigerians within their jurisdiction. This has enabled the local authorities in Plateau State and other parts of Nigeria to use ethnic affiliation as one of the criteria for exclusion and inclusion, and the consequences of such politicization of ethnicity were a series of ethnic, political, and religious violence in some States in Nigeria.

Commuters move freely along major federal highways from Maiduguri in Borno State, at the extreme part of the Northeast, to Port Harcourt in Rivers State in the South-South, cutting across

more than 10 States. The same applies from Sokoto in the Northwest to Enugu State in the Southeast, as well as to the ones linking the North Central with the South-West and Southeast. (Adelakun et al., 2025) have succinctly captured the existing reality of internal boundaries in Nigeria that influence social and political implications for social disparities, manifested in the unequal distribution and access to resources (both tangible and intangible) and social opportunities (Inobemhe et al., 2025). They can also be seen in consistent behavioral patterns of association in communities and marital relationships. Based on the above discussion, this article does not downplay the communal conflicts over the land and water border in Nigeria, particularly among pastoral and fishing communities. However, such administrative divisions have not impeded or restricted the social intercourse of Nigerians across the domestic demarcations.

Borders designed by political administrators serve as a basis for inclusion and exclusion in politics, power-sharing, and governmental affairs. At the same time, the same socially constructed dichotomous lines are not visible or do not affect social interactions among Nigerians of different ethnic and religious affiliations. As a country that houses more than 250 ethnic groups, demarcating borders for each ethnic group and allowing such divisions to determine the basis for interaction and movement, Nigeria might have been divided like some countries in the former USSR along ethnic lines. However, the country remains a united entity as of 2026 because geographical and political factors rarely affect citizens' daily affairs, despite their differences. In Nigeria, the creation of ethnic-based political parties such as the National Congress of Nigeria and Cameroon (East), Northern People Congress (North), and Action Group (West) as a result of the country's division into the three regions of East, North, and West in 1945 sparked fierce ethnic rivalry among the political elite. To strengthen their position of power, the political elites returned to the area. The struggle for supremacy in space intensified. However, over the years, this ethnic animosity in politics has persisted and heightened the level of political instability to the point where nearly all general elections held in the post-independence era have been marred by electoral violence that has resulted in the loss of lives and property. (Ojonimi et al., 2025)

Politically Divided but Socially Connected

In discussing political boundaries and everyday boundaries in Nigeria, it is essential to note that borders and boundaries) Both are designed or created for identity, regulation of human movement, control of resources, and other administrative affairs (Adeniyi & Isah, 2023). In different parts of the world, territorial, air, and maritime borders demarcate or separate countries.

However, boundaries in Nigeria also serve similar purposes for States and Local Government Areas (the second and third tiers of Government), allowing states to operate separately and, to some extent, independently of their immediate neighboring communities. (Uduji & Okolo-Obasi, 2021) explained that a border's function is to regulate the movement of individuals, products, services, capital, and information between nations. The border would matter less if states agreed to liberalize these flows. Okano's position highlighted an issue at the border between two countries. However, it is also related to political divisions in Nigeria, both imaginary and real, over place of origin, ethnicity, and religious differences that affect Nigerians' social interactions.

Political and Everyday Boundaries

Political gerrymandering has been central to the delineation of physical and political boundaries in Nigeria since 1960, when Nigeria became independent. Boundary delineation is a source of tension between competing divides because it serves as a benchmark for resource allocation and a determinant of the number of representatives in both the State and National parliaments. Additionally, boundaries determine voting strength, which is used to exert political influence in local and national political contests and in power-sharing (Odorige, 2024). To acquire political power within a given domain, internal demarcations were drawn to establish a new sphere of Control. In line with the above assertion, it was stated that to create a fair balance in the voting population, electoral constituency borders may need to be adjusted or redrawn. This process is known as constituency demarcation. The National Assembly mandated the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) to revise the boundaries of Senatorial Districts and Federal Constituencies at least every 10 years under Section 73 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It is important to note that Nigeria last delineated its borders in 1996 when General Sani Abacha was the military ruler. (Hady & Ibrahim, 2023). Therefore, the nation's political borders were supposed to be redefined in 2006. It was necessary to conduct a new constituency delimitation exercise before the General Elections in 2007, 2011, 2015, 2019, and 2023. However, it did not take place despite Nigeria's population increasing from 111.4 million in 1996 to approximately 170 million in 2015 (an increase of almost 66%) and to 250 million in 2022 (an estimated increase of 85%). Although population plays a significant role in the delineation of constituencies in Nigeria, the exercise is primarily carried out to achieve equality of registration and voting units, equality in the number of Local Governments within a constituency, and mutual affinities, among other reasons. (Mustapha & Sulaiman, 2015).

It can be deduced from the above discourse that, in Nigeria's political sphere, the State and Local Governments of origin are the first consideration when contesting for political power. In many instances, the majority of Nigerians use ethnic and political divisions as veritable tools to mobilize voters during elections. This is because each State of the federation demands equal representation in the central government, and the same is reflected at the State Government level. This formed the basis for agitation for marginalization and injustice by certain groups in different parts of Nigeria. In some instances, political boundaries led to violent clashes in Ekiti State between Ife and Modakeke, in Benue and Taraba States, and in Nasarawa and Benue States. In the political realm, there is a rigid division between Northern and Southern Nigeria. The political atmosphere is always tense whenever a President from one region of Nigeria finishes the second term of eight years in office; political elites and ethnic far-right agitate vigorously for a power shift to their geopolitical zone. During every election cycle in Nigeria, agitations for marginalization and domination along ethnic, regional, and religious lines dominate the electioneering campaigns and serve as a tool for wooing support to secure electoral victory. In their submission on internal boundary tensions in Nigeria and their effects, (Charles, 2017) referred to the political boundaries as artificial colonial boundaries that separated and merged communities without consideration of their ethnic, anthropological, and cultural differences. This is manifested in a series of ethnic, religious, and political unrest and violence in different parts of Nigeria.

Despite the violent conflicts, Nigerians have continued to coexist in their respective place of residence after the violence. This is because virtually all the States in Nigeria were not named after any ethnic groups domiciled in the areas. However, the States are named after geographical locations or historical artifacts. Even in the homogenous States in South-eastern Nigeria (Enugu, Abia, Anambra, Imo and Ebonyi, predominantly Igbo States), there are ethnic minorities from the geopolitical zone and other parts of Nigeria cohabitating peacefully because the name of the States did not denote that only ethnic groups from that area reserved the rights to occupy or reside in the areas (Adjeketa et al., 2025). The creation of States in Nigeria by different military governments from 1967 to 1996 gave rise to new majorities and minorities within the States. However, it has not restricted other citizens or ethnic groups from entering or leaving the States or from residing there. It can be observed that, in the history of State and Local Government creation in Nigeria under the military governments of General Yakubu Gowon, General Murtala Mohammed, General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, and General Sani Abacha, this process has not led to population transfer from the old to the new States. This indicates that the citizens remain in their places of residence despite

changes in the names of their geographical locations. This further shows that internal boundaries in Nigeria are more of a political and administrative tool for inclusion and exclusion, resource sharing, and mobilization of political support during electoral contests. Geopolitical boundaries in Nigeria have not generated or triggered armed violence because of the aforementioned reasons, whereas in the Balkans, partition along ethnic and religious lines led to violence.

In Nigeria, the struggle for independence followed the pattern fashioned by the British colonial administration. It was the vocal few (elites) from the three protectorates who spearheaded it. Independence was won by a combined effort of the elites from the three protectorates (Obafemi Awolowo from the West, Sir Ahmadu Bello from the North, and Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe from the South). The protectorates brought leaders whose allegiance was not to the corporate entity called Nigeria, but rather to how to ascend to power using their regional background as a scaffold. The regional or protectorate division served as a yardstick for recruitment into the colonial administration and resource allocation.

Furthermore, the precedent set by the departed British colonialists has continued to manifest in Nigeria's political affairs sixty-two years after independence. After the First Republic was terminated in January 1966 by the military, the Military Government changed the system of division from protectorates to States. One of the heads of State created 12 States from the 3 regions. Continuously, a series of military regimes created additional States and Local Government Areas up to 1 October 1996, when the last military Head of State created six States and Local Government Areas. As of December 2022, there are thirty-six States and 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria. The National Boundary Commission in Nigeria was established to demarcate boundaries among States and local governments.

Examples of Everyday Boundaries

However, despite the tension generated by rigid political boundaries within Nigerian communities, the daily interactions among Nigerians from different divides suggest otherwise. Northern Nigeria is known for producing foodstuffs and livestock. (Guanah, 2025). Markets for foodstuffs and livestock in States such as Enugu, Abia, Ebonyi, and Rivers State are controlled by Northerners. On the other hand, markets for automobile spare parts and clothing are dominated by traders from South-eastern and Southwestern Nigeria. In Lagos State, hundreds of Northerners are engaged in transporting fruits, livestock, and grains produced in the North.

Igbo people, whose origin is Southeast Nigeria, are the predominant residents of the Sabon Gari area of the Kano metropolis. As in Kano, in other parts of Northern Nigeria, the Igbos and Yoruba from the Southwest dominate the pharmaceutical, automobile spare parts, clothing, and brewery businesses, which are mostly produced in the Southeast or Southwest, or imported from foreign countries. The reality on the ground across all parts of Nigeria reveals that, on paper or administratively, Nigeria is among the most internally divided countries in the world, with marked ethnic, religious, and geopolitical demarcations that are used as benchmarks for exclusion or inclusion in government affairs and the allocation/sharing of public resources. The ability of Nigerians from different divides to cohabit peacefully has been the reason why all permutations and predictions about the breakaway country failed. This is not to downplay or deny the fact that there exists historical antagonism among different ethnic groups in different parts of Nigeria. However, there is a free flow of Nigerians between regions.

Many Nigerians are familiar with land disputes because they relate to lineage or family descent and town loyalties among the Yorubas of Southwestern Nigeria. Large numbers of individuals are typically involved in boundary disputes at the local level, whereas political attention and concerns about local administration focus on land conflicts between neighboring towns. Although conflicts over the boundary's position frequently arise, they rarely extend to disagreements over each other's rights or status outside the contested territory. Explaining the nature of mutual interactions among different parts of geographical locations that were joined and named Nigeria by the colonial masters in 1914, (Abayomi, 2024) stated that before the arrival of colonial masters, there were few known interstate boundaries in Africa since the customary process for establishing boundaries there involved several criteria and procedures that were distinct from those used in the West. The traditional values associated with land, migration, and cross-border activities also did not strictly adhere to the pattern later imposed by European incursions in Africa. Spiritual ceremonies and the use of natural features like trees, rivers, streams, hills, mountains, and forests were a part of boundary agreements between city-states and communities, rights of access, land grants, and boundary creation in the quest to seize and hold new territories or build Africa. Deducing from Babatola's assertion, the fluidity of internal boundaries in Nigeria has its roots in the inherited patterns of movement and interaction that predated the arrival of Portuguese, German, and British colonialists in present-day Nigeria.

(Quitow et al., 2025) asserts that by ascribing meanings and values through discourse, governments establish spaces. Faleg explains the motives behind the creation of political

boundaries and, sometimes, the gerrymandering of existing borders to advance political interests. It can be deduced from the above review that boundaries are social constructs that denote where things are done differently or in one way. They are also likely to be full of conflict and tension because they are the meeting point of various ways of doing things. By embracing methods of acting and rejecting, sometimes even fighting off alternative ways of acting, people erect barriers for the protection of interests that exclude others (Quitow et al., 2025).

In Nigeria, ethnicity is tied to place of residence, with some Nigerians designated as settlers and others as indigenes. This is because being an indigene of a particular area or community is one of the criteria for political appointment, contesting for elective political positions, and occupying the traditional throne. It serves as a scaffold to ascend to power and access the government's treasury; a contest over who is an indigene often leads to an outbreak of violence. In contrast, a contest over internal boundaries and the movement of goods and people between communities of different ethnic groups and religious affiliations rarely triggers violence across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones (Northwest, Northeast, Northcentral, Southwest, South-South, and Southeast).

For example, the second-largest cattle Market in Nigeria is the Amanesa Cattle Market, located in Awka, the Capital of Anambra State. Anambra is one of the States in South-eastern Nigeria that are agitating for secession and the establishment of a sovereign State of Biafra for the Igbo people. All the cattle are brought from the States in North-western Nigeria, parts of the Niger Republic and the Republic of Chad. The Market serves the remaining four States in the Southeast, supplying cattle for beef production. In the market, Igbo and Hausa marketers conduct their commercial transactions without reflecting what is happening in the political sphere, namely the nagging demand by the Igbo people for a breakaway from Nigeria.

Additionally, there are Kara Market, Onyingbo Market, Oko Oba Cattle Market, Odo Eran Market, Bodija Market, Moniya Market, Oluode Market, Kuto Market, and Gbonagun Market in Lagos, Oyo State, Osun State, Ogun State, and Ogun State, respectively. Daily, Trucks transport cattle and other livestock from Northern Nigeria, the Niger Republic, and Chad via routes to the Southwest, with the major marketers from Northern Nigeria. UNICEF (2020) reported that in Agege, a community in Lagos State, more than 200,000 Hausa people have resided since 1860. Also, the Idi-Araba area of Lagos State is home to the majority of the state's Hausa people, who are engaged in various businesses, ranging from foreign currency exchange to housekeeping. Statistics show that Igbo people are the second-largest ethnic group in Lagos State (45 percent).

They strategically dominate commerce after the Yoruba people, while the Yorubas are the feudal lords of the metropolis (Edomah, 2016). In Northern Nigeria, there were segregated settlements before colonialism, called Sabon Gari, Tudun Wada in Kano, Zaria in Kaduna State, and Jos in Plateau State, which were exclusively for people from other parts of Nigeria. They coexist peacefully and carry out their businesses with the indigenous people without any barriers. Northcentral is a geopolitical zone that connects the Northwest with the Southeast and also shares boundaries with the South-South and Southwest (Rahmadi et al., 2021). Commuters travel to different geopolitical zones without hindrance or entry restrictions imposed by the State Government (the second tier of Government in Nigeria) and the Local Government Council (the third tier of Government in Nigeria). To understand why Nigerians from the North reside in the East and West, and vice versa, it is explained that waves of human migration, a major feature of Nigeria's pre-colonial history, brought people from the forest into the grassland and vice versa. In each case, the newcomers had to adjust to their new environments.

The above discourse is that the constitutional provisions in Nigeria, which recognize ethnic, religious, and geographical considerations in all affairs of Government (in the three tiers of Government), have little impact on the daily activities of many Nigerians. Article 2, section 14(3) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) states that the composition of the Government of the Federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried out in such a manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty, thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few state or other sectional groups in that Government or any of its agencies. Article 2, section 14(4) states that the composition of the Government of a State, a Local Government Council or any of the agencies of such government or council and the conduct of the affairs of the Government or council or such agencies shall be carried out in such manner as to recognise the diversity of the people within its areas of authority and the need to promote a sense of belonging and loyalty among all the people federation (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria).

For example, in North-western Nigeria, the creation of Jigawa State from Kano State in 1992 separated people who had been together from time immemorial. Significant populations of Kano and Jigawa share the same ethnic groups (Hausa and Fulani) and religion (Islam). With the creation of Jigawa State, a person from Kano cannot be employed by the Jigawa State Government in the public service or appointed by the Federal Government to represent the people of Jigawa State, and

vice versa (Abayomi, 2024). However, the people of the two States are living together without considering their respective States. It is only on Government property established in villages on the border between the two States that a visitor or outsider will know whether he is in Kano or Jigawa State. The inhabitants of the two States live harmoniously in villages along the boundary between Kano and Jigawa States, sharing similar cultural practices, namely attending Eid and Durbar festivals (annual Muslim festivals) in both States. The people of Jigawa State annually travel to Kano to witness the Durbar festival, and the people of Kano also attend the same event in Hadejia and Kazaure Local Government Areas of Jigawa State. Despite their separation by the creation of the State, the people of the two States are culturally united and socially indivisible.

The people of Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara share similar linguistic styles, religion, and cultural practices. On August 27, 1991, Kebbi State was created from Sokoto State, and on October 1, 1996, Zamfara State was created from Sokoto State. The creation of two States from Sokoto State has politically and administratively divided the people of the old Sokoto State into three (A. Fauzi et al., 2018). However, in daily interactions, it is extremely difficult for people who are not from the area to distinguish an indigene of Sokoto State from one of Kebbi or Zamfara when they are speaking their variant of the Hausa language. Before colonialism in Nigeria, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States were under the caliphate of 18th-century Islamic reformer Usmanu Danfodiyo. This historical ancestry still binds the three States together in social activities, regardless of the boundaries established at the time of the States' creation. Despite the close-knit relationship and historical bond among the people of the three States, an indigene of Sokoto State cannot represent Kebbi and Zamfara States—and vice versa—in any official position (Charles, 2017). In the Northeast geopolitical zone, for example, the creation of Yobe State in 1992 from Borno State has separated the Kanuri people in Yobe State from their origins in Borno State. There is a clan of the Kanuri ethnic group called Manga, which originated in the Machina Local Government Area of Yobe State. The creation of Yobe State from Borno State has dissected the Manga clan into two, under different monarchs. As a result of the kinship relationship among the Kanuri people in Yobe and Borno States, the boundaries between the two States do not affect their daily movement across them. In the border towns between Borno and Yobe States, the Kanuri language is the language of communication. With their similar facial marks, it is difficult to distinguish indigenes of the two States. However, a Kanuri person from Yobe State cannot contest any elective position or be employed in the civil service in Borno State, and vice versa. With the creation of Yobe State, a Kanuri person in Yobe State cannot occupy the seat of the Shehu of Borno (a monarch of the Kanuri

people), even if the person is from the royal family (Afangideh et al., 2018).

In the Southwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria, there are six States: Ekiti, Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, and Osun. A significant population of people in the six States belongs to the Yoruba ethnic group. The Yoruba people in Nigeria, Togo, and Benin trace their origins to Oduduwa. However, the borders drawn by French and British colonialists have resulted in the Yoruba being found in three African countries that share common boundaries. With the creation of the States, Yoruba people in public and political affairs do not view themselves as descendants of Oduduwa but as indigenes of their respective States. (A. M. Fauzi et al., 2025). However, in cultural spheres, the Yoruba are among the most united ethnic groups in Nigeria at home and in the diaspora. These strong cultural ties have made political and administrative boundaries less relevant and unrecognizable in the Southwest geopolitical zone. The situation is the same in Nigeria's Southeast geopolitical zone. There are five States in the geopolitical zone (Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi, and Imo) that are exclusively dominated by Igbo-speaking people. State of origin is given serious consideration, even when granting admission to tertiary institutions. For example, indigenes of Imo State are not offered admission to study at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in Enugu State. Admission into Federal Universities established in the five States is strictly based on State of origin, despite all Igbo people in Nigeria tracing their origin to a deity called Arochukwu. This segregation based on State and Local Government in the Southeast is not found in the everyday encounters of Igbo people from the five States. There is free movement of people and goods across the States in the geopolitical zone, without official discrimination, in the public sector and political spheres. In the industrial cities of Aba in Abia State, Nnewi in Anambra State, Abakaliki in Ebonyi State, Enugu in Enugu State, and Owerri in Imo State, it is hard to differentiate the State of origin of the Igbo people as they relate and interact with people from the same ancestor (Charles, 2017).

Conclusion

Nigeria has remained a united country despite a series of ethnic and religious uprisings (among members of the same ethnic groups or between ethnic groups), conflicts, and violence because citizens still relate to one another beyond administrative and political divisions. Nigeria has survived various secession attempts because none of the 36 States of the federation or the six geopolitical zones are named after the ethnic groups living in them. States in Nigeria were named after geographical and historical heritage, which prevents the places' inhabitants from making it exclusive for their ethnic or religious groups. This is situated within the theoretical underpinnings of process-oriented and

constructivist theories of border studies that view the border as constructed and not permanent, and that do not inhibit people's activities. Unlike what happened in some countries in Eastern Europe, it laid the foundation for armed violence and the separation of some countries, such as Kosovo, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Croatia, which is in line with the traditional and functional approaches to understanding borders. Politically and administratively, Nigeria is among the most divided countries in the world, with recruitment into the civil service, admission to schools, and political appointments based on a person's place of origin. Fundamentally, geographical affinity unites Nigerians more than ethnic or religious affiliation, as geographical origin is not exclusive to any one faith or linguistic group.

A Nigerian citizen must possess an indigene certificate from the Local Government Area of origin, duly signed by the village's traditional rulers, certifying that the person's roots or ancestry are from the village. Similarly, a state indigene certificate is required after obtaining the Local Government indigene certificate. With these administrative divisions, a significant portion of Nigeria's population goes about their daily activities without considering the formal dichotomous lines. In this article, the researcher has identified both symbolic and concrete borders that were created from the colonial era through the post-independence period (2022). Internal boundaries in Nigeria set borders for accessing state resources and occupying political positions, on the one hand, and for relaxed social relationships between communities or territories, on the other. The article concludes that the existence of ethnic or primordial differences accompanying such demographic characteristics is not taken into account in most Nigerians' lives. Nigeria has remained a united country because political and administrative borders have not hindered the movement of people across States and Local Government Areas. The main reason why internal borders do not constitute a threat to the movement of people across the 36 States is that the different military governments created the States and Local Government Areas without an in-depth consideration of historical and social ties among the people, but conducted a brief referendum in which the opinions of a few selected elites were sought before the creation. This has rendered the boundaries of State and Local Governments valueless in the lives of ordinary citizens of Nigeria, even though these boundaries are considered very important in Government and political affairs.

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