

<b>Institution: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: D27 – Area Studies</b>
<b>Title of case study: Changing perceptions of difference and conflict in Nigeria</b>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)</p> <p>It is often assumed in media and policy discourses that difference – especially religious difference – automatically leads to conflict. The impact of this research stems from its demonstration that in the highly diverse and religiously divided Yoruba area of southwestern Nigeria this is not the case. By focusing on everyday experiences and interpersonal relationships, the research shows that people have evolved productive practices of cohabitation, and that these are important for the political process. The beneficiaries of the impact have been (a) international and UK policy-makers in diplomacy and foreign relations, (b) international and UK development-related policy-makers, (c) UK-based business/professional risk analysts, (d) UK and international refugee decision-makers, and (e) the wider public, including the Nigerian public.</p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)</p> <p>The research was based at the Department of African Studies and Anthropology, University of Birmingham between 2003 and 2013. Under the leadership of Insa Nolte, a senior lecturer in the department, the research has been interdisciplinary, drawing on ethnographic knowledge of Yoruba practices, historical research and an interdisciplinary engagement with theoretical literature beyond the remit of anthropology.</p> <p>Nolte's work focuses on the importance of everyday experiences and relationships for the formation of Yoruba and Nigerian political identities. The central insights of her work focus on:</p> <p><u>I. The importance of everyday encounters in wider contexts</u></p> <p>Nolte's work on Yoruba history and politics (Publications R1 and R3; Grants A, C, D, E) criticizes especially the narrow definitions of the public in contemporary debates on African societies. It has been significant in confirming the importance of everyday participation in public affairs for wider historical, social and political developments.</p> <p><u>II. The historical and social constitutedness of Yoruba identities</u></p> <p>Nolte's research on the formation of Yoruba identities (Publications R3-R5; Grants A, C, D, E) explores social identity as contextual and thus always potentially political. The emphasis on the historical trajectories of important forms of social identity constitutes an important theoretical element of her work.</p> <p><u>III. Practices centring on Islam, Christianity and traditional religion in southwest Nigeria</u></p> <p>Nolte's examination of the landscape of intense religious competition in Nigeria (Publication R2; Grants A, B) has illustrated that Yoruba Muslims, Christians and traditionalists often work and live closely together, and that the incidence of direct religious conflict among them is lower than in other religiously heterogeneous parts of Nigeria. This points to the importance of the private and everyday for the understanding of religious conflict as well as tolerance.</p> <p>Overall, Nolte's work emphasises the importance of everyday experiences and interpersonal relationships for the political process. It shows that while conflict can create and exacerbate difference, difference is not automatically a cause of conflict. It therefore offers an understanding of social, political and religious dynamics in Nigeria which breaks away from the common assumption – prevalent in the media – that difference is always the root cause of conflict. Instead, it shows the importance of a detailed understanding of how people work out interpersonal relationships on the ground in specific contexts.</p> <p>For this reason, it is of interest beyond academia not only to Nigerian stakeholder groups, but also to policy-makers, diplomats, businesses, development practitioners and religious leaders.</p>
<p><b>3. References to the research</b></p> <p>R1) <b>Nolte, Insa 2013.</b> (with Leena Hoffmann). "The roots of neopatrimonialism: Opposition politics</p>

and popular consent in Southwest Nigeria”, in Adebani, Wale and Ebenezer Obadare (eds), *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: Critical Reinterpretations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 25-52. **[available from HEI on request]**

R2) **Nolte, Insa 2010**. With Nathaniel Danjibo and Oladeji Abubakar. “Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria”, Religions and Development Working Paper No 39, published by the International Development Department of the University of Birmingham for the Department for International Development (DfID), 109 pp., ISBN 0 7044 2777 X and 9780 7044 2777 8.

**[available from HEI on request]**

R3) **Nolte, Insa 2009**. *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo: The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International Africa Institute, 336 pp, ISBN 9780748638956. **[available from HEI on request]**

Also published outside the UK as:

**Nolte, Insa 2010** (USA). *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo. The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist*, Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 296 pp., ISBN 1-59221-756-7.

**Nolte, Insa 2010** (Nigeria). *Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo. The Local Politics of a Nigerian Nationalist*, Ibadan: Bookbuilders and Safuran Publishers, 421 pp., ISBN 978-978-50022-1-8.

R4) **Nolte, Insa 2008**. “‘Without women, nothing can succeed’: Yoruba women in the Oodua Peoples’ Congress (OPC), Nigeria”, *Africa* 78 (1), 84-106. **[DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/E0001972008000065>].**

R5) **Nolte, Insa 2007**. “Ethnic Vigilantes and the State: The Oodua People’s Congress in southwestern Nigeria”, *International Relations* 21 (2), 217-235. **[DOI: [10.1177/0047117807077005](http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0047117807077005)].**

**Evidence of quality of research**

**Funding:** The high quality of the research is evidenced by a sustained record of successful grant applications from various UK and international funders to support it, including the following:

(A) Dr Insa Nolte, Principal Investigator, Starting Independent Researcher Grant funded by the European Research Council, February 2012-January 2017 (€1,497,520.37), leading a split-location team of up to 14 members in the UK and Nigeria;

(B) Professor Carole Rakodi and Professor Gurharpal Singh, Principal Investigators, with Insa Nolte as Co-Investigator, Research Consortium “Religion and development” funded by the UK Department for International Development (DfID), September 2005-December 2010 (overall grant c. £3.4million; Nolte managed two Nigeria-based teams and approx. £101,887 of the grant);

(C) Dr Olukoya Ogen, British Academy Visiting Fellowship, January-April 2009, to work in collaboration with Nolte as host (£11,188);

(D) Dr Aderemi Ajala, British Academy Visiting Fellowship, May-August 2006, to work in collaboration with Nolte as host (£6,049);

(E) Dr Insa Nolte, Principal Investigator, Economic and Social Research Council grant for project on ‘The Rise of Yoruba Nationalism: Exclusion, Identity and Youth in Nigeria’, September 2003-December 2005 (£40,467).

**4. Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

Nolte’s research has made a difference to the way in which UK and other policy makers in various fields perceive the relationship between conflict and religious, political and social difference in Nigeria. On the basis of her research, Nolte has been invited to discuss her findings with policy makers in the UK, USA and Europe, making a difference to development-related policy-making, the FCO and case-by-case decisions by the Home Office.

**Engagement with International Diplomatic and Policy Professionals**

Questions of religious and political conflict in Nigeria are high on the agenda of policy makers and overseas development agencies, but insightful interpretations of what is going on at the level of everyday life are rare. The impact of Nolte’s work is evidenced by the fact that she has been invited on several occasions to share her findings at high-profile events bringing together scholarly, diplomatic and policy-oriented audiences at EU institutions in Brussels, the Ditchley Foundation, Oxford, and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Washington, where she presented her findings on “Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria” (April 2010) to an

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

audience of Washington-based policy-makers. She discussed her insights on Nigerian politics and her understanding of vigilante activities (2007, 2008, 2009) with policy-makers and diplomats during a Conference on 1-3 October 2009 on “The Prospects for Nigeria” by the Ditchley Foundation (see source 1 below). Nolte was also invited to Brussels to give a keynote lecture to the European Union Election Observation Mission to Nigeria in March 2011. Her “considerable expertise and understanding of Nigeria’s socio-political environment” was considered by the organisers to “help the observers to both understand the context of the elections and to ensure their safety during the mission (Source 2). In November 2012, Nolte was also invited to a briefing at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to share her understanding of political styles and alliances in Southwest Nigeria (2013) with the then High Commissioner-elect, Dr Andrew Pocock. Her presentation and briefing paper assisted “[the FCO’s] understanding of some of the dynamics within opposition politics as well as some [of] the political challenges President Jonathan is going to face” (Source 3).

**Impact on Development-Related Policy-Making**

Nolte’s research has had a particular impact on development-related policy-making. A draft report on Nolte’s work on the agency of women in the OPC vigilante organization (published 2008) challenged views of women as passive victims of civil disorder. At the time, the director of the Heinrich Boell Foundation Nigeria “immediately gave the submitted article to [the organisation’s] programme officer responsible for the conflict management programme” in order to develop this aspect of the organization’s work. He advised that it was “high time” that her research be distributed among “international institutions” and “conflict management practitioners.” (Source 4). Nolte’s follow-on work on “Religion, Politics and Governance in Nigeria” (2010) contributed to research funded by a government organisation (DfID) in 2005-2010 because it critically examined the contributions of faith-based development organizations to development. In response to interest from scholars, representatives of DfID and other development practitioners, extracts from the Working Paper focusing on the conditions most likely to support productive inter-religious activity were later published as the Research Programme’s Policy Brief No. 7 (Source 5). In 2012, Nolte’s understanding of how religious and political debates affected wider dynamics such as the passing of Nigeria’s Petroleum Industries Bill also helped to “inform [...] policies under the FCO’s prosperity agenda” (Source 3).

**Contributing to UK-based Business/ Professional Risk Analysis**

Since 2011, Nolte has maintained regular contact with the West Africa Desk of the London-based risk management firm Control Risks. As a “valuable contact” for the company, Nolte’s “additional insights” into political developments in Nigeria have helped the company to “improve the quality of its analysis and opinion” (Source 2).

**Supporting Refugee Decision-Making in the UK and Beyond**

Based on her understanding of social, political and religious dynamics in Nigeria, Nolte has provided regular expert advice on Nigerian cases to charities and lawyers working to support asylum seekers and other migrants in the UK. She has provided formal reports to a range of international organizations. An individual report for the US-based Seton Hall Center for Social Justice was considered by a US judge to “establish” a client’s claim (Source 6). Information provided on a Nigerian organisation is cited at length by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada as a basis for its own decision-making (Source 7). In the UK, Nolte has worked as a Nigeria country adviser to Refugee and Migrant Justice (RMJ) between 2005 and 2010, and the Refugee Legal Centre (RLC) since 2008. Nolte’s reports have assisted the Home Office in making appropriate case-by-case decisions and have been praised by a judge (Source 8).

**Public Engagement**

The resonance of the research for the Nigerian knowledge-community was demonstrated by the strong interest and response attracted by her book (item 3 above) from the Nigerian public in the UK, Nigeria and elsewhere. Attendance at the London launch on 6 October 2009, sponsored jointly by the International African Institute and the Nigeria-based Obafemi Awolowo Foundation, included academics, Nigerian expatriates and prominent politicians such as Governor Gbenga Daniel (Ogun State, Nigeria), who referred to Nolte’s work as “an exceptional book” (Source 9). The launch of the

**Impact case study (REF3b)**

Nigerian edition, on 28 July 2011 at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) in Lagos, attracted academics, members of the business community, politicians and traditional rulers, including the most senior traditional ruler of Yorubaland, HRH Oba Okunade Sijuwade II, the Ooni of Ife. In the Nigerian context, the impact of the book was further illustrated by the fact that its “chief launcher,” the entrepreneur Tutu Braimo, paid over USD 6,000 for the first copy (Source 10). The popular interest in the book was also confirmed by several reviews in Nigerian newspapers, with a reviewer in the Nigerian Compass arguing on 9 May 2012 that it was “outstanding” and well deserving of “the accolades it is currently receiving among Nigerian intelligentsia” (Source 11).

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

1. Ditchley Foundation, “The Prospects for Nigeria,” <http://www.ditchley.co.uk/conferences/past-programme/2000-2009/2009/nigeria>, accessed 2 August 2013.
2. Factual statement provided by Senior Analyst (Africa desk), Control Risks.
3. Factual statement provided by Deputy Head Research Analysts, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
4. Comments included in an official project evaluation for the ESRC (Grant E) by ESRC Rapporteur Axel Harneit-Sievers, director of Heinrich Boell Foundation Nigeria.
5. Religion and Development Policy Brief 7
6. Factual statement provided by LD candidate and pro bono case worker, Seton Hall Center for Social Justice [USA].
7. Factual statement provided by Research Officer, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada.
8. Factual statement provided by case worker, Refugee Legal Centre.
9. *The Guardian* [Nigeria], 11 Oct 2009, “Book Launch Honours Awolowo In London”
10. Toner Photo Agency, “The Launch of the Book on Obafemi Awolowo and the Making of Remo,” <http://tonerphotoagency.blogspot.co.uk/2011/07/launch-of-book-on-obafemi-awolowo-and.html>, accessed 2 August 2013.
11. *Nigerian Compass*, 9 May 2012, “Awo... nationalist leader groomed from Remo homeland.”