



Call for Papers

Micro Dynamics of Armed Conflict and Political Violence in West Africa



In the last two decades, countries in West Africa have experienced different forms of armed conflict and political violence. These conflicts include electoral violence, communal violence, insurgencies and militancy, violent extremism and terrorism, farmer-herder violence and violent youth gangs in cities. Numerous reasons – exogenous and endogenous – have been put forward to explain their manifestation in West Africa. Herder-farmer conflicts are no longer aberrations in a few countries. Terror groups – sometimes aligning themselves to Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – have continued to conduct deadly and audacious attacks on soft targets. The Boko Haram has remained one of the deadliest terror groups in the region owing to its ability to kidnap hundreds and capacity for cross-border operations. Yet, there are variations within the region. For instance, while some countries have experienced forms of armed conflicts, others, such as Ghana, have experienced relative peace and stability however with the rise of 'low-intensity' violence.

In many cases, the weak capacity of states in West Africa to effectively respond to these challenges and provide security for their citizens has itself been complicated by historical conditions and new realities. This lack of capacity at many levels leads to a revisit of what Osaghae (1999) described as 'exiting from the state,' in this case manifesting in self-help groups such as political party vigilantes in Ghana or sub-national initiatives like the recently launched Amotekun among the Yoruba-speaking units in the Nigerian federation. However, history suggests that the emergence of these self-help groups can generate new security dilemmas that can question their contribution to resolving the issues that led to their creation. It is against this background that the Post Graduate School of the Niger Delta University (NDU) and the Department of Political Science at the Lagos State University (LASU) are jointly organising a workshop to discuss the state of armed conflict and political violence in West Africa. Specifically, the workshop is being organised under the platform of the University of Edinburgh's Catalyst Regional Workshop for West Africa.

This workshop aims to provide an opportunity for West African based scholars, researching on different forms of armed conflict and political violence in the region, to present their ongoing work and receive feedback from their colleagues. Priority will be given to papers focusing on community and individual level analysis of armed conflict and political violence. Papers may focus on topics on electoral violence, communal violence, insurgencies and militancy, violent extremism and terrorism, farmer-herder violence, riots and protest movements, mob violence and youth gangs in cities. Contributions should seek to explain: why these different forms of armed conflict and political violence persists in West Africa, how they affect everyday lives of ordinary people, how they shape socio-political relations in communities, and how all these contributes to the emergence of new forms of authority. Papers may equally focus on analysing how armed conflicts and political violence affects the legitimacy of the state in communities. Submissions may also seek to explain how individuals and communities mobilise against armed conflicts and political violence and how they avoid state repression and collective punishment in the face of widespread regional insurgencies such as the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon, Islamist Militancy in the Sahel, Boko Haram conflict in Lake Chad region or Niger Delta militancy in Nigeria. Equally, submissions addressing conflict management and peacebuilding strategies by individuals, communities and governments are also welcomed.

The workshop will be held at LASU, Lagos State, Nigeria.



Keynote Speaker

Gilbert M. Khadiagala (Jan Smuts Professor of International Relations University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa).

Paper Submission

Participants at different levels of their academic careers are encouraged to submit an extended abstract of 3 pages by 10 March 2020. In addition to the institutional affiliation of authors, abstracts must include sufficient details of the question(s) to be addressed, methods and approach used, and (possible) conclusions of the papers. Abstracts should be sent to workshop2020@cornwestafrica.org.

Authors must be ready to submit a full paper upon the acceptance of their abstracts. All successful authors will be informed one week after the submission of the abstracts. Participants must be based in an institution in West Africa and Cameroon.

We particularly encourage submissions from doctoral students who are researching on the theme of the workshop. In addition to the academic presentations, the workshop will feature a policy roundtable with policy makers and policy researchers, a methodology workshop and a workshop on popular communication for social science researchers. *The Conversation Africa* is the technical partner for the popular communication special panel of the workshop.

The workshop will take place from 20-23 April 2020.

The workshop will lead to the publication of a book on conflict processes and political violence in West Africa. The organisers will also inaugurate the Conflict Research Network West Africa (CORN – West Africa) at the workshop to serve as a platform for the continuation of the scientific engagement of the issues of armed conflict and political violence in West Africa. Participants at the workshop will be offered free membership of the Network. For more information about the network visit: www.cornwestafrica.org

Funding

The Centre for African Studies at the University of Edinburgh through its *Catalyst Regional Workshops* has generously provided funding for the workshop to cover the participation of 30 attendees. The cost of transportation and accommodation of participants for the period of the workshop will be covered by the organisers. For participants travelling from outside Lagos or Nigeria, an airport pick-up and drop-off will be provided. Further details on the funding for participants will be provided to participants whose papers are accepted.

Conference language

The working language of the conference will be English. French interpretation may be provided based on the number of participants requiring this service.

For further enquiries kindly contact Tarila Marclint Ebiede and Tobi Oshodi: info@cornwestafrica.org

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