Article

# Collective Memory and Nation-Building in Africa

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## Abstract

Based on documentary analysis, this article argues that lessons of violent conflicts are rarely appropriated positively for nation-building in the context of post-conflict African societies. The article further stresses that the reasons often projected as causes of ineffective nation-building, such as multiple ethnicity and neo-colonialism, are unjustifiably projected as causal factors. It argues that diverse ethnicity remains a dormant destructive force until operationalised for political gains through misappropriation and deployment of collective memories. In the African context, post-conflict societies adopt the mixed approach of selective amnesia which emphasises amnesty, reconciliation, rehabilitation and reintegration as necessary for nation-building. Experience, however, suggests that the operationalisation of this approach is always marred by inconsistencies and repression. Consequently, repressive mechanisms suppress violence and achieve relative stability. True reconciliation which is critical for nation-building is never achieved. Among loser ethnic groups (hereafter loser groups), resistance to selective amnesia and simultaneous preoccupation with collective memory of victimisation, discrimination and injustice continue to reinforce sentiments of group exceptionality and separatist impulses rather than national consciousness. Therefore, cautious expression of citizenship among segments of the loser groups continues to attract mutual suspicion and distrust from leadership of post-conflict states. It is concluded that the challenge of social contradictions in post-conflict societies is serious because neither the state nor loser groups positively deploy memory of conflict for nation-building. A new reconciliatory approach drawn largely from lessons of history is recommended for post-conflict nation-building efforts in post-

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conflict African states. Positive appropriation and deployment of memory for nation-building ensures amnesty and restoration without repercussions; and remembrance without resentment.

**Keywords:** collective memory; recollection; nation-building

## Introduction

The African state is faced with difficult challenges associated with nation-building. These endemic challenges account for why the African state is not considered a Weberian state (Jackson and Rosberg 1986, 1). A Weberian state possesses "compulsory jurisdiction, exercises continuous organization and claims monopoly of force over a territory and its jurisdiction" (Weber 1949). Jackson and Rosberg (1986, 1) further explain that a Weberian state has attained "Empirical statehood" – a stage of not being independent and sovereign only in name but possessing the capacity to exercise "sufficient authority and power to govern their territories and populations". In contrast, "juridical statehood", "quasi-state" and "negative-sovereignty" are terms employed to describe the nature of the African state and to distinguish it from a Weberian state (Jackson 1990). Juridical statehood refers to the "distinct liberty conferred on former colonies as a consequence of the international enfranchisement movement" (Jackson 1990, 5). Negative sovereignty is a reference to the right of non-interference extended to the African state and others despite lack of sufficient capacity to exercise authority and power over its territory and people. Thus, the African state is a glaringly "soft", "weak" and "ramshackle" regime of personal rule that is severely deficient in institutional authority and organisational capacity (Jackson 1990, 5). On this basis, Buzan (as cited in Dunn 2001, 47) asserts that the African state and indeed third world states belong to a different class of states since it does not have a "connection to the established western concept". Buzan goes as far as to classify states into "modern", "postmodern" and "premodern" states. The African state is classified as "premodern".

This article is not intended as a critique of the argument of Weberian scholars regarding statehood or where the African state should or should not be classified. Some scholars, such as Dunn (2001) and Grovugui (2001), have already done that extensively. In this regard, Dunn (2001) and Grovugui (2001) question the basis of Jackson and Rosberg's (1986) assumptions about the African state. Dunn (2001, 47) in particular criticises the "evolutionary analogies and classifications" of states as a reification of a western concept and a de-legitimisation of non-western polities. Therefore, what the West considers to be "collapsed" or "failed" states in Africa, are nothing but failures at being western (Dunn 2001). Grovugui (2001) also illustrates that the African state was not the only state that was granted juridical statehood. Switzerland and Belgium also fall into this category of negative sovereignty prior to demonstrating "empirical" statehood (Grovugui 2001).

There are merits in both the Weberian and Africanist perspectives regarding the state in Africa. However, implicit in the argument of both is that a state, whether in the Weberian or juridical sense, should be effectively organised and positioned to perform required roles. Both strides of thought also accept that statehood is a process. Therefore, attaining an appreciable level of socio-political organisation characterised by social cohesion and capacity to perform basic roles, such as justice and equitable distribution of resources (what others see as empirical statehood), comes through conscious nation-building efforts. The so-called empirical state arrived at empirical statehood by passing through and overcoming years of social contradictions, conflicts and counter conflicts, ideological revolts, revolutions, social transformation, state collapse, formation and reformation. More importantly, the Weberian state evolved by positively appropriating and deploying collective memory and lessons of chequered history for nation-building. The African state is passing through a similar historical trajectory as the so-called "empirical state" but may not evolve into "empirical statehood" (Jackson 1990, 5) in the foreseeable future due to its failure to positively appropriate and deploy collective memory for nation-building. This contradicts propositions often projected as causes of ineffective nation-building in post-conflict societies such as multiple ethnicity and neo-colonialism. These factors, it is argued, are unjustifiably projected as causal factors of conflicts and poor nation-building projects. Diverse ethnicity, it is acknowledged, remains a dormant destructive force until operationalised for political gains through misappropriation and wrongful deployment of collective memories.

The experiences of post-conflict African states, such as South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria, Mali and others, are drawn to demonstrate the inability of the African state to positively appropriate and deploy collective memory for nation-building. The rest of the article is divided into the following sections. The first section provides a conceptual background to the discourse that is mainly related to memory and its appropriation and deployment for nation-building by individuals, groups and states. Discussion and analysis of memory appropriation and deployment for nation-building are done in the second section; while the third section tries to critique memory appropriation and deployment by some post-conflict African states. In so doing, it captures reactions of loser ethnic groups (hereafter loser groups) to state appropriation and deployment of collective memory for nation-building. Emphasis is placed on major issues at the heart of loser groups' agitations against the state. The fourth section concludes the discourse.

## Conceptualisation of Collective Memory and Violent Past

There is no single definition of collective recollection of the past or more generally memory. Several contending conceptualisations exist with identifiable similarities and differences. In this regard, Shils (1981, 24) articulates memory as possessing normative attributes which "link the generations of the dead with the generations of the living in

the constitution of a society". Memory, therefore, is seen as the means through which past experiences and knowledge gained from recorded and remembered experiences of others, either living or dead, are made relevant in the present (Shils 1981, 50). For Mizstal (2010, 24–44), memory is understood as a collection of intricate practices which help in the creation of self-awareness. In other words, memory recreates the past in the present with a focus on the future. It relates to whatever past event is seen as normative, embedded in culture and tradition, and communicated or passed on from the past to the present.

Thus, it is obvious that memory shares an intricate relationship with myth and history. For this reason, memory, myth and history are sometimes used synonymously. This misunderstanding notwithstanding, the concepts are conceptually separable. Yerushalmi (1982, 95), for instance, demonstrates the difference between history and memory by arguing that memory is significantly selective and alive while history refers to what has been "winnowed out, repressed, or simply discarded by a process of natural selection, which the historian, uninvited, disturbs and reverses". It is also argued that myth refers to ancient narratives which are assumed to be "sacred and true, with extra-human, inhuman, or heroic characters" (Leeming 1990, 3, 13).

By nature, memory is both individual and collective. Assmann (2008, 109–118) considers individual memory as personal recollection of significant past events which play critical roles in the recreation and refashioning of an individual's present and future life. Whereas recollection of the past has individual properties, it is often expressed in group or collective logic, especially if what is recollected is directly related to a group. Therefore, recollection and preservation of significant events in the life of a group by the group through several means, such as oral narrative, monument erection, and documentation in books and electronic devices form an integral part of what is generally referred to as collective memory or recollection of the past (Nets-Zehngut 2012, 243–267; Yerushalmi 1982, 95).

Considered from this perspective, collective memory or recollection has certain characteristics. It is, for example, primarily social in nature. What is commonly recollected about the past is hugely influenced by dominant discourses among group members regarding their history, culture, language and world view. In this regard, Misztal (2003, 6) posits that "what is remembered is profoundly shaped by what has been shared with others such that what is remembered is always a memory of an inter-subjective past, or of past time lived in relation to other people".

Collective memory or recollection is also characterised by protest or challenge to receive knowledge or dominant narratives. From a constructivist perspective, historical events, such as wars, are written by the victorious and acquiescent or forced on the

vanquished. More so, poor or selective documentation makes certain aspects of historical events more myth than memory. As events are narrated and re-narrated, certain facts of history are lost and some may be manufactured to fill gaps in narratives. Therefore, collective recollection of violent conflict by loser groups through oral narratives and different documentation systems constitute a response to or disagreement with official or dominant historiographies of the conflict. Collective memory of violent political past by loser groups is an attempt at historicisation of suppressed and substituted facts of history. Besides attempting to present and preserve violent past's more accurate historicity, loser groups' collective memory is an attempt at reclaiming space and agency in history.

Reclaiming of agency and space in historical narratives guarantees continuous existence, functioning and reproduction of societies (Mizstal 2010, 24–44; Net-Zehgut 2012, 243–267). In post-conflict African societies, the continuous existence, functioning and reproduction of loser groups' societies largely depends on the extent to which the groups interpret and reinterpret narratives of their past generations and systematically pass these to future generations. Civil wars in countries, such as Rwanda, Burundi, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria and others, so far is the most significant part of these countries and as such continue to form part of ethnic identities. Olick and Levy (1997, 932) argue that memories serve social purposes at both personal and social levels. The understanding of the present is based on the reconstruction of the past. The sense loser groups in a conflict make of the present condition of states they live in is based upon reconstructed, interpreted and reinterpreted past. Preoccupation with the past among loser groups' youth is not merely a desire to search and acquire historical knowledge for the sake of it but the interrogation of the substance of that knowledge in order to make meaning of their identity in relation to other ethnic groups.

Wolin (1989, 40) observes that memory can serve as a means of forming new identities. Pre-conflict ethno-political identities of loser groups, such as the Igbo in Nigeria, Hutu in Rwanda, Bete in Ivory Coast, Tuareg in Mali and several others, were more nationalistic with a strong belief in unity of their states (Achebe 2012, 51; Igwe 2015, 14–27; Keita 1998; King 2010). However, violent conflicts and their negative consequences are among factors forcing the building of new socio-political identities of loser groups in post-conflict African states. These new identities seem more regional and more conscious of ethnic particularities.

The link between collective memory and nation-building and its paraphernalia of sustainable democracy, justice and good governance has also been well discussed by scholars (Corey and Joireman 2004; Hirsch 2014, 126; King 2010). Nation-building, in the context of the article, is the "the attainment, within a territory of a "sense of

community" and of institutions and practices strong and widespread enough to assure, for a long time, dependable expectations of peaceful community" (Deutsch and Foltz 1966, 2). The emphasis on "sense of community" and "peace" implies that in a well-integrated state, constituent groups eschew violence as a means of resolving socio-political conflicts. Instead, conflicts are resolved peacefully through commonly developed institutions and norms (Coleman and Rosberg 1964, x, 730). Ojo (2005) notes that nation-building essentially entails substantial and continuous decrease in ethno-cultural, religious and regional contradictions for the purposes of constructing or building a more homogeneous state. Succinctly expressed, it denotes the process of making a single "nation" out of "multiple nations" through achieving consensus on fundamental issues regarding inter-group relations and governance structures. The term is often used synonymously with concepts such as "national integration", "social cohesion", "solidarity" and "national unity" (Bakari 2017; Dukes and Musterd 2012; Ojo 2005). Whichever term is employed, nation-building is essentially the pursuance and attainment of a reasonable degree of common and sustainable understanding on social, political, economic and legal matters among diverse ethnic groups for the purpose of achieving peaceful co-existence, egalitarianism, justice, common destiny, national identity (citizenship) and governance system. The process has certain observable characteristics.

Firstly, it is characterised by conscious agreement and acceptance of state authority and a governance system by diverse groups that make up a state. Existence of this agreement ensures a disposition to cohesiveness and commitment to a common course or destiny. Secondly, nation-building is characterised by compromises among constituent groups for the purpose of developing endurable linkages that preserve the state and make "boundaries of sub-systems fade and become less consequential in affecting behavior" (Ojo 2005, 51). This implies gradual dissolution of territorial and cultural boundaries and increased interaction among diverse ethnic groups. Nation-building in the context of post-conflict African societies, such as Nigeria, Rwanda, Ivory Coast and Mali, means the search for means of making forcefully incorporated ethnic groups accept their forceful incorporation as an irreversible act of divine providence, which is politically, economically, socially and militarily more expedient than small, weak, homogenous independent states. Nation-building is also encapsulated in post-conflict reconciliatory programmes such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa, Rwanda and Liberia.

Collective memory of a violent past plays a critical role in nation-building. It is, for instance, a weapon of political mobilisation for both the state and loser groups. Adorno (1986) and Mizstal (2010) observe that the evolvement and continuous functioning and maintenance of democratic governance system and values in any state are possible only through critical self-reflection. This entails looking back into history, reflecting upon it

and drawing lessons that would help resolve contradictions in the present and ways of guiding against them (Hirsch 2014, 126). Mizstal (2010, 24–44) agrees that absence of memory or poor reflection on “past records of institutions and public activities” implies lack of “warnings against potential dangers to democratic structures and no opportunity to gain a richer awareness of the repertoire of possible remedies”. Critical self-reflection while enhancing democratic culture by helping prevent despotic and authoritarian leadership equally improves inter-group relations in multi-ethnic societies (Gunn 1999, 589; Mizstal 2010, 24–44). Collective memory therefore allows states and societies to assess potentialities and limits and therefore to take an independent stand on public issues (Mizstal 2010, 24–44). Ability to independently examine the past and present, helps prevent indoctrination and uncritical mindset that help foster understanding and appreciation of other points of view and consequent improvement in inter group relations. Loss of memory is “the root of oppression” (Gunn 1999, 589; Mizstal 2010).

From the foregoing, collective memory can be seen as the engine that drives the present as well as directs the future in nation-building. The prevalence of conditions, which led to violent conflicts, implies that the post-conflict African state and its leadership have not sufficiently applied critical self-reflection to nation-building or have misappropriated collective memory. Balanced or positive deployment of collective memory produces positive effects on efforts towards nation-building while negative or selective appropriation and deployment for the sake of legitimation produces negative effects. Memory positively deployed serves as a mobilisation tool for sustainable democracy and its values of inclusiveness, equality and justice. But memory negatively deployed results in disunity, exclusivity, inequality, injustice and a possible return to violence.

## Deployment of Collective Memory of Violent Past for Nation-Building in Africa

Approaches to collective memory appropriation and deployment for nation-building differ. Misztal (2010) discusses these approaches under “social forgetting” or consciously applied mechanisms for eliminating, erasing, undoing, or substituting segments of social memory that interferes with the functioning of a society”. Social forgetting has three dimensions, namely, “repressive forgetting”, “constitutive forgetting” and “humiliated silence”. Repressive forgetting entails difficult attempts by individuals or a collective to consign painful past experiences to relatively remote parts of their subconscious minds (Misztal 2010, 24–44). While repressive forgetting is often individualistic or group motivated, it can also be state-induced. It is in the sense of state inducement that Mizstal (2010), arguably, employs the term. As a state-induced approach, “repressive forgetting” relates to the use of force to make people forget about violent past. This entails the proscription of programmes, works, documentations,

schools, speech, teachings or open references that commemorate or celebrate a painful past. Unlike repressive forgetting, which involves the use of force, "constitutive forgetting" involves conscious persuasive acts and policies, which are geared towards reconciliation and reconstruction of a new national identity. While it is mostly state-driven, active cooperation and participation of the citizenry are critical to its success. Similarly, "humiliated silence" is a state-driven strategy to encourage forgetting which entails making a conscious effort at diffusing the past by overlooking or remaining silent over past atrocities (Mizstal 2010, 24–44).

Post-conflict reconstruction in Africa shows a mixture of the three dimensions to social forgetting. Thus, repressive forgetting and humiliated silence were the preferred strategies of post-conflict Nigeria (in the 1970s), Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Rwanda and South Africa. The logic of social forgetting is that the less victims remember past atrocities, the less they suffer anew; while the quicker they reconcile and integrate into a new society, and the faster the state builds a new national identity. In the Nigerian context, the policy of "No victor, no vanquished" aimed at achieving amnesty and amnesia as necessary ingredients for reconciliation and reintegration of the defeated Igbo nation back into the Nigerian state. This approach entailed that in place of criminal prosecutions or execution of secessionist leaders, the Nigerian state opted for silence or deliberately glossed over past atrocities on both sides. Instead of criminal prosecution, some secessionist soldiers were reabsorbed into the Nigerian army (Elaigwu 1986, 98; Nwadike 2010; Siollun 2009, 268). The strategy of silence or amnesia was not intended to benefit only the vanquished Igbo ethnic group, but also Nigerians of other ethnic groups who engaged in pre-war and war-time atrocities. The state believed that silence over pre-war and war-time atrocities by both sides would be necessary for quick transition to political stability. In Mozambique, the state discourages Mozambicans from remembering their civil war just as the Sierra Leonean state also dissuades Sierra Leoneans from publicly discussing past atrocities as doing so can undermine the process of reconciliation and reintegration and possibly inspire fresh violence (King 2010).

South Africa's efforts at building a post-apartheid identity and integration was encapsulated in its TRC. Its restorative justice system encouraged victims of apartheid era violence and gross human rights abuses to testify and seek for reparation and rehabilitation (Boshomane 2016). Perpetrators of violence and human rights abuses were also encouraged to testify before the commission and seek amnesty from prosecution. Other measures such as none or selective teaching of history at schools were geared towards diffusing the past by appearing to overlook or remain silent over past atrocities.

Post-civil war/genocide Rwanda emulated South Africa's restorative justice system. Rwandan pursued reconciliation and the reconstruction of national identity through

truth finding, justice, peace and security. Its constitution provided for equal rights and criminalised discrimination and divisive ideology. When it appeared retributive justice system was failing to resolve genocide cases, the state introduced the *Gacaca* courts or traditional conflict resolution mechanism in which communities tried and judged those who confessed or were accused of committing genocide. Through these courts victims learnt about the death of family members and relatives and perpetrators had a chance to make confessions, show remorse and ask for forgiveness from their communities (Achu 2008; King 2010). Reconciliatory efforts also involved suspension of the teaching of history in schools and proscription of ethnic identification. Thus, post-civil war/genocide Rwandans are no longer identified as Hutus or Tutsis or Twas.

Based on Mizstal's (2010) typologies, policies such as "No victor, no vanquished", and programmes such as compulsory National Youths Service (NYSC) for university graduates in Nigeria; proscribing public ethnic identification by the Rwandan state; and the merging of historically black institutions with historically white institutions of higher learning in South Africa form part of constitutive forgetting with the overall objective of promoting national unity through increased inter-ethnic interactions. Physical reconstruction and rehabilitation of former combatants are also forms of constitutive forgetting. This strategy seeks to create enabling environment for resettlement of displaced persons; reuniting of families and friends; and demobilising, disarming and reintegrating of former combatants into civilian life (Ojeleye 2010, 76; Uzokwe 2003, 1).

Numbing or glossing over past atrocities or deliberately refusing to legally prosecute obvious conflict-time crimes forms an integral part of humiliated silence. However, criminalisation of fire arms possession; divisive ideology; and selective teaching of history in schools constitute repressive forgetting. Special remembrance days, such as Nigeria's Army Day; Rwanda's Genocide Remembrance Day; and South Africa's Freedom Day, commemorate past events and the historic contributions of those who fought for the survival of post-conflict states in the belief that such acts would foster unity. By discouraging recollection of the past, post-conflict African states attempt to prevent the reproduction of their societies on the basis of negative memory of violent past. This is in line with Gupta's (2005, 148) argument that a preoccupation with memory hinders social cohesion and democracy in general because much attraction to memory results in competition for recognition of past sufferings among ethnic groups within a state (Gupta 2005, 148). Furthermore, preoccupation with the past undermines the development of cooperative and collaborative political behaviour necessary for building a healthy democratic state.

From the forgoing, it is obvious that post-conflict African societies grapple with best approach to appropriate and deploy collective memory of violent past for nation-

building. The African state struggles to determine what should be remembered and what should not; what constitutes positive memory and what constitutes negative memory. The essence of careful consideration of what should constitute memory and what should not, emanates from the fact that whatever is considered necessary for recollection is critical for reconstruction of identity and for nation-building (Zerubavel 1997, 12). Similarly, in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world international acceptability and respect is integral to nation-building. Therefore, collective recollection and deployment of memory for post-conflict nation-building articulated in development policies simultaneously address multiple target audiences.

Addressing the international community is necessary to diffuse widespread allegations of state orchestrated violence which tarnish the image of the state and its leaders. These policies therefore project humane, benign, magnanimous, responsible and respectable image of post-conflict African states. However, ways and manners in which post-conflict policies are implemented to address structural causes of conflict constitute collective memory appropriation and deployment for nation-building. The following section critiques appropriation of collective memory for nation-building in the context of post-conflict African states.

## Critique of Collective Memory Appropriation and Deployment in Africa

Collective memory appropriation and deployment are largely a conscious state-driven process. Post-conflict African state attempts to rebuild itself quickly by promoting memories that unite rather than divide the citizenry. Theoretically, state-driven memory appropriation ensures fairness and equality and discourages preoccupation with the past as this constitutes obstacle to reconciliation and nation-building. While it is easier for victorious groups to forget the past and move on, it is hard for loser groups to do so, especially if their perceived causes of conflict have not been sufficiently addressed. Thus, continuous preoccupation with the past by loser groups is often a proportionate reaction to differential treatment by the state in relation to victorious groups. Collective memory appropriation and deployment are captured in post-conflict policies as has been demonstrated. These policies which exhibit elements of “constitutive forgetting” and “humiliated silence” have so far failed to achieve desired results. In theory the policies appear genuinely well intended. In practice, however, the post-conflict African state strategically pursues “repressive forgetting” as evidenced by its intolerance of opposition and criticisms from loser groups. Repressive state actions therefore keep memories alive among loser groups as the Malian and Nigerian experiences demonstrate.

The Tuaregs of Mali first revolted against the Malian state between 1962 and 1964 (Keita 1998), but the rebellion was crushed and their region placed under repressive

military authority. Although the Malian state articulated several post-conflict reconciliatory and integrative measures to address Tuareg concerns, such measures were either poorly implemented or were never implemented due to lack of resources. In the end, the Malian state succeeded in restoring relative peace and security in the restive region of the Tuaregs through military repression. However, coercive measures and poorly implemented post-conflict reconciliatory and integrative policies alienated moderate Tuaregs, who never supported the insurrection against the Malian state. Furthermore, atrocities and gross human rights violations by the military contributed to an atmosphere of fear and distrust in Mali. Thus, despite the restoration of order and stability, Keita (1998, 102–128) notes that "Tuareg grievances remained largely unaddressed, and a seething resentment continued in many Tuareg communities". The failure to address Tuareg grievances implied that the problem of instability in Mali was never solved but simply deferred (Keita 1998, 102–128). It was unsurprising, therefore, that the Tuaregs would rebel again throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. In 2012, helped by conflicts in Libya and the Middle East as well as political instability in different West African states, the Tuaregs – under the auspices of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) – came close to achieving the goal of secession from the Malian state. As happened in the previous conflicts, the Malian state only survived through the intervention of the French and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Similarly, the post-civil war Nigerian state adopted a policy of "No victor, no vanquished" which emphasised reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction to build a new society (Ugochukwu 2010; Ukiwo 2009). In practice those policies were hardly implemented despite the oil boom of the 1970s. Among commonly cited post-civil war Igbo memory of the civil war was state orchestrated confiscation of "abandoned property", that is, landed property owned but left behind by fleeing Igbos during the war. This act meant that those properties could not be reclaimed by their Igbo owners. Similarly, the policy of unequal political, economic and social reintegration pursued by the Nigerian state manifested in the voiding of "Biafran currency" through post-war banking regulations. The most common feature of the post-war financial regulations included the payment of £20 to the Igbos regardless of the amount of Biafran currency exchanged for Nigerian currency (Korieh 2013, 1–14; Ogbuagu 1983; Udogu 2005, 49; Uzoigwe 2011).

Economically, the financial regulations further impoverished the Igbos and created in them an indelible mark of victimhood. The Igbo ethnic group considers those actions as attempts at dehumanisation on account of losing the civil war (Ogbuagu 1983; Ugochukwu 2010; Ukiwo 2009). The post-war banking regulation negated the spirit of reconciliation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction as basic requirements for socio-economic empowerment and nation-building. The regulatory policies proved that

the Nigerian state pursued reintegration through subjugation, humiliation and impoverishment. The consequence is that the state succeeded in compelling obedience to its authority and in stabilising itself for rapid economic development but failed to win true allegiance which is critical to nation-building among the vanquished Igbos. Four decades later, the Nigerian state is witnessing serious contestation against its authority and sovereignty from several quarters. In the north-eastern region, a deadly terrorist organisation, Boko Haram, has emerged posing an existential threat to the state. In the Niger Delta region, militants continue to mount a serious challenge to state authority through acts of sabotage, especially on vital economic infrastructure. In the south-eastern region, the vanquished Igbos have found their voice again and are vocally challenging the state over marginalisation on account of the civil war. Different Igbo groups, such as the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), sustain serious agitation non-violently for secession from the Nigerian state.

As in the Malian case, these developments are indicative that Igbo grievances before and after the war remained largely unaddressed, and a simmering resentment has persisted among the Igbos. Thus, structural problems which led to the Nigerian civil war were never resolved, but simply deferred. Persistent collective recollection of violent past among loser groups is premised on state orchestrated marginalisation. The elevation of "victorious" ethnic groups above Guttmann's, (2003, 23) "democratic standards of equal freedom and opportunity for all" undermines reconciliation, reintegration and construction of new national identity. Thus, while the civil war has become history as far as the Nigerian state is concerned, it remains a living memory among the Igbo and will probably remain so for a long time to come.

A similar pattern of state orchestrated neglect and marginalisation in terms of political leadership and economic opportunities has emerged in post-civil war/genocide Rwanda. Despite well-articulated post-conflict policies, the Rwandan state has not achieved reconciliation. The Hutus continue to silently protest official portrayal as perpetrators of genocide. A portrayal they argue does not accurately reflect or provide a true account or memory of the civil war and events leading to it. While *Gacac*a courts are largely touted as successful, Hutu survivors argue that whereas traditionally, participation in *Gacaca* courts is voluntary, the state made participation in them involuntary; highly regulated and consciously directed from Kigali with predictable outcomes (Burnet 2008; Corey and Joireman 2004; King 2010). Again, the proscribing of ethnic identification and teaching of history have not prevented ethnicity remaining a serious challenge to the Rwandan state. The reason being, among others, that official narratives of the civil war/genocide as captured in memorial sites reflect the memory of Tutsi ethnic group. Promotion of Tutsi experience over Hutu experience of the violent past sustains ethnicity in Rwanda. Ethnic hegemonic tendencies were at the root of pre-

genocide violence and of the genocide itself (Achu 2008). The Hutus' experience in post-conflict Rwanda confirms the theoretical assumption that history is written by the victorious and acquiescent by the vanquished. As in previously cited cases, repressive tactics have been used to achieve relative peace and security in Rwanda but not true reconciliation necessary for nation-building.

Hutu survivors continue to express unhappiness with selective official appropriation and deployment of memory of the events of 1994 for nation-building. Their disapproval of official narratives has sometimes been expressed violently. For example, the Gisozi national memorial site in Kigali was attacked on three occasions in 2008 and 2009. According to King (2010, 293–309), these attacks show that the site is a "site of symbolic significance and contention" – contentious because "half of the narrative refers to the causes of genocide being grounded in dehumanisation and discrimination against Tutsi by the previous regime. All of the testimonies explicitly or implicitly suggest a Tutsi voice". The selective official narrative at memorial sites pays little recognition to moderate Hutus who were killed for saving Tutsis (Achu 2008; Corey and Joireman 2004; King 2010). The official narrative is also silent over the revenge massacre of the Hutus by the Tutsi dominated Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) which emerged victorious at the end of the war and now rules Rwanda. In this regard, King (2010, 293–309) notes:

> there is no public space in Rwanda for Hutu memories of violence perpetrated by the RPF. Indeed, saying that there are "unpunished RPF crimes" is equated with negation of genocide and may classify as the punishable offense of "genocide ideology." Yet reports indicate that the RPF committed widespread killings during the civil war (1990–1993) and during the genocide …

The RPF appears to be bent on replacing Hutu domination with Tutsi domination. This has little consideration for how the myth of Tutsi supremacy over the Hutu was at the root of the civil war/genocide (Achu 2008). More so, frequent reference to the war and atrocities committed against the Tutsi stigmatises the Hutu and debases their humanity. Thus, disagreement with the official narrative of Rwandan civil war/genocide is an attempt to present counter narrative like the Igbos in Nigeria. Chinua Achebe's (2012) *There Was a Country* is a counter narrative of the events of the Nigerian civil war from an Igbo perceptive. Presentation of counter narratives serves two purposes for loser-ethnic groups. Firstly, it serves to correct internal and external articulation of their experience and consequent deprivation of authentic voice; and secondly, it serves to politicise memory for future political gain.

Even in South Africa, post-apartheid measures – especially the TRC – have not achieved the primary goal of reconciliation and unity among diverse ethnic groups that constitute the South African state. Despite garnering much praise, a critique of the TRC reveals

that the restorative justice system mostly benefited perpetrators of violent acts and human rights abuses more than the victims (Boshomane 2016). Boshomane describes specific focus on politically motivated crimes and human rights abuses as one of the major failings of the TRC. This means that lived experiences of forced removals, systematic discrimination; forced labour; targeted impoverishment and institutional and psychological violence were not addressed by the TRC. It is further noted that several of the recommendations of the commission are yet to be implemented two decades after TRC ended. Among these recommendations is wealth tax on beneficiaries of the apartheid regime to make them contribute towards poverty alleviation. Again, many of the perpetrators of violence who did not receive amnesty from the TRC are yet to be tried. Boshomane (2016, 1) remarks that the TRC reduced apartheid experience to "politics – and little else", and he argues that the TRC's restorative justice "erases the fact that racism was the root of apartheid, which downplays white supremacy, making it easier for systematic racism and white privilege to continue to thrive largely uninterrupted". Thus, resurgence of debate around the teaching of history at schools; campaign for land appropriation without compensation; and amendment of South Africa's constitution for this purpose; students' protests; such as "Rhodes Must Fall"; continued racism in South Africa, in all forms and guises; white minority discontent with black majority rule are indicative that reconciliation which is critical to nation-building is still a long way in post-apartheid South Africa.

## Conclusion

The article has argued that collective memory is required to bring about reflective continuity between the past and the present as well as articulate likely future scenarios. It is counter-productive for a post-conflict state which requires reconciliation to rebuild and create a new national identity to engage in repression of the memory of the vanquished and simultaneously promote the memory of the victor for political gains. While fair or positive deployment of collective memory helps bring about unity or national integration, unfair or negative deployment results in disunity and social insecurity. The challenge of social contradictions in the post-conflict African state is largely because the state fails to positively deploy the memory of violent past for nation-building. Collective memories of former warring parties significantly influence acceptance, perception, commitment and belief in national integration, unity, common destiny and national consciousness of post-conflict African states.

Memory appropriation and deployment encapsulated in post-conflict policies on the surface suggest genuine commitment on the part of the state; to reconciliation, sustainable peace, stability and development on the basis of equality and justice. However, implementation or deployment of those policies is often marred by inequality and injustice. Contrary to general expectations, a huge gap between policy intentions

and policy outcomes exists in the implementation of post-conflict policies in Africa. Post-conflict African states use post-conflict policies of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction to address multiple target audiences. In this regard, post-conflict policies of African states do not achieve domestic objectives because; the seemingly well-intended policies target especially the international community. Addressing the international community is considered necessary in the thinking policies of post-conflict Africans because allegations of state orchestrated atrocities are often widespread in the immediate post-conflict years (Aka 2004; Korieh 2013). Thus, post-war policies are used to project the post-conflict African state as a humane, benign, magnanimous, responsible and respectable member of the international community.

Rather than appropriating and deploying conflict memory to achieve domestic peace and reconciliation, the post-conflict African states use post-conflict policies to raise hopes and expectations; buy time to lessen tensions; and stabilise the state. The policies are also used to disarm, dissuade and demobilise armed groups from reverting to violence. Security enforcement is therefore preferred over reconciliation, rehabilitation, reintegration and reconstruction in the strategic thinking of leaders of post-conflict states. For this reason, post-conflict policies are never intended to be fully implemented but only to the extent that they serve the state's palliative objectives. This approach fails to achieve genuine reconciliation and national integration. Negative deployment of collective memory implies neither loser groups nor victorious groups forget or attempt to forget violent past. Each group remembers past conflict for different political and economic reasons. Failure of the state to act as a neutral or impartial party in inter-ethnic tensions engendered by violent conflict; results in failure to dissuade or prevent the use of conflict memory as the basis for reproducing the society.

Actions favouring the memory of the victor over that of the vanquished creates an unhealthy environment of inequality, injustice and disunity as well as strengthen the culture of impunity where crimes are rarely tried and corruption becomes a norm and not an aberration. Negative appropriation of collective memory will continue to strengthen and encourage ethnic bigotry and the weakening of nation-building in Africa for a long time to come. Repressive mechanisms of post-conflict African state speedily suppress violence in the immediate post-conflict years but cannot achieve national integration as suppressed grievances are bound to resurface in the future to pose existential threat to the state. In the current democratic setting in post-conflict African states, a new reconciliatory approach drawn largely from lessons of history is needed. Violent past should be revered as national memory whose importance and lesson, cannot not be trivialised lest history be repeated. Frequent reference to violent past in mockery of the vanquished does not only trivialise memory, but relives and refreshes the victims' sufferings. Positive appropriation and deployment of collective memory for nation-

building will ensure amnesty and restoration without repercussions; and remembrance without resentment.

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