



# Africa Study Group | Groupe de réflexion sur l'Afrique

## CIC National Capital Branch, Africa Study Group Presents: "Is Nigeria Falling Apart"

**DATE:** Wednesday, January 28th, 2015

**TIME:** 17:00 pm - 19:00 pm

**LOCATION:** St. Paul's university, Alumni amphitheater, Guigues Hall, 223 Main street, Ottawa

**ASG website:** [www.africastudygroup.ca](http://www.africastudygroup.ca)

**Twitter:** @AfricStudyGroup

**In Attendance: 34**

**Chair:** Louise Ouimet

**Guest Speaker:** Assistant Professor Nduka Otiona, Institute of African Studies, Carleton University

### Subjects Discussed:

- 1. Opening Remarks by Chair:** Louise Ouimet reported on the January 22, 2015 meeting with Mr. Marc Garneau, M.P., and his team. Her presentation will be made available.

She flagged the launch of a joint study with the Canadian Council on Africa. It will identify lessons learned, what went wrong, or well, in doing business in Africa. The project will entail a survey and interviews with 5-6 firms leading to a final report. The tentative title of the project is "Corporate Survey of Best Practices." Paul Hitschfeld of the ASG will conduct the survey with the identified companies and will report back to ASG possibly in April.

Ms. Ouimet also identified topics for upcoming meetings. Several will be devoted to the theme of food security, beginning February 25 with a representative of the Canadian Hunger Foundation, and possibly again in May. On March 25, we will have a presentation on decentralization and the work of the Canadian Federation of Municipalities in Africa.

On February 28-March 01, there will be a joint CIC-Ottawa U. conference on "Moving Canada Forward" devoted to Canadian foreign policy as a whole. The Chair and ASG member Bruce Montador will be involved in a panel on Africa.

- 2. Presentation by Digafie Debalke,** Canadian-African Initiative for Peace and Conflict Management

Mr. Debalke briefed the group on his recent mission to Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana. There had been much interest expressed in peace education at all levels. Canada was seen as a good source of comprehensive policy advice for leaders and for African society. In response to a question, he noted that the current situation in Ethiopia was marked by ongoing

political tensions, accompanied by improved economic growth but exacerbated inequalities.

### **3. Special Presentation by Dr. Nduka Otiono, Assistant Professor, Institute of African Studies, Carleton University "Is Nigeria Falling Apart."**

Professor Otiono noted that Boko Haram (BH) was created in 2002. It was not until 2009 that a crack-down began and there has been increasing violence since then. The brutal insurrection has been active mainly in Borno State, an under-governed region the size of Belgium. He noted that the Northeast has no natural resources. Thanks in part to citizen policing, BH had not been able to advance outside its base or to replicate its lone attack in Abuja.

Professor Otiono noted the national context of the upcoming Presidential elections on February 14. The 1.5 million displaced persons have implications for the upcoming elections. APC candidate, former General Buhari from the North, faces incumbent PDP President Goodluck Jonathan from the South. Cultural attitudes to politics were different in Nigeria and security was not a major issue. The opposition APC already held power in a number of Nigerian states and its track record in governance had been compared favorably with PDP-controlled states.

Professor Otiono contrasted the current response of the Government to BH with the earlier unrest in the Niger Delta and the Biafra succession in the 1960s. The Nigerian army had a reputation of an effective peace enforcer e.g. in ECOMOG, but questions remained as to why it had not been able to crush BH. Sympathizers among army troops from the North could not be ruled out. Faced with nervous regional neighbors, Nigeria now seemed to be pursuing an international force under African Union auspices. There was real concern in the military about collateral damage to the civilian population. The recent BH attacks on hard targets such as the military base in Bama could signal an improved offensive capacity and more aggressive stance.

Nigeria required a united front with both major parties working to end violence. The upcoming Presidential election will not be the last word as political trade-offs and cross-overs may take place, but the election adds to the overall climate of uncertainty. Civil society and the use of social medias were, however, playing a useful role in drawing attention to breaches of electoral rules, so one can expect more credible elections than in 2011.

Funding for BH was complex and involved kidnapping and criminal activities. Its ostensible goal was to create a form of Islamic state, but it has no clear ideology. It practiced a senseless, scorched earth policy unlikely to win popular support. It appeared to be headed by a mentally unstable fanatic. Eventually, negotiations might be possible but only when a profile of the organization's broader leadership was clearer.

The following links were suggested for further study:

<http://mg.co.za/article/2015-01-29-boko-haram-nigerian-military-were-warned-of-attacks>

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GHQEZBB\\_wU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6GHQEZBB_wU)

[http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/12/11/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria-maps.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2014/12/11/world/africa/boko-haram-nigeria-maps.html?_r=2)