



Mohamed Khider University of Biskra  
ISILC Laboratory  
POLICA Research Unit  
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**We versus Them: Ethnic Insecurity and National Belonging in Postcolonial Africa**

**The Case of Nigeria**

Seryah Khalil

**Abstract**

Territorial, cultural and ethnic belonging have been always at the heart of the discourse that navigates the conflicting identities, insecurities and otherness. As was the case in the colonial world, African nations fell in the trouble of regional and ethnic insecurity before any national or territorial one. Tribalism and ethnic lines were firm and rigid in Africa making the quest for an independent nation that brings all ethnicities together a difficult task. Although Africans could share common cause, the tribal, regional and ethnic insecurities have remained, and sometimes threatened the whole process; perfectly described in the case of Nigeria as “the continuous state of disunity, political instability, general insecurity of lives and property, mutual suspicion and distrust among the diverse ethnic [groups].” This paper, thus, will attempt to explore the dimensions of African ethnic insecurity after independence with reference to its colonial roots taking Nigeria as an example to study. It will also attempt to understand how ethnic insecurity affected the nation building quest in this country.

Key words: national belonging, ethnic insecurity, African nationalism, ethnic conflict