

Hybrid War Can Wreak Havoc Across West Africa

Part IV

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The last chapter of the Hybrid War research, not just for West Africa but the entire continent, deals with its largest country, Nigeria.

This federal republic, as it's officially called, has the largest population of any African country at over 175 million people, thus bestowing it with limitless economic potential if its human resources were properly managed. Coupled with its large oil and gas reserves, Nigeria should theoretically be a booming success story, but the reality contradicts all expectations and the country is mired in abject poverty in spite of its natural riches. Even worse, it has an extensive history of internal division and bloodshed which continues to plague its present and temper hopes for its future.

If Nigeria could figuratively 'get its act together', then it could rise from its knees to become one of Africa's leading powers and the center of gravity in the West African Core Region (WACR), but doing so is infinitely easier said than done. Nigeria needs to overcome its legacy of identity discord – whether regional, religious, or tribal – and unify its people through an inclusive national vision that accommodates for the country's diverse differences, leveraging them as a strategic advantage instead of the vulnerability that they've been for decades. All the while, Nigeria needs to walk a thin tightrope in avoiding the Hybrid War pitfalls inherent in its historic ethno-political composition, though if it succeeds in this transformational journey, then it will morph into the most reliable African member of the multipolar community and proudly emerge as the robust New Silk Road hub that it's destined to become.

The research thus begins by analyzing the institutional avenue through which Nigeria can improve its geostrategic leadership prospects in West Africa. Accordingly, the work then progresses to a discussion of the country's geo-economic role in China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) project and the grand strategy that Beijing is pursuing in the WACR. Once that's done, the study seamlessly moves along to addressing the importance of Nigeria's huge energy deposits as they relate to the larger paradigm at play, before zeroing in on how concerns over the equitable distribution of natural resource revenue are driving the dual devolution trends of Regionalism and Identify Federalism (not to be confused with Nigeria's extant Federal Republicanism). After that, it's time to explore how these aforementioned processes contribute to Nigeria's most likely range of Hybrid War risks, with the research concluding on a positive note about how these intrinsic structural factors could creatively be used for building multipolar bridges between Nigeria and the rest of the WACR.

The Economic Integration Of ECOWAS

The “Eco” vs. The West African Franc:

Nigeria is the geostrategic center of gravity for the West African Core Region (WACR), which the author previously described as also comprising Benin, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Nigeria’s destined role is to become powerful enough that it can one day bridge the gap between the Anglophone and Francophone countries of the region and thus link together West Africa (Benin, Niger, and others) with Central Africa (Chad, Cameroon, and others), though the latter goal might be overly ambitious in the medium-term because of just how tarnished the Nigerian core has become. For now, it’s already difficult enough for Nigeria to satisfy the expectations of leadership that its peers have for it in the [Economic Community Of West African States](#) (ECOWAS). This organization institutionally brings together the Anglophone and Francophone countries of West Africa into an integrational format focused on economic cooperation and regional security, though [financially divided](#) into the mostly Anglophone [West African Monetary Zone](#) (WAMZ) and the mostly Francophone [West African Economic and Monetary Union](#) (UEMOA). The UEMOA all use the [West African Franc](#) (CFA), while the WAMZ has yet to roll out a single currency, but both constituent parts of ECOWAS did have future plans for one day creating a new currency called the “[Eco](#)”.



The details are very scarce and this monetary unit might not enter into circulation at its expected 2020 date, not least because it was [‘officially’ abandoned](#) in 2014 and a new unnamed currency was announced in its place, but the “Eco” (to continue using this moniker until the replacement one is unveiled) holds out the promise of [deepening](#) ECOWAS [integration](#) and [standardizing](#) the economies of the region. The predicted challenges, however, will be immense and might prove to be insurmountable without the proper amount of political will from all sides and the enactment of multisided concessions, which might not be possible in the current international-regional climate.

The greatest uncertainty is the role that France will have over the “Eco”, seeing as how the Paris-controlled CFA is the official currency of over half of ECOWAS’ members, and it would be unrealistic to expect France to cede its hegemonic neo-imperial influence over the region.

The most likely outcome will probably be that the CFA is rebranded as the “Eco” and that the WAMZ states are either progressively integrated into adopting it or are economically shunned for holding out and sticking with Nigeria in the hopes of one day attaining true financial independence, which is basically the reason why the original “Eco” was abandoned in the first place. Therefore, educated conjecture would suggest that ECOWAS’ economic-financial future will essentially come down to a battle between France and Nigeria in getting the member states to either accept a rebranded CFA or for the Paris-controlled economies to ditch the neo-imperialist currency and bravely take up the genuinely independent “Eco” instead.’

Nigeria vs. France, or China vs. France?:

Nigeria is plainly in no position to compete with France on any of these levels, let alone at the present moment, so it falls to China to help with building the West African state up to the point where it can behave as Beijing’s surrogate and confidently press forward with this monumental task. China can maneuver between the CFA UEMOA and the disjointed currencies of the WAMZ, but it would ideally be best for all actors if ECOWAS could

economically interface with China and the rest of the world through a single currency as opposed to several. China, however, would prefer to retain the existing system as opposed to seeing the CFA rebrand itself as the “Eco” and for France to de-facto take over the whole bloc, which would then essentially make all of China’s commercial interactions with West Africa dependent on France to varying degrees.

Moreover, if France succeeded in conquering ECOWAS with a CFA-rebranded “Eco”, then the next logical step would be for it to expand [Operation Barkhane](#) to incorporate all of the regional integration bloc’s countries and basically turn ECOWAS into a massive ‘[Lead From Behind](#)’ proxy organization for perpetuating Paris’ dominance in West Africa. If Nigeria doesn’t go along with these plans yet isn’t strong enough to stop them, then it’ll end up isolated in its own neighborhood and become subject to economic blackmail by the rest of the French-controlled countries (whether Francophone or Anglophone). China doesn’t want this to happen since it would amount to the West taking full control over a large swath of Africa and turning it into the structural analogue of what the Eastern European and Balkan backwater economies are to the EU nowadays.

If Brussels wants to continue growing, it will need to acquire more labor and consumer markets, which is precisely the role that a CFA-dominated West Africa could play, especially if the WAMZ countries were tricked into falling for the ruse of the Paris-based currency being rebranded as the “Eco”. On the other hand, China also needs new labor and consumer markets to assure its own continued growth, which is the foundational motivation for pressing forward with OBOR and the construction of New Silk Roads all across the world. At the same time, neither the EU nor China wants their ‘go-to’ market to be under the influence of the other, which thus sets France (the EU’s vanguard in West Africa) up against China in a proxy competition for the region, with China having no choice but to outsource its future leadership in the area to Nigeria, though with the risky bet being that Africa’s [most populous country](#) and its [second-largest economy](#) can succeed in getting on its feet first and then effectively carrying out the collective multipolar will afterwards.

The Nigerian Node On The New Silk Road

The only way that Nigeria can ever actualize its true potential and approach the position of asymmetrical strength whereby it can realistically take on France’s regional economic influence on China’s behalf is for the country to become the primary West African node on China’s New Silk Road. Being the meticulous and risk-adverse planner that it is, China has three simultaneous projects that it’s pursuing in order to bring this about, with each of them being supplementary to the other but also capable of functioning as successful stand-alone endeavors in the event that the other two are derailed.

✖ The three Nigerian Silk Roads that China is helping to construct are complemented by the [\\$2.5 billion](#) that Beijing has already invested in its host’s economy and the [astounding \\$80 billion](#) in energy infrastructure deals that it committed to in June. This latter aspect of the OBOR strategy will be described in the next section, while the present one will explore the mobility portions more in-depth in illustrating the ingenuity behind China’s connectivity vision and explaining the reason why it was willing to loan Nigeria [\\$6 billion](#) in pursuit of this. It’ll begin by highlighting China’s geostrategic vision and then detailing how each of the three projects contributes to this in their own way, including the means through which they can connect with other actual and forecasted projects in the region.

Since most readers will probably be overwhelmed with the details presented in this section,

the last part of it ends with a map that illustrates each of the Silk Road projects that are discussed below and concludes with a few strategic observations about the bigger picture being presented.

Bringing Giants Together

Like it was explained at the very beginning of the African Hybrid War research many chapters ago, natural economic logic suggests that the continent would be best served if its two most populous countries were connected to one another, which would help each of them benefit from the other's growth as well as encourage more intra-African trade in general. In practice, this means that a transport corridor would have to be constructed between Nigeria and Ethiopia (and its Red Sea maritime outlet of Djibouti), with the quickest route being through the resource-rich states of South Sudan, the Central African Republic, and Cameroon. Unfortunately, as it was also previously extrapolated on in an earlier chapter, the first two of the three transit countries constitute what the author has dubbed the Failed State Belt, purposely destroyed by the US' meddling intrigue and therefore logistically unreliable and horrendously unsafe.

The CCS Detour:

An alternative route had to be blazed which made the best out of the given circumstances and still endeavored to connect the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, which is why China went ahead with funding the oft-delayed [Cameroon-Chad-Sudan \(CCS\) Silk Road](#) from Douala to Port Sudan (via N'Djamena) that was comprehensively analyzed in the earlier chapters about the former two states. Still, this project doesn't directly link up with Nigeria, which was supposed to be the main purpose behind the entire endeavor, though it does get very close to doing so in both the Chadian capital and the Cameroonian port, leaving space for northern and southern branch lines (whether rail or highway) to extend into the country whenever the situation is deemed safe enough. Security is an issue in Northeast Nigeria because of Boko Haram, which coincidentally became a major problem right around the time that both South Sudan and the Central African Republic descended into chaos, while Southeastern Nigeria is recently experiencing a [surge of violence](#) from criminal gangs and self-proclaimed separatists, thus explaining why the CCS Silk Road isn't the NCS Silk Road and doesn't formally include Nigeria.

The Nigerian Silk Roads:

The purpose of the three Nigerian Silk Roads is therefore to connect the country to the CCS Silk Road via the branch lines that were spoken about above, taking care to run through the most important and economically promising areas of the country in order to best utilize this game-changing series of infrastructure investments.

Lagos-Calabar

The first project of significance is the [\\$11 billion Lagos-Calabar Silk Road](#) that was agreed to in July and which plans to run along the entirety of the Nigerian coastline, though dangerously through the oil-rich southeastern region currently beset by [low-intensity](#) criminal-separatist violence. Although ending right before the Cameroonian border, a short interconnector could foreseeably be built one day in linking Calabar with Douala and thus joining the Lagos-Calabar Silk Road with the CCS one. Functionally speaking, this would accomplish the goal of connecting the Atlantic Ocean with the Red Sea, and while the CCS

Silk Road (which itself isn't yet built) doesn't penetrate into Ethiopia, a branch line could be constructed one of these days in finally fulfilling the master plan of bringing the Nigerian and Ethiopian giants together.

Lagos-Kano

The second Nigerian Silk Road route is the one [between Lagos and Kano](#) by means of Abuja, which will [connect](#) the two largest cities in the country via the capital [when](#) it's finally [completed](#). This is a strategically crucial route because it doesn't run through any ongoing Hybrid War-afflicted areas, as in it's not affected by Boko Haram nor any of the Southern separatists. That isn't to say that its long-term security is inherently guaranteed (which will be discussed later at the end of the research), but that it's generally the safest of the three Nigerian Silk Roads and the least likely to be destabilized in the short term.

Port Harcourt-Maiduguri

The [last](#) branch of the Nigerian Silk Road [runs](#) from the southeastern oil capital of Port Harcourt to the capital of Boko Haram's Borno State, Maiduguri, in the northeast of the country. This corridor is the eastern counterpart of the Lagos-Kano line, but unlike its western analogue, it passes through the doubly destabilized regions of the criminal-separatist Southeast and the Salafist Northeast, making it the most strategically risky of the three routes but also the one which would most directly connect Nigeria with N'Djamena and thenceforth with the rest of the CCS Silk Road up until its Red Sea terminus. It's for this reason, alongside corruption and other related challenges, that the route's modernization has been beset by [numerous delays](#) and will probably be the last of the three to enter into operation.

Kano-Maiduguri-N'Djamena Interconnector

Just like how the Lagos-Calabar Silk Road need a short interconnector to link it up with the CCS Silk Road terminal of Douala, so too does its perpendicular portions of Lagos-Kano and Port Harcourt-Maiduguri need their own for joining together and reaching N'Djamena. While this isn't officially in the cards at the moment, it makes complete sense for it to eventually be built, but only after all three lines are up and running first. Additionally, Boko Haram needs to be defeated beforehand and Northeastern Nigeria needs to be pacified in order to ensure this project's lasting security.

The Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road And The West African Rail Loop:

Nigeria is one of the most crucial countries for China's New Silk Road strategy in Africa not just because of its own promise as the most populous country on the continent and its second-largest economy, but because of the geographically facilitating role that it plays in extending OBOR all across Africa. Nigeria is approximately midway between Senegal and Sudan, and given the existing infrastructure investments that China is partaking in all throughout the West African Core Region's main state, it makes sense for any additional projects west of Nigeria to pass through it en route to Sudan (or eventually Ethiopia one day).

The first project of repute is what the author dubbed in the last chapter as the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road, which is pretty much just [Trans-African Highways 5 and 6](#), the former being from Dakar to N'Djamena and the latter being from the Chadian capital to Sudan. The

projected modification to this route is that it has the very real chance of accommodating rail transport as well, since the [Dakar-Bamako portion](#) between the Senegalese and Malian capitals is presently [being built](#) with Chinese assistance. If this railroad were extended to the Burkinabe capital of Ouagadougou, then it would successfully link up with the [West African Rail Loop](#), which circularly [connects](#) to the Nigerien capital of Niamey, Nigeria's Lagos (and thus to the Lagos-Caladan Silk Road), the largest Beninese city and only seaport of Cotonou, and the Togolese, Ghanaian, and Ivorian capitals of Lomé, Accra, and Abidjan.

Concerning the remaining portion of Trans-African Highway 5 between Niamey and N'Djamena, that too has the chance to be developed into a railroad and all that it takes is yet another short line being built, though this time between the Nigerien capital and the second-largest Nigerian city of Kano. After that, the Kano-Maiduguri-N'Djamena Interconnector written about above would suffice for completing the last part of Trans-African Highway 5. There is, however, a possibility that a workaround could be constructed between Kano and N'Djamena, especially if Northern Nigeria falls deeper into violence and the original direct route to the Chadian capital becomes unviable. In that case, it might be necessary to construct a detour from Niamey and Kano to the second-largest Nigerien city of Zinder, and thenceforth continue along Niger's densely populated southern border belt all the way to Lake Chad, choosing either to go around it by cutting through the northeastern tip of Nigeria (which might not be feasible amidst the prolonged circumstances of destabilization that gave rise to the rerouting in the first place) or via the longer way around the Chadian section.

Grand Strategy:

In summary, Nigeria forms the irreplaceably crucial juncture of China's Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road in linking the Atlantic country of Senegal with the Red Sea-bordering state of Sudan. In principle, Nigeria still functions as a very important node on China's New Silk Road even without its various interconnections to the rest of West Africa or further across the eastern reaches of the continent, in that each of the three Nigerian Silk Roads are economically sound and strategic investments on their own. When all three are taken together as an integrated infrastructural package, the unified project acquires a significance much larger than the sum of its total parts, and this is exponentially multiplied with each of the other Silk Road projects that it ultimately connects to (CCS Silk Road, West African Rail Loop, and the Trans-African Highway/Railway 5).



Red: CCS (Cameroon-Chad-Sudan) Silk Road

Gold: Trans-African Highway 5

Lavender: Ethiopia-Nigeria Silk Road (the most direct projected route through resource-rich territory)

Pink: West African Rail Loop

Blue: Lagos-Calabar Silk Road

Green: Lagos-Kano Silk Road

Yellow: Port Harcourt-Maiduguri Silk Road

Strategic Observations:

Several salient conclusions can be reached from the above map:

- * The Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road is pretty much just a slightly modified and rail modernized version of Trans-African Highways 5 and 6 that aims to connect Dakar with Djibouti;
- * France's Operation Barkhane and the US' 'anti-terror' presence along the Sahel almost perfectly overlap with the projected Silk Road route, proving that both Great Powers intend to influence it;
- * The Chadian capital of N'Djamena will acquire heightened significance as a crucial juncture and transit point along the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road due to its geographically central location;
- * Boko Haram's terrorist insurgency in the Lake Chad basin threatens to sabotage China's transcontinental plans through the formation of a black hole of chaos right in the middle of the route;
- * and the West African Rail Loop and Nigerian Silk Roads essentially serve as southern branches of the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road, and the latter is a means for linking the Gulf of Guinea and Red Sea.

Africa's Energy Capital

Nigeria's economic promise isn't just limited to its future market value as Africa's largest possible producer and consumer, but it's also fundamentally tied in with its existing energy wealth and the significance that this has to the rest of the world. The author describes Nigeria as Africa's energy capital because of its copious supplies of both oil and gas, which combine to give it a competitive advantage over all the other countries in the continent. A [report](#) from the US' Energy Information Agency (EIA) states that Nigeria is Africa's largest oil producer and the world's fourth-largest LNG exporter, though a different analysis from elsewhere [warns](#) that the country could slide down to tenth place in the global LNG suppliers market if it doesn't receive enough modernizing investment to keep pace with its many competitors. On a regional level, Nigeria also supplies gas to its Beninese, Togolese, and Ghanaian neighbors through the underwater [West African Gas Pipeline](#), which extends Abuja's reach along the Gulf of Guinea and coincidentally overlaps with the southern portion of the West African Rail Loop that was discussed in the previous section.

In getting down to business, this section is split into two parts; the first addresses Nigeria's previous energy partnership with the US, while the second one looks at its Asian energy prospects with India and China.

American Past:

The EIA [reported](#) in 2011 that Nigerian oil accounted for 9% of the US' total crude imports and 40% of the West African country's total exports, which surprisingly made Nigeria the US' fourth-largest source of oil behind Canada, Mexico, and Saudi Arabia. While the top-three rankings haven't changed in the years since, Nigeria's contribution to the US' energy consumption dramatically shrank with the advent of fracking, with the White House taking the unprecedented step of [declaring](#) in late 2014 that the US had completely stopped importing Nigerian oil. Official EIA [statistics](#) and [graphs](#) prove that a massive 92% drop-off had indeed taken place, as the US imported 373 million barrels in 2010 but only 30 million by 2015.

Apparently, the US hadn't in fact totally halted its imports of Nigerian oil between 2014-2015, but had radically decreased them to such a level that there were veritably times where it wasn't purchasing anything, just as the White House stunningly told the world at the end of 2014. However, the US did [announce](#) in spring 2016 that it was going to resume Nigerian imports in order to compensate for the fracking slump that was caused by the energy glut and consequent price drop, but it seems almost impossible for levels to ever return to their 2010 high. The consequence of Nigeria's diminished energy importance to the US is that America is no longer directly affected by any energy disruptions in the Niger Delta region, and that such events could even cynically serve to advance Washington's agenda of interfering with the reliability of its competitor's (China) future supply source or threatening its ally's (India) access as a means of indirectly influencing it

Asian Future:

The abrupt end of Nigeria's energy relationship with the US meant that the [OPEC-member country](#) had to urgently find new customers to replace it with, which it [ended up doing by 2016](#) with India (21% of imports), Spain (11%), and the Netherlands (10%), all three of which together replaced the amount of exports that Nigeria had previously sent to the US. Indian oil consumption is so important to the Nigerian economy nowadays that India has become Nigeria's [top export destination](#), and with the South Asian state planning to [buy more oil](#) from its [top African trading partner](#) in the coming future, this relationship is expected to only strengthen. In the coming years, it can even be expected that the tight energy ties between the two will pioneer diversified commercial engagement. Indian entrepreneurs will logically become attracted to the promising Nigerian economy and fortuitously come to realize that the shared English language legacy between the two makes it relatively easier to conduct business there than elsewhere in Western Africa.

As for China, it just committed the [staggering sum of \\$80 billion](#) to develop and modernize Nigeria's oil and gas infrastructure, proving that Beijing plans to get in on the country's energy game and belatedly compete with India. China [only imported](#) 11 million barrels of Nigerian oil in 2014 compared to the more than 10x larger amount that India did in 2016 at 157 million barrels, but China did [declare its intention](#) in early 2016 to increase that amount in the future. True to its word, China's \$80 billion investment promise came just a few months later in June, but in all actuality, Beijing's long-term energy interests in Nigeria have more to do with LNG than oil, which is most clearly seen by the fact that its LNG imports experienced a [60% spike](#) in 2015-2016 and China stated its early 2015 desire to import even more of this resource from Nigeria. Again, one sees how China carried through on this intent through its \$80 billion commitment in June 2016, which is obviously meant to supplement its Silk Road vision for the country.

Southern Resentment:

In transitioning to the next section about Nigeria's history of regionalism, federalism, and violent domestic division, it's relevant to make mention of the fact that all of the country's oil and gas reserves [are concentrated](#) along its southeastern coast. The problem, however, is that the native Igbo majority in this part of Nigeria never felt like they received their due dividends from the natural resource wealth that lies beneath their soil and below their waters, instead accusing their fellow countrymen – particularly politicians from the North – of plundering their riches and leaving them with next to nothing. This has been a recurring historical problem for Nigeria and reinforced the already sharp sense of identity separateness that the Igbo and other Southeastern native populations felt relative to the

rest of the country. Once more, concerns about the equitable sharing of natural resource revenue have reemerged as a catalyst for conflict in the Southeast, thus setting the stage for a return to divisive regionalism and possibly prompting a renewed call for federalism sometime down the line.

The Regional-Federal Interplay

Nigeria has a storied history of domestic divisions, and it's not the intent of this research to comprehensively analyze every facet of them. What's relevant for the reader to learn in the context of Hybrid War theory is that Nigeria was once a federation of just a handful of states that progressively underwent the seemingly contradictory processes of administrative decentralization and political centralization, interestingly transitioning into a federal republic of [36 separate entities](#), though not before experiencing a gruesome [civil war](#) that was fought in the energy-rich Southeast. It's not within the scope of this research to investigate each and every reason for why this happened, but the main point of discussing this is to reveal insight into the general trends that have occurred in Nigeria's administrative-political history, which will in turn provide the reader with an understanding of how the country's subsequently discussed Hybrid War risks could impact on Nigeria's fragile nature.

Early Years:

To begin with, Nigeria achieved its independence in 1960 and was at that time composed of only [three regions](#) – Northern, Eastern, and Western – that were dominated by a certain ethnic group – [Hausa](#), [Igbo](#), and [Yoruba](#), respectively. Northern Nigeria is majority Muslim while both the Eastern and Western regions are majority Christian, the latter two of which used to be their own single colony called the Southern Nigerian Protectorate. This entity was forced to merge with the Northern Nigerian Protectorate in 1914, after which the two civilizational halves [became part](#) of the same future independent state, thus explaining why the country has such impressive identity diversity. The three regions existed in an uneasy relationship from 1960-1963, after which the [Mid-Western Region](#) was formed out of the Western one in that year and the country formally became a Federal Republic. Lingering mistrust between the Southeastern Igbo and the Northern Hausa continued to afflict the fledgling country and boiled over in 1966, during which Nigeria experienced an [Igbo-led coup](#), a Hausa-led [counter-coup](#) that reversed it, and [retributive killings](#) all across the country against the Igbo.

Civil War:

These rapidly developing events in turn prompted the military leader of the Eastern Region, an Igbo by the name of [Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu](#), to [declare independence](#) for his territory and [rechristen](#) it as the [Republic of Biafra](#), thus heralding in the Nigerian Civil War that raged from 1967-1970. It's not known exactly how many people died during this time, but most estimates place the number of victims at [over two million](#), the majority of which [died from starvation](#). The "Biafrans'" humanitarian plight earned worldwide sympathy and inspired dozens of NGOs to [airlift](#) food and other supplies to the region in getting around the Nigerian military's blockade. The most pertinent domestic administrative-political consequences of the civil war was that a decision was later made to transfer the capital from the country's largest city of Lagos on the western fringe of Nigeria to the purposely built centrally positioned city of Abuja. Additionally, and in the more immediate term, the Eastern Region was broken up into three separate states after the end of the conflict, while the rest of the country also underwent a similar decentralization, especially in the Northern

Region. This process steadily continued until the present day, and Nigeria's domestic administrative-political makeup is now virtually unrecognizable from the past.

Democratic, Or Divide And Rule Tactic?:

The saliency in this happening is that Nigeria's leaders expected that the decentralization of the country into a scattering of separate ethno-identity statelets would lead to the diminishment of regionalization in favor of more easily containable localization/tribalization, thereby hopefully preventing a resurgence of separatist conflict in "Biafra" or elsewhere in the future. To put it more bluntly, while being very democratic on one hand and attempting to respond to the perceived governing needs of the country's various identities, it also cynically helped the central politicians divide and rule the rest of Nigeria. The gigantic West African country is nowadays split into 36 different administrative units, but even these can broadly be categorized into the North, South, and [Middle Belt](#), with the first two remaining mostly ([Sharia-law](#) abiding) Muslim and Christian respectively, while the third one is a heterogeneous mix. In this day and age when the "Clash of Civilizations" is regrettably seen as an attractive model for people to follow, Nigeria appears to be set on the path of returning to its old regionalization tensions, albeit this time along civilizational-religious lines that expectedly overlap with the pre-1914 colonial-era division of the now-unified country.

From Civil To Religious Allegiance:

The problem that predictably emerges is that the North is Islamifying at the same time as the South is either secularizing or embracing Christianity, and while both religions are in principle highly compatible with one another, they're also easily susceptible to being led into violence against the other by devious domestic and/or international influences, such as what has happened [several times](#) in the mixed Middle Belt. The elevation of religious identity above that of its civil and tribal counterparts is responsible for the modified reemergence of regionalism in Nigeria and the relative ease with which large masses of people can quickly be gathered together by political organizers, whether it's to protest, riot, and/or revolt against the state. To an extent, this is one of the partial reasons why Boko Haram was able to rise as quickly as it did and generate such appeal, though Nigerian researcher Aaron D. Chiroma more comprehensively explains the group's genesis in his article "[Boko Haram: A Question For Dominance Or Simply Terrorism On Steroids?](#)", which the author strongly recommends that the reader check out if they're interested in learning more about this terrorist group.

"Retro-Federalism":

Boko Haram will be discussed a bit more in the last section about Nigeria's Hybrid War threats, but for now what's important for the reader to recognize in general is that religiously-organized regionalization could one day usher in a return to [Identity Federalism](#), which is what Nigeria practiced from 1960-1963, or some could argue, up until the beginning of the civil war in 1967. Instead of following the oft-described model that the author has elaborated on all throughout his worldwide Hybrid War research and implementing the "Bosnification" of each separate identity group into its own quasi-independent statelet, Nigeria's 'retro-federalism' would see the de-facto restoration of three broadly defined Northern, Eastern, and Western regions concentrated around the Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba ethnicities, respectfully, that endeavor to return the country back to its pre-civil war administrative-political status. For instance, the amalgamation of Northern Nigerians into "Muslims" simultaneously with their Southern counterparts' unification into

“Christians” might be abused by demagogic forces to prompt identity discord across the country and enough violence in the Middle Belt that many common Nigerians come to the conclusion that it would be much better to “Bosnify” than to destructively remain together (though objectively keeping in mind that these potential conflicts are not ‘naturally occurring’ but provoked by agenda-driven forces, whether internal and/or external).

Resource Triggers And Constraints:

The problem, just as it was back in 1967, is that the Eastern Igbos’ natural resource wealth is envied by the rest of the country, thereby making it unlikely that their compatriots would ever allow any substantial form of federalization to occur that would endow “Biafra” with fiscal autonomy over their riches. Relatedly, it would be contrary to the Northerners’ long-term interests to voluntarily want to part with the South’s wealth, no matter what manipulated identity-driven problems they may have with people in that part of the country. Therefore, while federalization might one day return to the forefront of the country’s politics and become an attractive slogan for various forces to use in organizing the masses (even those misled into believing that they are against the other [i.e. Christian-Muslim clashes]), it’s doubtful that it could ever peacefully be implemented to the extent that its agitators would be satisfied. Instead, the comparatively ‘superficial’ federalization that’s currently practiced in Nigeria could deceptively be expanded to include more symbolic political-cultural autonomy, though with the caveat being that fiscal responsibilities are still under the control of the central government in order to preempt the energy-wealthy southeastern states (collectively referred to as “Biafra” for the sake of this research) from effectively seizing/‘regaining control’ over most of the country’s budget.

As these sorts of conflicts usually have a penchant for doing, however, the eruption of multisided warfare in Nigeria could inadvertently allow for unexpected scenarios to occur, possibly even leading to the fulfillment of doomed-to-fail Identity/Regional Federalization. While it’s theoretically possible that a return to federalism between the three main regions of the country could be done in a peacefully effective way that ultimately improves Nigeria’s overall situation, there’s plenty that can go wrong during this transitional period and turn the country into a totally failed state. The driving factor in making this and other unpredictable scenarios possible is Hybrid Warfare, which is why it’s now time to turn to the last section of the research in analyzing the most likely sorts of identity conflicts that could break out in the country and bring Africa’s most populous state to the brink of bedlam, whether in pursuit of the aforementioned administrative-political objective or some other type of far-reaching goal.

Back To The Past

Boko Haram And The Backdrop Of Hybrid War:

Nigeria’s Hybrid War scenarios harken back to the country’s past and are essentially a rehash of the ethno-identity structural split that set the backdrop for the country’s civil war. Like it was explained in the previous section, regionalism never fully went away in Nigeria despite the administrative-political decentralization that occurred after the civil war ended, and this historical phenomenon is once more back in focus due to the ‘Clash of Civilizations’ overtones that surround the Boko Haram conflict. The gist is that Boko Haram’s rise produced a diversity of reactions all throughout the country and among its main communities, but the most commonly pervasive one was that Nigerians became fearful that militant Salafism could spread and take over more parts of the Muslim North, basically

creating a 'state within a state' that would de-facto partition the country into two civilizationally separate zones.

The only response that the government could take by that point would be to reignite another civil war, albeit one in which the central authorities fight against the North and not the South. Understanding the enormity of what's at stake in this scenario and how disastrous it would be for all Nigerians, the state was compelled to take proactive measures in assembling the regional anti-Boko Haram coalition in trying to wipe out the terrorists. Granted, the systemic corruption and inefficiency of the Nigerian Armed Forces largely served as an [enabler](#) for the group in the first place, but the semi-coordinated measures that have been undertaken with the country's neighbors over the past year have been mildly successful in dislodging the group from its stronghold in the Northeast, though the threat still remains in both physical and ideological terms.

The damage that Boko Haram inflicted on the Nigerian psyche has yet to be thoroughly studied, but it can be reasonably conjectured that it brought the 'Clash of Civilizations' to the forefront of the national discussion and stirred the undercurrents of ethno-identity regionalism, which can be seen through the opportunistic re-emergence of Niger Delta criminal-separatists over the past couple of years. Sensing the military's weakness in the face of Boko Haram's blitzkrieg and eager to exploit the country's structural weaknesses at their most vulnerable time in order to further their own interests, armed groups in the former separatist region of "Biafra" returned to their low-scale insurgency/banditry, which in turn forced the military to divide its focus between the Northeast and Southeast in dealing with both concurrent threats.

Although seemingly manageable for the time being, the precedent that this established is startling and could soon become the norm in the country if it's not adequately dealt with as soon as possible. Even worse, however, is that the indefinite prolongation of simultaneous Northeastern and Southeastern insurgencies could set the country up for a devastating blow to its unity if yet another armed conflict breaks out elsewhere in the country or if self-interested opportunists exploit the occasion to aggressively press their own divisive demands. This is the strategic situation that Nigeria presently finds itself in, and it sets the context for explaining the rest of its Hybrid War vulnerabilities.

The Triangle Of Threats:

Recalling what was written above about how Boko Haram triggered a return to the country's historic divisions, as well as the earlier elaboration about Nigeria's predilection to regionalism, the three main ethno-regional identities may 'defensively' consolidate their influence in their home areas and thus form the basis for reconceptualizing the country as a political union between its primary Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo peoples, which together account for [approximately 70%](#) of the country's total population. In practice, this broadly splits the country up into the North, Southwest, and Southeast, respectively, with each of these population groups forming the core of their region's identity, which is not unlike the pre-civil war administrative-political delineation of Nigeria into the Northern, Western, and Eastern Regions. This is what was being referred to in the title of this section, Back To The Past, because it strategically reverts the country back to its immediate post-independence identity divisions, regardless of the fact that each of these are now further subdivided across separate sub-national statelets in their prospective regions.

It might sound overly simplistic and actually be so to an extent, but the general idea is that

the reconsolidation of ethno-regional identities around the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo peoples could set into motion the uncontrollable centrifugal processes of Identity Federalism or separatism. The objective foundation for identifying each of the three potentially problematic actors is former President Goodluck Jonathan's 2013 [declaration](#) that "The Nigerian state faces three fundamental security challenges posed by extremist groups like Boko Haram in the North; the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra in the South-East; and the Oodua People's Congress in the South-West." From the reverse strategic standpoint, however, each of the leading ethnic groups behind these movements could also play a positive centripetal role in holding the country together and helping it embrace its geopolitical future in the context of the West African Core Region (WACR). This given sub-section will first deal with the threats that this triangular geo-identity division poses for Nigeria, before ending on a positive note in the last part of the research about the unique ways in which this arrangement could be applied for the benefit of the entire state, provided of course that there's enough political will and discipline from all parties to do so.

"Hausaland":

The concept of a politically [separate homeland](#) – whether formally independent or broadly autonomous – for the Hausa-Fulani people is one which was first touched upon in the last chapter about Niger, but it's actually even more relevant for Nigeria. The Federal Republic has many more members of this demographic than its northern neighbor, and the modern-day territory of Northern Nigeria used to contain the [Sokoto Caliphate](#), one of what experts have called the "[Fulani jihad states](#)". There's a wealth of history behind these entities which is just waiting to be discovered by the reader, but the scope of the present work isn't too wide enough to get into a detailed review about these entities. Instead, the importance in becoming familiar with these polities is to highlight that this demographic has a precedence of formal independence that predates the brief British-era colony of Northern Nigeria.

Like it was already explained earlier, the North would stand to lose immensely from any independence campaign because it would end up being cut off from the oil-rich Southern coffers and unimpeded access to the maritime trading routes along the Atlantic coast. Still, the sense of identity separateness and precedence of formal independence that the Northern Muslim Hausa-Fulani once enjoyed is a powerfully attractive idea that appeals to the imagination of many and can thus be abused by political agitators in assembling large masses of easily misled people to do their bidding. This is even more so in the present atmosphere of regional-civilizational distrust that's returned to the forefront of Nigerian society, though it must never be forgotten that it hadn't ever totally left in the first place despite the cosmetic administrative-political changes implemented after the conclusion of the civil war.

What's particularly noteworthy about "Hausaland" – or Northern Nigeria in general (which are not interchangeable, though largely overlapping) – is that this region already practices various forms of [Sharia law](#), all with the willing support of the central authorities. This can be taken to mean that Abuja recognizes that it is in the overall interests of Nigeria's unity to decentralize the justice system in this part of the country so as to stave off any sort of forthcoming unrest modelled off of the above template. No matter how hard the government tried, however, its strategy can only be said to have partially succeeded, since the [rise](#) of Boko Haram contradicts the assertion that this move satisfied the desires of all Muslims. It should be recognized that the terrorist group embraces an extreme form of fundamentalist Islam that is outside of mainstream acceptance anywhere in the world,

especially in Nigeria, but that the fusion of violent Salafism with the historical memory of the Sokoto Caliphate, coupled with the periphery's preexisting regional frustrations against the center, came together in such a way as to greatly contribute to Boko Haram's success over the past few years.

If the terrorists can broaden their appeal to the Hausa community by embracing the concept of "Hausaland", then even their military defeat at the hands of the anti-Boko Haram coalition wouldn't be sufficient for eliminating this threat, since the composite ideology of Salafism and geo-identity separateness that the group stands for could lead to it experiencing a 'second wind' sometime down the line, albeit in the core of "Hausaland" instead of along the Lake Chad periphery.

"Yorubaland":

The second of the three regions to be briefly discussed is "Yorubaland", or in other words, the distinct homeland of the [Yoruba](#) people from Southwestern Nigeria. This ethnic group also transcends state borders and stretches into parts of neighboring Benin and Togo, though they have nowhere near the amount of institutional influence there as they do in Nigeria. Their chief strategic advantage is that the country's largest city and former capital of Lagos is located in their traditional territory, thus giving them a sense of entitlement in feeling that they deserve a leading role in the state (aside from their large demographic numbers that some have [estimated](#) to be about 21% of the country's total). The leading group that's militantly advocating for the formation of a separate "Yorubaland" is the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), which as cited above, was grouped together by former President Goodluck Jonathan as constituting one of the three primary militant threats endangering Nigeria.

Non-Nigerians such as the author have difficulty finding reliable information about this group aside from what they've officially declared on their [website](#) and the scattered reports about their statements and activities which occasionally filter through into the media, but some salient information about their intentions can still be acquired. For starters, the US Justice Department published an [informative report](#) about their history, organizational hierarchy, and objectives in 2013, which reaffirms that the group is seeking to promote Yoruba rights to various extents, with there being a split between the "moderates" and "militants". The document states that the former are willing to work with the authorities in achieving their objectives, unlike the latter, but a surprising twist of events happened over the summer which might indicate that the 'hardliners' position is pragmatically softening. Gani Adams, whom the report indicates is the leader of the "militant" faction, [spoke out](#) against the Niger Delta "Avengers" and other related groups in July 2016 and offered to work together with the military in [defeating](#) this menace. That's not exactly the policy of a diehard separatist organization, but of one which is attempting to work 'within the system' to a certain extent in order to gain some benefits from the establishment.

Whether or not this indicates a larger shift in the "militant" faction of the OPC remains to be seen, but this move can at least be interpreted as comparatively positive and holding out the prospect of future promise. Moreover, a "moderate" faction of the party, the so-called "Reformed Oodua People's Congress", also [announced](#) that it would take action against Niger Delta militants that are present in "Yorubaland", though adhering to a strict policy of peacefulness and non-violence in doing so. Interestingly, while being internally divided into "moderate" and "militant" factions, the OPC appears relatively united in their defense of "Yorubaland" and in opposing the operative expansion of any other armed non-state groups

onto what they consider as “their” territory. To follow along and not lose sight of the chain of events, the rise of Boko Haram emboldened the Southeastern separatists-criminals (which will be addressed shortly), who then [encroached](#) on Yoruba-populated territory and prompted both OPC factions to stand up and oppose them to differing extents.

What’s important to learn from this is that the OPC is patriotically standing behind the government in pushing back against the Southeastern fighters, instead of taking their side and teaming up to fight against Abuja. In reference to patriotism, the OPC probably isn’t doing this in defense of the Nigerian state per say, but is driven by their duty to protect “Yorubaland”, which they feel is being violated by the out-of-regional militants’ activity on their soil. More pragmatically, the OPC might have calculated that the government’s crackdown on the Southeast’s armed groups might inadvertently lead to clashes in “Yorubaland” as the authorities try to flush out all the fighters that have infiltrated there, which would complicate the strategic situation for the OPC in that their territory would then become a battlefield between two separate actors which they ideally want nothing to do with in the first place. Predictably, the unfolding conflict in their region – fought by two sides which the OPC doesn’t even recognize as being in the area legitimately – could suck the OPC into the warzone and lead the situation along a dangerous and unpredictable scenario branch that neither faction wants or is prepared to handle.

Therefore, the two factions appear to have implicitly reached an understanding amongst themselves in agreeing to side with the authorities and cooperate in flushing the Niger Delta militants out of their territory, hoping that this could both raise their soft power prestige among their constituents and the rest of the country, as well as eventually result in some sort of political concessions from the government further down the line, especially in the event that they can prove themselves invaluable to the authorities or of enough value so as to warrant this. It’s not foreseeable that the government would instantly ‘reward’ the OPC just for the sake of it, but the group’s constructive activity in support of the military’s anti-insurgent campaign could help foster an atmosphere of trust between the two parties that could afterwards make it more likely that the sides could come to some sort of forthcoming agreement, whether in general or during future times of tense discord and sudden crisis. The most militant members of the OPC might even moderate their positions with time and recant their separatist objectives in favor of Identity Federalism or something akin to it, especially if they’re somehow incorporated into the existing power structure and become a stakeholder in its affairs.

“Biafra”:

The last of the three corners of Nigeria’s Triangle of Hybrid War Threats is “Biafra”, the southeastern separatist state which sparked the Nigerian Civil War in the late 1960s. Nowadays there’s a distinct upsurge in ‘neo-Biafra’ militant activity, whether carried out by genuine separatists or criminal bands that have misappropriated the name and cause in order to gain ‘legitimacy’ among the population and the international community. The three most relevant groups are the [“Niger Delta Avengers”](#) (simply the Avengers), [“Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State Of Biafra”](#) (MASSOB), and the [“Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta”](#) (MEND).

MEND [reached a deal](#) with the government to lay down arms and renounce violence in exchange for cash payments and amnesty back in 2009, and they’ve since served as intermediaries between the authorities and other militant groups in the delta region. In fact, MEND also publicly came out in [opposition](#) to the Avengers in May 2016, indicating that the

“Biafra” movement is more divided than ever due to the competing interests of its militant actors. MASSOB, for its part, has [sided](#) with the Avengers and supports their policy of bombing pipelines and carrying out other acts of sabotage. The newest of the three main “Biafra” actors, the Avengers only arrived on the scene in March 2016, but have since then morphed into a potent force to be reckoned with. Their spate of bombing attacks, kidnappings, and killings in favor of independence got so bad that the government launched [Operation Crocodile Smile](#) in August to bring law and order back to the Southeast. In response, the Avengers declared their own campaign, [Operation Crocodile Tears](#), to fight back against the government.

What’s of particular Hybrid War interest is that there appears to be an ethnic divide between the Avengers and the other “Biafra” militants, with attempts having been made to link the Ijaw with the new insurgency group. This ethnic group generally lives in the creeks and rivers of the Niger Delta, while the much more populous Igbo inhabit the “Biafran” hinterland north of the Ijaw homeland. Some of the Ijaw have [denied](#) that it is only their demographic which takes part in the Avengers’ militancy and others have outright [disowned](#) it, though several other Ijaw organizations have [publicly proclaimed](#) their support for the group and have defended its general mission of fighting for a separate country. Whether or not it is objectively the case that the Ijaw are the driving actors behind the Avengers, what’s important for observers to conclude is that this is how they’re being portrayed, which can indicate two pertinent things.

Firstly, Operation Crocodile Smile could be interpreted as targeting the Ijaw, thus raising expected claims of ‘ethnic cleansing’ and ‘genocide’ if the conflict heats up. Secondly, because of what appears to be a divide between the Ijaw, Igbos, and [Itsekiri](#) in the Niger River Delta region (“Biafra”), there’s a chance for the government to exacerbate whatever splits are currently existing in order to isolate the active militants by turning their neighbors against them. From Abuja’s perspective, it might be infinitely more preferable for “Biafrans” to kill one another than for the state to do this instead and be accused of human rights abuses and targeted attacks. Moreover, Operation Crocodile Smile might backfire against the government if it ends up uniting all the disparate ethnic groups and separatist-criminal organizations in the region, but for this to happen, the Igbos have to definitely get on board, which has yet to fully happen.

Despite the Southeast’s lingering destitution which has continued throughout decades of multi-billion-dollar energy deals, the Igbo haven’t returned to their civil war-era militancy and probably might not ever do this owing to the profound trauma that was inflicted on them during the war. Therefore, barring some sort of extraordinary circumstance that pushes the Igbo to the breaking point in throwing caution to the wind and joining the Avengers, it’s doubtful that this insurgency will escalate into anything too serious in the near future, though the risk is ever-present that it suddenly could. There are indeed legitimate local concerns that the inhabitants have about the environmental consequences of unregulated oil extraction in their homeland, which compounds with their perennial frustrations at not receiving what they feel is their legitimate share of the natural resource wealth from below their soil and beneath their sea. The chronic underdevelopment of the Niger Delta region adds credence to locals’ criticisms against the government, so it’s not hard to see how this conflict could easily boil over at any time.

The worst-case scenario for the government would be if the three “Biafran” organizations united in militant opposition to the authorities and implicitly coordinated their attacks with Boko Haram in order to make the best use out of the government’s divided focus. Neither of

the two prerequisite developments – the unification of the “Biafran” militants and their coordination with Boko Haram – show any signs of happening in the near future, but it would be irresponsible to disregard either of their eventualities, no matter how far-flung they may appear at present. Another possibility to watch out for is if the “Indigenous People Of Biafra” (IPOB, a small-scale “Biafran” separatist group) teamed up with the “Southern Cameroons National Council” and internationalized each other’s conflict like how International Business Times [predicted](#) in February 2016. The author isn’t suggesting that these scenarios will veritably occur, but just that any movement in their direction must be studiously monitored because of the game-changing impact that it would have in totally upsetting the state of affairs in Nigeria.

Building Ethno-Bridges

For as potentially divisive as Nigeria’s three ethno-regional divisions could become in ultimately tearing the country apart, they could also end up functioning as irreplaceable opportunities for building ethno-bridges throughout the region and strengthening the West African core. The ideas that the author will briefly mention definitely deserve to be elaborated on by other researchers and probed for their viability, as they’re indeed very forward-looking and might not necessarily be applicable to the present moment. Instead, they should be seen as provocatively constructive suggestions that are intended to serve as a starting point for creatively contemplating how Nigeria’s objective identify vulnerabilities could be reversed into becoming strategic opportunities for kick starting deeper and more comprehensive regional integration processes. Nigeria can be strengthened, not weakened, by its identity differences if it proactively employs them to build New Silk Road bridges and doesn’t let them slide out of control in fomenting zero-sum domestic divisiveness.

Hausa:

To go through the Triangle of Threats in the order that it was first presented, the Hausa could bridge Nigeria and Niger due to their trans-border nature and the high permeability between the two frontiers. Not forgetting what was written in the last chapter about Niger, there will probably be more Hausa in the Sahelian-Saharan country than in Nigeria itself if the population explosion continues at the pace that the UN predicts it will throughout the course of this century, meaning that there could eventually be a time where Niamey could leverage this against Abuja and not vice-versa. Therefore, it’s in the interests of Nigeria’s leaders to use the demographic opportunity that they presently have in building mutually beneficial inroads with Niger by means of the Hausa community, though taking care that this process both doesn’t get out of control in sparking a separatist “Hausaland” movement and that Nigeria assuages all of Niger’s concerns that Hausa-led regional integration isn’t some sort of insidious Hybrid War Trojan Horse against it.

Yoruba:

This ethno-regional identity group extends into the other West African countries of Benin and Togo, though nowhere near to the proportional and influential demographic extent that they do in Nigeria, but the culture that each of its members share could serve as a powerful factor in uniting them across their politically and linguistically divided realms. It shouldn’t be forgotten that Nigeria’s two neighbors are Francophone, while Nigeria itself is Anglophone, so this and the different historical memory that they experienced from the colonial and post-independence periods could create some challenges to deeper cooperation. Still, the ethno-cultural ties between all of the Yoruba, regardless of their present location and native

language, should be powerful enough to at least form a working platform for brainstorming cooperation proposals. In tangible terms, the West African Rail Loop will run through Benin and Togo, and Nigeria's successful leverage of the Yoruba could help it maintain influence over parts of this project, though of course in conjunction with other inroads and outreaches that it should simultaneously attempt during this time as well.

"Biafra":

It's hard to conceptualize how the reconsolidation of Southeastern regionalism could be beneficial for Nigerian unity, especially considering the explosive role that this played in the run-up to the country's bloody civil war, but there's no use denying that many of the people in this part of Nigeria have a distinct sense of ethno-regional identity that's separate from the rest of their compatriots, and that the civil war and its legacy actually played a defining part in crystallizing these differences. So long as the urge for militant separatism can be contained and its contributing factors mitigated (a task admittedly easier said than done), then a stable Southeast would allow for the planned Lagos-Caladan Silk Road to be extended across the border into Cameroon in linking up with the CCS Silk Road. Additionally, a stable situation along Nigeria's southeastern frontier with its neighbor would make it more difficult for any conflict overspill to ever develop between "Biafra" and "Southern Cameroons", since the Anglophone Cameroonians could serve as their country's bridgehead in fostering mutually beneficial commercial cooperation with Nigeria along the conjoined Silk Roads between them.

EXTRA: Northern Muslims:

Although technically being majority Hausa-Fulani, the Northern Muslims most directly afflicted by Boko Haram could serve a unique role in fostering closer integration in the Lake Chad region. Building off of the anti-Boko Haram coalition's on-the-ground gains and victories, and presuming that they can be maintained, then it's possible for this group of frontier Muslims to serve as the vanguard in advancing an integrative religious-cultural space between Northeastern Nigeria, Southeastern Niger, Western Chad, and Northern Cameroon. There's already a very porous border and much interaction between all sides (whether legally conducted through border crossings or illegally done so through areas beyond their control), so instead of allowing this state of affairs to perpetually remain as a strategic vulnerability of divisiveness and potential Hybrid War blitzkrieg, it would be in the best interests of all state-based actors to find a way to turn their non-state counterparts into anchors of stability. In order for this to happen, though, each of the respective governments must pay more attention to their citizens in this region and prioritize development projects here, which translates into immediately setting out to work on and modernize the Sahelian-Saharan Silk Road the moment that Boko Haram is militarily defeated.

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