

**THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF BIAFRA (IPOB) AND THE SETTING OF THE
“JUBRIL AL-SUDANI” AGENDA: A QUALITATIVE REVIEW OF A FAILED
SECURITIZATION MOVE***

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ABSTRACT: *The value of “good name” in politics and political movements is highly invaluable and is most appreciated when confronted by agents of demonization. Cases abound where angels are presented as demons and fugitives packaged as saints; thus, while a sparkling reputation can enhance political demagogues and even parachute political victory, “bad name” is deleterious to the state, the agents of the state and forces against the state and provides justification for the utilization of extra-legal means in solving “perceived grave” problems. This work evaluates the attempt by the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Nnamdi Kanu, to demonize President Muhammadu Buhari’s personality and present him to the Nigerian audience as an impostor and a security threat from Sudan. Content was generated from secondary sources which comprised mostly online media publications and published and unpublished literatures. Using the securitization model, we have subjected the demonization to several levels and units of securitization analysis and have concluded that the IPOB’s securitization was not successful in the sense that it dominated the agenda over a period of time and even captured the interest of a reasonable proportion of the Nigerian political audience but faded away without successfully demeaning the president as a threat, albeit, to the majority of the citizenry.*

KEYWORDS: National Security, Securitization, Indigenous People of Biafra, Nnamdi Kanu, Jubril al-Sudani

INTRODUCTION

“A good name is rather chosen than great riches...”
Proverbs 22:1

There was a time in history that certain “dastardly” acts were valorized and sugarcoated with a bunch of “nice words”, appellations and “sweet names” that they gained social legitimization. Such power of good name, for instance, made terrorism (as we know it today) a onetime revered act and its soiling, an ignoble profession. Paradoxically, after a failed attempt to assassinate a district police chief in 1878 as a form of protest against autocratic tendencies of the Russian Tsars, the female activist Vera Zasulich declared herself to be a “terrorist not a killer” (Simon, 2013:115).

*The authors are indebted to Mr. OGUNNOIKI, Adeleke Olumide of the Department of Political Science, University of Lagos, Nigeria, for his striking and helpful observations. His comments were highly invaluable and provoked major redactions in the original manuscript. The authors, however, take full responsibility for the submissions and conclusions reached in the article.

Yes! She preferred to bear the prestigious name “terrorist” than a mere “killer” for the act of terror then may have been bad but the name was noble and the end justifiable. This explains the logic behind the description of terrorism by the French politician and revolutionary, Maximilien Robespierre, as “nothing other than justice, prompt, severe, inflexible; it is therefore an emanation of virtue; it is not so much a special principle as it is a consequence of the general principle of democracy applied to our country’s most urgent needs” (Marsella, 2004:21). That is to say, “terror” was so good a name to cloak in dispatching horrific state policy which according to Robespierre, was even democratic.

By the mid twentieth century however, the demonization of the words “terror”, “terrorist” and “terrorism” at the rhetorical realm had begun with far-reaching implications. Here, Menachem Begin, the Jewish *Irgun Zvai Leumi* leader, complicated the hitherto noble “profession” by labeling its members as “freedom fighters” struggling against “government terror”. So appealing was this “good name” that all subsequent terrorist groups followed suit. Consequently, governments understood and appreciated the value of “appropriate” language too, and began to describe all violent rebels as terrorists. In an effort to avoid being seen as partisan, the media corrupted the personality of terrorists more by further describing some individuals alternatively as terrorists, guerillas, and soldiers in the same account (Rapoport, n.d:8, Ekpo, 2018).

Our analogy above demonstrates the value of “good name” and reputation to the elite ruling class, political activists and leaders of political movements. Thus, mudslinging or dragging an opponent to the mud has been a vibrant strategy at realizing certain political ends. Hence, we conceive of the attempt by the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, to assassinate the character of President Muhammadu Buhari as one of such demarche, but with no clearly defined political objective; perhaps, it’s a payback for the Nigerian government’s demonization of the group as a terrorist group before its proscription in September, 2017, or a superfluous cacophony for perpetual relevance. We are however, interested in weighing the success of IPOB’s attempted demonization of the President with the securitization model as our gauge tool.

Theoretical Framework: Securitization

The theory of securitization as a model for security analysis was propounded, developed and popularized by Ole Weaver (1989; 1995; 1997) of the Copenhagen School. The theory attracted much more attention, debates and modifications (*see* Balzacq, 2011; Stritzel, 2014; Floyd, 2007) when it featured in Buzan *et al.*’s *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (1998).

Securitization, as proposed by the Copenhagen school is marked by three elements: the speech act, the securitizing actor and the audience, so that, securitization appears as an intersubjective act of a securitizing actor acting towards a significant audience. That is to say, the securitizing actor performs a security move by communicating insecurity and then the ‘vulnerable’ population either accepting or rejecting the conceived threat communicated in a collective interpretation order – a condition which makes securitization intersubjective (Stritzel, 2014:30). The securitization theory sees security as an “invocation” or “creation”, through identification, pronouncement and positioning of “existential threat to a designated referent object” (which in any case could be the state, government, society) (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:21) or even an individual by a securitizing actor. Thus, to securitize is to present and existing or non-existing threat in so much an exaggerated

manner that emergency and extralegal measures are justified to curb, manage or mitigate the impending disaster which could manifest with greater cost implications if urgent and crucial actions are delayed. Securitization is an extreme form of politicization of an issue or object by a securitizing actor with the aim to blow the issue out of proportion and shift it to the level of grave threat to induce or muster political action. Vuori (cited in Balzacq (2011:6-7), has observed that the function of securitization utterances is better represented in four strands: (1) securitization for raising an issue on the agenda (2) securitization for deterrence (3) securitization for legitimizing past acts or for reproducing the security status of an issue (4) securitization for control.

It is important to note that in securitization process, a securitizing actor can decide to make the threat conspicuous, obvious and explicit or can leave it at the level of “metaphorical security reference”. In fact, securitization is based on the poststructuralist belief in a “social magic” power of language, a magic in which the conditions of possibility of threats are internal to the act of saying security (Balzacq, 2011:1). This is why Balzacq has defined securitization as:

an articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artefacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions, etc) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to promote an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor’s reasons for choices and actions, by investing the referent subject with an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development (p.3).

Securitization is framed, staged and structured in rhetoric, semiotics, words, argument and debates by an agent. As argued by Buzan *et al.* (1998:26):

...an issue is dramatized and presented as an issue of supreme priority; thus, by labeling it as *security*, an agent claims a need for and a right to treat it by extraordinary means...The task is not to assess some objective threats that “really” endanger some object to be defended or secured; rather, it is to understand the processes of constructing a shared understanding of what is to be considered and collectively responded to as a threat. The process of securitization is what in language theory is called a speech act. *It is not interesting as a sign referring to something more real; it is the utterance itself that is the act. By saying the words, something is done* (emphasis is ours).

In the position of Balzacq (2011), there are two fundamental, interdependent layers in securitization studies: the first is to identify the puzzle named “threat”; the second is to determine how to make sense of it. There are two criteria necessary for a securitizing agent to sort out a security problem or issue; it should be focused on public attention or debate and the issue should be a target for activities related to public opinion or legal and/or political actions; in other words,

the issue should be critically pervasive for the political system. To Buzan *et al.* (1998:32), securitization studies aim at gaining an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful).

Securitization is successful if a securitizing actor is, through argument, able to galvanize and convince his audience into believing in the existence of an impending threat and in the course of urgently neutralizing such threat bypasses apposite rules and standard procedures which traditionally bind such process. That is to say that there must be tangible facilitating conditions. Inversely, a failed securitization is just a securitization move and does not galvanize security action.

A discourse that takes the form of presenting something as an existential threat to a referent object does not by itself create securitization – this is a *securitizing move*, but the issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such...The existential threat has to be argued and just gain enough resonance for a platform to be made from which it is possible to legitimize emergency measures or other steps that would not have been possible had the discourse not taken the form of existential threats, point of no return, and necessity. If no sign of such acceptance exists, we can talk only of securitizing move, not of an object actually being securitized (Buzan *et al.*, 1998:25)

Judging from the fact that “anything can potentially become a referent object”, (Floyd, 2007:41) non-state securitizing actors are likely to engineer “securitization move” than “securitization” itself, since they lack capability or means for security action, albeit, can facilitate it.

At the levels of analysis, Buzan, *et al.* (1998:36) identifies three units viz

1. *Referent objects*: things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival.
2. *Securitizing actors*: actors who securitize issues by declaring something – a referent object – existentially threatened.
3. *Functional actors*: actors who affect the dynamics of sectors. Without being a referent object, this is an actor who significantly influences decisions in the field of security.

Balzacq (2011:35-37) on the other hand, identifies three analytical level and units which is structured as follows:

1. *Agent*: this level concentrates on the actors and the relations that structure the situation under scrutiny. It includes four facets:
 - (i) those who contribute or resist, either directly or by proxy, to the design or emergence of security issues (securitizing actors, audiences, and “functional actors”);
 - (ii) the power positions (or rather relations) of actor identified under (i);
 - (iii) the personal identities and social identity, which operate to both constrain and enable the behaviour of the actors

identified under (i); (iv) the referent object and the referent subject, or what is threatened and what threatens.

2. *Acts*: this level is interested in practices, both discursive and non-discursive, which underwrite the processes of securitization being studied. This level has, at root, four sides: (i) the first is the “action-type” side that refers to the appropriate language to uses in order to perform a given act—the grammatical and syntactical rules of the language. (ii) the second facet is strategic: which heuristic artefacts a securitizing actor uses to create (or effectively resonate with) the circumstances that will facilitate the mobilization of the audience—analogy, metaphors, metonymies, emotions, or stereotypes? (iii) the third facet is expressed by the dispositif of securitization (i.e., a constellation of practices and tools). (iv) the policy(ies) generated by securitization.
3. *Context*: captures the meaning of any discourse, it is necessary to situate it both socially and historically viz: (i) the proximate context which is the “setting” (ii) the distal context which focuses on the socio-cultural embedment of the text.

The labeling of President Muhammadu Buhari as an impostor harvested from Sudan, by the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu is therefore a securitization move. Here, Kanu (securitizing agent), through rhetoric, created a problem where it did not exist by presenting the President as a national security threat – being that he is no longer the “real” fellow of whom Nigerians entrusted their mandate to but an invention installed by elements (both home and abroad) with vested interest. By so doing, he had successfully made the president a referent subject and by engineering public opinion, discourses and debates, had successfully portrayed the citizens as implicit referent objects that are existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival. Aside setting media agenda for months, the securitization move had yielded some results as worries had emerged from several camps, doubting the being of the President following certain factoids (indicators) which were advanced in support for and/or against the debate. In this work, we shall analyze the level to which the securitization move was successful by subduing it to the analytically model provided by apostles of securitization.

Background to the Proscription of IPOB by the Nigerian Government

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) is a secessionist movement based in South East Nigeria with the aim of restoring the defunct Biafra, albeit, through peaceful means. The group is an offshoot of a similar group, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) with same objectives as IPOB but in a less radical manner. In fact, it was the ‘weakness’ in the *modus operandi* of MASSOB in pursuing its objectives that paved way for the hysteria of the more radical IPOB as “an undisputable champion, fronting the Igbo secessionist cause” (Ekpo & Agorye, 2018:36).

The objective of the group, *inter alia*, is to push for, facilitate and advocate the Igbo’s right to self determination while advocating “for the right and fundamental freedom of the remnants of the Biafrans who are scattered in all parts of the world as refugees and people in self-exile”. Generally, the agitation for the restoration of Biafra is a product of the failure of the Nigerian government to create a sustainable transitional justice system after the 30 months Nigeria-Biafra war (1967-1970).

There are evidences, or so it look, of unfair treatment of the Igbos in the present political dispensation. Analysts have noted indicators such as lack of economic opportunities, palpable degree of political exclusion, unequal development, lack of federal government presence and others. The Igbos feel relatively deprived at the economic, political, cultural and social levels (See Ekpo & Agorye, 2018). This victimage of horizontal inequality meted against the Igbos by other groups in Nigeria (and in the case of IPOB, Hausa-Fulani) is the force behind the emergence of groups such as IPOB to agitate and aggravate a favorable recognition and redistribution of national resources or a breakaway of the Igbos from the Nigerian state to form the ideal and utopian state of Biafra.

Until 2015, the activities of IPOB have been superficial and reduced to the level of online radio (Radio Biafra) tirade and other media frenzy and were largely ignored by the then president, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan's administration. However, the group became more daring, brazen and audacious from 2015 just after President Muhammadu Buhari assumed office. This, Ekpo (2018:48) has argued, was a culmination of what he described as "Buharophobia" – the fear of Nigeria's incumbent president, Muhammadu Buhari. The authors had corroborated literatures which demonstrated the enduring relationship between Buhari and the Igbo during his military regime (1984-1985) as regards his treatment of Igbo Second Republic political leaders and distribution of developmental projects in relation to other regions and ethnicities. The President's "97 percent and 5 percent" comment and the brazen killings and national arrogance of Fulani herdsmen has spurred up anxiety among the Igbos of which security, IPOB assumed, only Biafra can guarantee.

By October, 2015, the leader of IPOB had left his propaganda office (Radio Biafra) in London for a trip to Nigeria and was arrested upon arrival by security operatives and detained in the State Security Service (SSS) custody. This marked the beginning of the escalation of the conflict and the animosity between IPOB and the Buhari administration. There were series of protests by IPOB members for the release of their leader and such protests were meted with crude force by security operatives. It is estimated that not less than 146 people died in such clashes between secessionist protesters and security operatives in 2016 alone (Ekpo & Agorye, 2018:38).

When Mazi Kanu was subsequently released in April 15, 2017, situations further deteriorated. As Ekpo & Agorye (2018:39) puts it,

His (Kanu's) release came with a euphoria which further gave impetus to the illusion of victory which must be sustained through constant rallies aimed at intimidating and influencing the federal government and international community respectively. The frenzy orchestrated by Kanu's histrionics and megalomania heated the polity and aggravated popular calls for "restructuring" of Nigeria's federalism and similar threats of secession from elements both from the Niger Delta and the Western geopolitical zone. Kanu's popularity disrupted the political levers - a development which was repercussive of the *Kaduna Declaration*.

The polity was indeed heated with secession calls, ultimatums and threat and counter threats of ethnic wars and attacks. IPOB had challenged Nigeria's national security to the extreme and had preposterously recruited a militant group it christened Biafra Security Service (BSS) for the purpose of intelligence gathering. It was obvious that IPOB had constituted a major security nuisance but tackling it within the confines of established laws and conventions meant the group was legally untouchable. Hence, there was a need for a necessity to prevail over legality. So, in order to kill the dog, a bad name was sorted for it – this marked the beginning of the securitization of the IPOB by the Nigerian government through the Nigerian military. Already, President Buhari had described them in August, 2017 as “irresponsible elements” and had utilized the Nigerian Army, through Operation Python Dance II, to provoke, attack and declare the group as a terrorist group in September 15, 2017, even though the group's objectives and operations fail to meet such conditions as speculated by the 2011 Terrorism Act (as amended). The proscription of the group generated a plethora of censure and opprobrium by the citizens and international communities for the securitization was poorly executed. For instance, Ekpo (2018:57) had concluded that:

The legal effrontery at the proscription of the group sufficed from that given by the Criminal Act (2004). The criminal posture of IPOB...is never contested. What is however eccentric and highly debatable is the discretion of the State to invoke the Terrorism Act, and thus, declare IPOB a terrorist group. Regarding the anomalies of the issue under discourse, highlights have been made which expose the hypocrisy of the government at solving an integral puzzle to state preservation; however, at the expense of, or ridicule of our established laws and conventions. Whatever be it, the necessary was achieved, not conspicuously on the guise of necessity, but in a cloak of legality...it was pertinent that the IPOB's threat to the continued existence of Nigeria be neutralized. What was not necessary was the façade of legality aimed at giving a dog a bad name just to hang it.

The securitizing agent (the Nigerian military) failed to convince the referent object (citizens) of the impending threat and the need for abnormal actions against the group but was, however, able to galvanize the functional actor (the Nigerian government) into securing legitimacy for the group's terrorist identity and validation of the ill-fated proscription. The securitization was not intersubjective (in that it did not follow the (a) speech act, (b) securitizing actor, (c) audience paradigm) and indeed, lopsided as an avalanche of the informed audience were not convinced of IPOB's exaggerated threat nor the need for unusual action but it is argued to have been successful since the functional actor had gone beyond the fringes of the law to restore normalcy – even as the cart (action) was placed before the horse (law) subsequently.

It is on the context of the above that the attempt by the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu's securitization move against President Buhari could be understood. The scenario reflects something and kind of “counterattack” for the president to be paid in same coin, we infer.

IPOB and the Setting of the Jubril al-Sudani Agenda

The fitness of the retired General Muhammadu Buhari and candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in running a complex and tumultuous nation as Nigeria constituted one of the major debates and discussions in the eve of the 2015 presidential elections in Nigeria. Eyebrows were raised by Nigerians (especially from the ruling People's Democratic Party) regarding the motive behind Gen. Buhari's visit to London towards the end of February, 2015 – a visit which spanned a fortnight. For instance, the former Ekiti State governor, Mr. Ayodele Fayose had berated thus:

A man who campaigned for four weeks, speaking for less than one hour in all the rallies put together and needed to rest for 15 days should just stay at home and be playing with his grandchildren rather than struggling to take up a job that he does not have the required mental and physical strength to do (*See Odunsi, 2015*).

Governor Fayose had lost every form of confidence in Buhari's health and had even gone extreme by placing a death-wish advert on the latter in national newspapers (Ekpo *et al.*, 2019:988). When General Muhammadu Buhari eventually emerged as the winner of the 2015 presidential elections, it appeared the concerns and fears of Nigerians were actually germane. The President had, between 5 and 10 February, 2016, embarked on a 6-day vacation in the United Kingdom. In just a four month interval, President Buhari had yet again embarked on a 10-day vacation to treat an ear infection but ended up spending fourteen days in London. Buhari further left again on January 19, 2017, on a forty-nine day medical tourism which saw him return to the country on March 10, same year (Punch, 2017). The President, yet again, departed for London on May 7, 2017 spending 104 days in the process (Adeshida, *et al.*, 2017). Since the state of the president's health and his attendant expenditure were shredded in secrecy (Adebayo & Busari, 2018), his last lengthy medical sojourn (May – August, 2017) witnessed the filtering of sophistries on the state of the president's health.

Consequently, a British politician and former military officer, Eric Stuart Joyce had in May 19, 2017 raised an alarm, claiming the demise of President Buhari in a London hospital. He had alleged through his Twitter handle thus:

Very sad to learn, hear of the death of President Buhari, whom I campaigned for...The president of one of the world's largest and most sensitive countries died in London today. In our main news bulletins, not a word...UK curiously uninterested in whether [the] Nigerian president, reportedly in London, is alive or dead (Nwachukwu, 2017^a).

Though the allegation was dismissed by the APC-led federal government with visual evidences of President Buhari in the "Nigeria House", London (*see Ogbonna, 2017; Adetayo, 2017*), curiosity,

anxiety and an environment of paranoid had emerged already – a candid atmosphere for mind manipulators and securitizing agents. This was the proximate context upon which Mazi Nnamdi Kanu leveraged to spin the Jubril al-Sudani controversy.

Building on the position of Mr. Joyce, a video had emerged on September 3, 2017 (shortly before the proscription of IPOB) of Nnamdi Kanu, addressing his congregation informing them that the real Buhari they knew is dead and the one parading himself as one, is a body double from Sudan with the initial nomenclature of “Jubril Aminu”. The video went viral with IPOB members henceforth referring to the president as “Jubril al-Sudani”. The IPOB leader had attempted to justify his claims and had concocted “evidences” for his fixated conviction on the death of President Buhari and the successful “recreation” of another in the person of “Jubril al-Sudani”. His “six scientific” factoids included:

1. That the “initial” Buhari was actually 75 years of age, appeared conspicuously frail as against the “new” Buhari that appears to be 50 years old which was obvious in his “gait, his vibrancy, the smoother tone of his face and skin...[and] the slight difference earlobes between the two men”.
2. That the hair on the head of the “real” Buhari had become very scanty and snow white as against the “new” Buhari “who appears to have fuller mane of hair, much darker hairlines, and now permanent spots a cap that he has refused to remove despite repeatedly being dared to do so”.
3. That the “former” Buhari as a Fulani and could speak his Fulani and Hausa languages fluently whereas the “latter” could not speak Fulfulde – the language of the Fulanis.
4. That the immediate family members of the “late” Buhari are staunchly keeping distance from the “new” Buhari even on official occasions.
5. That “original” Buhari was very tall, relative to his appointees and other public officials while the “latter” is quite shorter in height.
6. That having spent over three months receiving treatments, it was highly suspicious that he never returned for follow up, which according to the IPOB leader, is “mandatory” (*See Jannah, 2018^a*).

Other conjectures made were the fact that the president has switched his writing hand from left to right or had become ambidextrous and that his decision to discharge his official duties from his home, rather than office (Ameh, *et al.*, 2017) was a decoy to reconfigure the security installations in the office to synchronize with the new biometrics. Kanu had also linked the murder of a Nigerian diplomat in Sudan, Habibu Almu on May 14, 2018, to an attempted cover up by the Nigerian government and alleged that the diplomat was a privy to the Jubril conspiracy (Lawal, 2018). Furthermore, when the leadership of the ruling All Progressives Congress (APC) ‘truncated’ the wishes of its two governors – Owelle Okorochoa (Imo state) and Ibikunle Amosun (Ogun state) in November, 2018, the former alleged that “If I say what I know about APC, Nigerians will burn down Aso Rock within 24 hours” and the latter reportedly averred that “If APC provokes me again, I will tell the whole world what we were cooking that got the house burnt” – these vituperations were interpreted in the context of the identity of the man in Aso Rock (*See Godwin, 2018*).

The proximate and the distant contexts (which we shall discuss later) fueled the discussions and debates, making the Jubril anecdote a dominant theme for media, political and social analysis. Also, the fact that the president failed to reveal the nature of his illness and that his handlers resorted to insults and ludicrous explanations for the factoids raised by the IPOB leader made the theme very dominant and the minds of Nigerians very susceptible and malleable. Apparently lacking the necessary information, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, the Minister of Information in his rebuttal, dismissed the allegation and termed it as “sentiments, silly, and idiotic fake news” (Olowolagba, 2018^a) but such rebuttal failed to satiate the inquisitiveness of Nigerians. As discourses were engineered on the theme, it dominated public opinion and greatly influenced media agenda. Consequently, the Jubril anecdotes and its attendant commentaries and comments were published by almost all the famous online and prints media houses in Nigeria.

Reactions to the IPOB generated controversy rained from all corners of the country with some portraying acquiescence and others admonishing the president to address the issue. For instance, the former Minister of Aviation, Femi Fani-Kayode on December 16, upon advancing his “15 questions” to Buhari, concluded thus:

[I] do not believe that Buhari is a clone but I do believe that the body–double allegation and rumour is worthy of our attention and consequently needs to be thoroughly investigated, explored and examined. Though I cannot vouch for the veracity of this allegation and rumour one thing is clear: a significant number of Nigerians do not believe that the man in Aso Rock Villa is the Buhari that they know and, rightly or wrongly, their perception is that there is something going on (Olowolagba, 2018^b).

Similarly, the former aide to President Goodluck Jonathan, Pastor Reno Omokri had in a Tweet in September 29, 2017 casted doubts on the “realness” of Muhammadu Buhari when he carefully placed there different pictures of the president with the caption “Is it my eyes or does the person without glasses look a bit different from the other pictures?...”. Former president, Olusegun Obasanjo voiced his feared in this issue thus: “no matter how long we choose to feign ignorance, the news of a stranger running the affairs of Nigeria has gained international attention...but this story, whether false or true, can only be put to rest by the accused who happens to be President Muhammadu Buhari” (Lawal, 2018; Olaiya & Muanya, 2018). Even so, the incumbent vice president, Professor Yemi Osinbajo had, in a National Consultative Forum organized by the National Committee of Buhari Support Groups (NCBSG), discuss the Jubril agenda when he vituperated thus:

They prayed for him to die, he didn't die... The fear of Buhari makes these people desperate, even crazy. So now they say he is Jibrin from Sudan. If you can't discredit him say he doesn't exist... How will one Jubril sit in Federal Executive Council and conduct meetings, consult with his ministers, speak to me daily? Their strategy is simple, if you tell a lie often enough some will believe you; Buhari

is not only alive and well, he will, by God's grace, live long and well after his second term in office (Olowolagba, 2018^c).

Amidst the media heat and the controversy surrounding his identity, President Muhammadu Buhari, while addressing his nationals in Poland, on December 2, admitted that:

someone has asserted [that] I am cloned...a lot of people hoped that I was dead and hoped I died...it's the real me, I assure you. I will soon celebrate my 76th birthday and I'm still going strong (Youtube, 2018).

At this point, the "Jubril al-Sudani" agenda had become a global issue reported on *Cable Network News* (Cullinane, 2018), *British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC, 2018^a), *The Wall Street Journal* (Parkinson, 2018) *The Times* (Robinson, 2018) *ABC News* (Davies, 2018) and other mainstream media channels.

Analysis into the IPOB's Abortive Securitization Move

Here, we have adopted Balzacq's (2011:35-37) *Agent-Act-Context* analytical model to evaluate qualitatively, the IPOB facilitated "Jubril al-Sudani" securitization move to underscore the intrigues that played out since the aim of securitization, Buzan *et al.* (1998:32) have argued, is to gain an increasingly precise understanding of who securitizes, on what issues (threats), for whom (referent objects), why, with what results, and, not least, under what conditions (i.e., what explains when securitization is successful).

Agent:

When Eric Stuart Joyce, the British politician and veteran, alleged the death of President Muhammadu Buhari in London in May 19, 2017, he barely expressed benign concerns and would in fact further explain that "actual death in this circumstance is – in respect of president's role – academic", meaning the president "may be so incapacitated as to be unable to resume his role" (Nwachukwu, 2017^b). Thus, Stuart's position had become antiquated and was overtaken by the fact that the president recovered and returned to Nigeria on August, 2017. Albeit, he remains the purveyor, and his allegation the bamboo stick, upon which the major securitizing agent (Nnamdi Kanu) mustered the basis for his securitization move. Hence, Eric Stuart Joyce was a fortuitous and indirect securitizing agent in the whole securitization move. Being a military veteran and an ex-lawmaker of United Kingdom, Mr. Joyce's pronouncement of the president as dead and his condolence to the First Lady was momentous owing to the fact that he might possess access to the British intelligence. Mr. Joyce's false alarm spread like wildfire across his audience (Nigeria) with grave implications.

Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB, built on the assumptions of the Mr. Joyce and became the major securitizing actor by distorting the narrative from the earlier dead assumptions to the "body double" anecdote which pronounced threat – the president here constituting the *referent subject* and Nigerians, *referent object*. Having a cult-like followers and apologists in the south east region of Nigeria and perceived by a plethora of persons to be an apostle of justice and equity, he had

possessed a manipulative audience already. Even so, a handful of individuals from other regions (than south east) of the country who cherished his bold moves, through IPOB, against the federal government were additional vulnerable population. His power and tendency to successfully communicate the *speech act* to his audience thus lied on his popularity and sympathy generated from the Nigerian government’s failure to successfully demonize his group (IPOB) before its deployment of troops against it. Whereas, his Achilles’ heel lied in his antecedents of uncouth, inaccurate, untruthful, wayward and inflammatory statements against the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba (See Ekpo & Agorye, 2018) as most of the audience rightfully analyzed his move from the context of “payback” and usual propaganda from the IPOB leader against the Nigerian state.

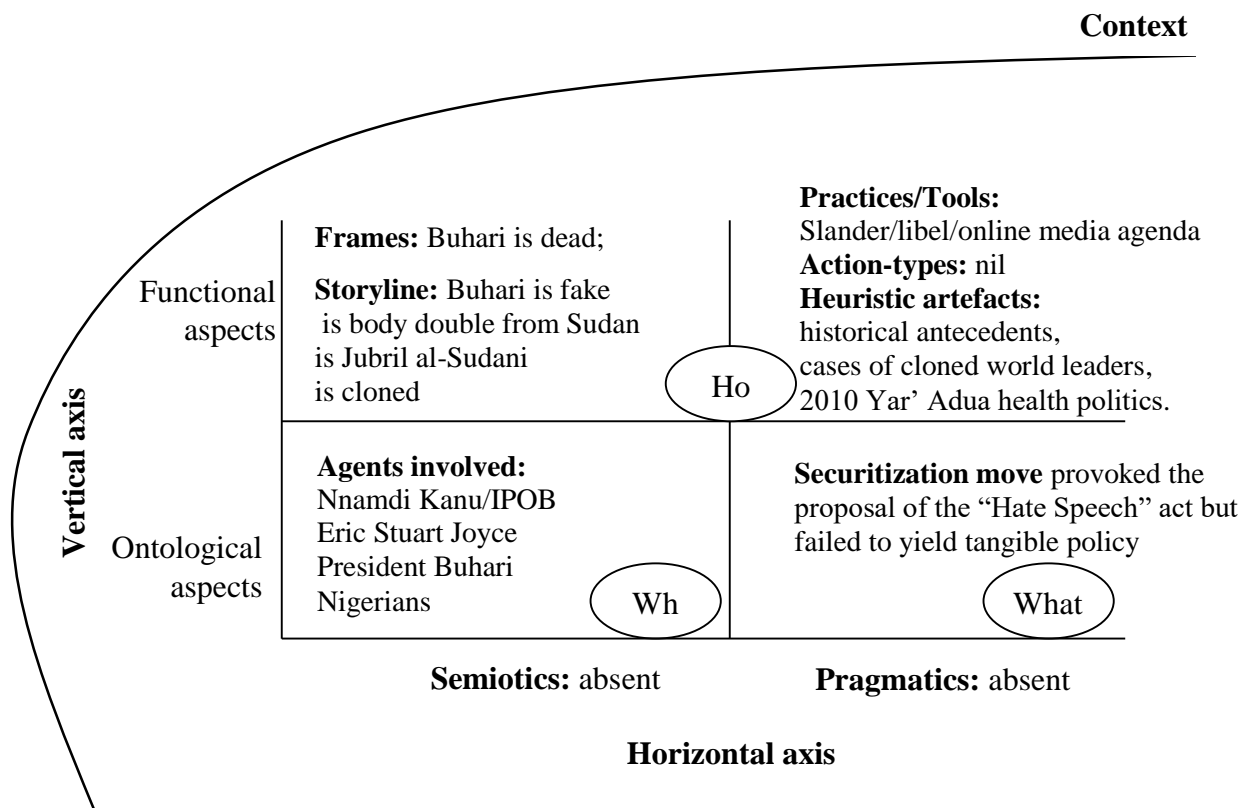


Figure 1: IPOB’s Securitization move in context (adapted from Balzacq, 2011:37).

The *referent object* here, as Nnamdi Kanu had portrayed, is Nigerians. Here, the security rhetoric of a “body double” by a certain cabal implicitly illuminates high degree compromise on national security with grave repercussion on the citizens. In one of his tweets screen-snapped by BBC (2018^b), Kanu had alleged that “the transformation of Jubril Aminu to replace dead Buhari [is] an evil that will destroy the demonic Nigeria and free millions of lives”, advancing the paradox of using insecurity to gain security to negotiate the threat with his *referent object*. The power of the referent object here lies in public opinion, mobilization and activism. If in any way, the majority of the Nigerian population had accepted this notion of the president as an existential threat, it could

have spurred up mass protests, coup or a massive vote against the ruling party in subsequent elections. But from our quotes and analyses reviewed above, it is apparent that while a handful of the population accepted the notion, a vast majority rejected and another good number who were indecisive threw in the towel after the president's comment in Poland reaffirming his "realness". While every government officials and some academic and public analysts rejected the move instantaneously, the ember of flame was fanned by mostly members of the opposition Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). Nevertheless, the diverse nature of Nigeria and the dynamics surrounding its politics and policies make it difficult or impossible for a unanimous acceptance of any existential threat communicated by a securitizing agent and most securitization actions taken by functional actors are usually not intersubjective. Threats are often viewed, ascertained and analyzed not just on the ethnic lenses but regional and religious prisms. That the securitizing agent here was an Igbo and the referent subject a Fulani explains already, the vagaries and projected outcome of such securitization move.

Consequently, the "impostor" threat communicated by Nnamdi Kanu was shallow enough not to be accepted not just by the referent object, but the *functional actor* which in this case, is the federal government of Nigeria. The fact too, that the *referent subject* is indeed the head of the federal government that possesses the power of action means the securitization move could have failed even if it was successfully communicated to the referent object. As demonstrated earlier, even while opposition elements had called for investigation into the communicated threat, the federal government did not deem it worthy of explanation or investigation not to even mention utilizing unusual methods to neutralize the threat.

Acts

When Nnamdi Kanu began his securitization move, he rode on the earlier insinuation of Mr. Joyce to claim that President Buhari had died in London but that a cabal had collaborated with the British government to perfect a "body double" from Sudan with the appellation, Jubril Aminu to impersonate the later. Keywords trended by IPOB and its leadership in substitution for President Buhari included "Jubril al-Sudani", "Jubril", "impostor", "impersonator", "body double" and "fake Buhari". These words carefully crafted engineered the needed social engagements and reactions which even gave birth to other phrases as "Buhari is cloned". In fact, most commentators as quoted earlier in the work preferred the "Buhari is cloned" phrase such that rather than the earlier listed, the "cloned" pervasively replaced the "body double" metaphor, culminating in the IPOB leader clearing the air that "Buhari was not cloned...but was 'dead' and was replaced by another individual, Jubril Aminu al-Sudani, as a double" (Jannah, 2018^b). In fact, the "clone" phrase informed a larger horizon of debate and was easily dismissed as being a "rubbish in the face of scientific realities" by experts such as Senator Ajayi Boroffice, a Nigerian lawmaker who holds a doctorate degree in human genetics (Boroffice, n.d). Even President Buhari while refuting the claim used the "clone" as against "body double" since the former had become very viral.

The heuristic artefacts utilized here by Nnamdi Kanu were citations of similar incidences and cases to bolster the genuineness and plausibility of his assumptions. Kanu had averred that such scenario had "happened before in history, most notably with Josef Stalin of defunct Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler of Germany...[with] many others, especially during the Second World War, when it became

very rampant with spies and espionage” (Jannah, 2018^a). This scenario actually facilitated the mobilization of audience—analogy, metaphors, metonymies, emotions and motivated the *BBC* (pidgin) December 3 publication titled “‘Jubril Aminu and Muhammadu Buhari’: Three Presidents wey don use ‘Clone’ Before” (BBC, 2018^c).

Mr. Kanu had failed to define his action type, maybe because his security utterance was, as Vuori (cited in Blazacq (2011:6-7) has coined, “for raising an issue on the agenda” after which we cannot infer. The securitization has thus, failed to generate any tangible policy aside the proposed “hate speech bill” which suggested capital punishment for hate speech (See Busari, 2018).

Context

Context situates the analysis both socially and historically viz: (i) the proximate context which is the “setting” (ii) the distal context which focuses on the socio-cultural embedment of the text.

The proximate context which prepared a leveling ground for the IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu, to begin his securitization move was the situations surrounding the president’s state of health. Having spent a good number of working days away on a medical sojourn and allegations of his death made by a respectable individual (in the person of Eric Stuart Joyce), the milieu was quite conducive for Kanu’s securitization move. Furthermore, the prolonged stay of President Buhari (May-August, 2017) in London for medicals had rejuvenated the aura of the cover-ups and desperate politics which surrounded the medical sojourn of the late president Yar’Adua (See Adeniyi, 2011). Also, the coincidences such as the murder of the Nigerian diplomat in Sudan, amongst others provided a livewire and dots upon which the securitizing agent netted in an attempt to negotiate the existing threat with his referent object. More so, the President Buhari-led federal government had just demonized and proscribed IPOB on September, 2017. The decision by Nnamdi Kanu to intensify the securitization move (which he had started earlier) could also be analyzed from the context of revenge strategy whereby the once securitizing actor (President Buhari) suddenly becomes a referent subject too for the already securitized Nnamdi Kanu and his IPOB group.

The distal context, on the other hand, is of the historical. Here, Kanu chose Sudan in a calculated attempt to connect history to the present. Since the Fulani ethnic group is known to have migrated into Africa through the northern and eastern fringes, the Sudan region and the Futa region of the Senegambia hosted a lot of them. The possibility of a shared ancestry and lookalike of the president from an area of a sizable Fulani presence must have facilitated his decision. It is in this context that his decision to feature Sudan in his securitization move could be understood.

CONCLUDING REMARK

This study has attempted an analysis into the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) facilitated “Jubril al-Sudani” media agenda. We have established that the IPOB engineered narrative was only but an invention and communication of a non-existential threat with the hope to engineering popular opinion and forcing a security action against the president’s popularity and legitimacy. We have also carried out a critical analysis of this securitization move and have, based on Balzacq’s (2011) *Agent-Act-Context* analytical levels, highlighted the various actors, the language and the context upon which the securitization was communicated. Embedded in our analysis, also, are the causes

and the contextual dynamics why the securitization was bound to fail. We therefore arrived at conclusion that the IPOB led securitization attempt was a failure in that it failed to portray President Muhammadu Buhari as an existential threat to its targeted referent object and had failed, also, to muscle a drastic policy from the federal government who in this case, was the functional actor. Paradoxically, the president actually became more popular as the 2019 presidential elections results, as published by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), records that President Muhammadu Buhari harnessed over 15 million of the total votes counted with his strongest opponent, Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) garnering some 11 million votes.

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