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DIGITAL ACTIVISM AND CYBERCONFLICTS IN NIGERIA: OCCUPY NIGERIA, BOKO HARAM AND MEND

BY

SHOLA ABIDEMI OLABODE

University of Hull, UK
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About the Author

Shola Abidemi Olabode completed his PhD in Media Studies at the School of Social Sciences, University of Hull, UK. He also holds a Master of Laws (LLM) in International Law, BSc (Hons) in Mass Communication from the University of Hertfordshire, UK, and a Diploma in Mass Communication from the University of Jos, Nigeria. He has served as a Tutor of Media Movements and Radical Politics at the University of Hull. His main research interests are in digital activism and cyberconflicts.
Preface

Developments in media, culture and society have been an area of growing interest in the last few decades given the rapid developments in digitisation infrastructure. The critical role of media (old and new) for political development and the wave of conflict that has been evolving across the globe motivated my curiosity to understand and advance fresh thinking on the intersection between information and communication technologies (ICTs) and conflict. In Nigeria, conflict has been an integral part of political life and has served as a catalyst for a progressive Nigerian society from the pre-colonial era to the current period of democratisation. As in other countries on the continent, dissident movements, social movements, civil society organisations and radical movements in Nigeria have found a voice in conflict and continue to harness various media technologies in their quest to influence government programmes, policies, reforms and changes in Africa’s most populous country. In all this, the media has served as a tool and resource for dissident movements who use the medium as a means to achieve their goals.

This monograph is a product of my doctoral dissertation carried out at the School of Social Sciences at the University of Hull. The thesis has been revised in part to broaden its scope to include snapshots of recent conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, its primary focus remains the same: the use of information and communication technologies in the Occupy Nigeria, Boko Haram and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta conflicts. The three distinct cases provide a lens for examining mobilisation among contemporary movements in Nigeria in one single study and allows for perspectives to be offered on digital activism and cyberconflicts from a developing non-western context.

There are some people to whom I am most thankful for their support, inspiration, assistance and kindness during the length of this research. I acknowledge the inspiration and the strong guidance provided by my supervisor, Dr Athina Karatzogianni, who exposed me to her wealth of experience in the field of research and believed in my work. I am particularly thankful for the opportunities for professional development, her encouragement and support throughout my doctoral programme. I owe my second supervisor, Dr Julia Holdsworth, my sincere appreciation for offering me her valuable support, assistance, suggestions and supervision. I also thank Dr Bev Orton and Dr Anastasia Kavada for their insightful recommendations.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The last few decades have witnessed new waves of socio-political and ethnoreligious conflict across the globe even in particular national contexts hitherto expected. These events have, coinciding with developments in digital media technologies and corresponding applications of the internet, ignited new discussion, debates and heightened the need for a reconsideration of our understanding of conflict in computer-mediated environments. In the present context, the uses of ‘conflict’ allow for a broad depiction of activities of social movements and insurgency movements (encompassing radical and non-radical movements). Not only has conflict become crucial in debate within political, media and scholarly circles in recent times, but the thrust of such debate has also focused on the impact of networks of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) on the new waves of social movements, civil society and insurgency movement protests across the globe. Digital media and ICTs are used interchangeably to follow Diamond’s (2010) theorisation of digital ICTs. According to Diamond, digital ICTs refer to ‘the computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, and countless innovative applications for them, including “new social media” such as Facebook and Twitter’ (Diamond, 2010, p. 70) and YouTube. These technologies offer access to information and increase the socio-political and economic autonomy of individuals to take part in governance.

Drawing on conflict within global civil society, a new wave of socio-political and ethnoreligious conflict is emerging within cyberspace. In sub-Saharan Africa, the expansive developments in digital media infrastructure in the last two decades have led to new uses and audiences which Williams and Mano (2017) argued required critical research more than ever, given the rapidly developing media environment on the continent. Conflict movements in Nigeria provide an illustrative empirical basis for understanding new digital cultures particularly as it relates to youth engagement and contentious politics. Like with most countries on the continent, contentious politics have been a crucial element of Nigerian politics, one that has shaped the political environment through the different phases of the Nigerian political development. Conflict served as machinery for keeping an eye on the democratic institutions, with civil society, the media, social movements and independent activists as protagonists, as will be demonstrated in the empirical chapters.

Nigeria provides a lens to examine the role of ICTs in the activities of non-institutional actors engaged in conflict with the state. Scholarly discussion about the potential impact of ICTs when employed by activist networks during
protests has risen in the last few years (Castells, 2001; Garrett, 2006; Karatzogianni, 2006a, 2006b, 2009, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2013; Kavada, 2010a, 2010b, 2012, 2015; Morozov, 2011a, 2011b). However, the reality is that far too little attention is paid to support these claims in the context of low-income earning countries as in sub-Saharan Africa (Obadare & Willems, 2014; Mano, 2017; Mutsvairo, 2016a, 2016b; Shepherd & Shanade, 2016). Therefore, this study aims to explore the role of ICTs in the Nigerian context juxtaposed with empirical cases in sub-Saharan Africa and across the globe. This book is also timely and crucial for several reasons. First, it is worthy to mention that the notion of digital activism and cyberconflict (CC) is a developing area in the African context as in the Nigerian case. Similarly, no study considers the role of ICTs in the activities of socio-political and ethnoreligious conflict movements in a single study in Nigeria. Therefore, examples of Occupy Nigeria, Movement for Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Boko Haram contribute to improving knowledge by bridging the gap in the literature with regard to digital activism and CC as a field of study, an examination of the use of digital media in three political movements of various ideological underpinnings in a single country and considering these examples in a developing non-western context. Second, by considering the role and influence of ICTs and the internet on the mobilising structures of political conflicts in Nigeria, this study highlights the barriers and benefits of the uses of new media. The discussion will be useful for understanding the challenges confronting dissident communities in their struggles for social reform, resource control, revolution and political change in Nigeria. Third, the findings of this thesis could prove useful to civil society as a guide for understanding the uses of ICTs for conflict.

A clear distinction needs to be made on the two dynamics, digital activism and CC, that underpin this study. In this context, digital activism is used herein to denote ‘political participation, activities and protests organized in digital networks beyond representational politics’ (Karatzogianni, 2015, p. 1). Essentially, groups involved in digital activism share a common political attribute that involves the struggle for ‘reform or revolution’ with non-state players and emergent socio-political establishments, including social movements, protest groups, individuals and civil society groups, as protagonists in such conflicts. Similar to digital activism, CC refers to conflicts in computer-mediated environments involving non-state actors. ‘It involves an analysis of the interactions between actors engaged in digital activism to raise awareness for a specific cause, struggles against government and corporate actors, as well as conflict between governments, states and corporations’ (Karatzogianni, 2015, p. 1).

The research question does draw from the literature review, but in particular, from the CC framework developed by Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b). The analysis includes a consideration of the role of ICTs on (1) mobilising structure, (2) opportunity structure and (3) the framing process of conflict movements and activist’s repertoires during a protest against the Nigerian state.
1.1. Analytical Framework

As Garrett (2006) rightly pointed out, although the multiplicity of views demonstrated by theorists has enhanced the literature and provided a plethora of perspectives for examining political protests, protest movements and ICT users, nonetheless, this diversity and/or plurality of perspectives could be an impediment to adequately articulating the phenomenon. The challenge has been that very few ‘works are commonly cited across the field, and most are known only within the confines of their discipline’ (Garrett, 2006, p. 2) from media studies and communications studies to political science, sociology and conflict studies, to mention a few. Conversely, the deficiency in establishing a unified theoretical framework that cuts across such boundaries posed a complexity in articulating the links between the diverse perspectives advanced by theorists (Garrett, 2006, p. 2). Only a unified technological theoretical framework of political protest and/or an analytic framework that will underpin the assessment of the impact of ICTs, the internet and other everyday social media networks on the nature of political protest mobilisation, organisation, collective action and resistance can instruct our understanding of the contemporary Nigeria context.

As early as the 1960s, in view to grasping a full understanding of factors that motivate protests and contentious movements, one school of thought came up with what Breuer (2012) described as ‘traditional grievance or relative deprivation models’ (Block, Haan, & Smith, 1968; Braungart, 1971; Fendrich & Krauss, 1978; Gurr, 1970; Lewis & Kraut, 1972; Thomas, 1971). The underlying assumption held by this school of thought is rooted in the belief that certain psychological attributes inspire social resistance, political activism and contentious activities. Corroborating this point, Muller and Jukam (1983) explained that individuals participate in acts of civil disobedience, or that political violence are dissatisfied about certain things within a given polity. ‘The underlying psychological mechanism at work is that unfulfilled material expectations cause anger, frustration and resentment that manifest themselves in an individual propensity to protest’ (Breuer, 2012, p. 4).

In addition, the relative deprivation theorist also extended the psychological perspective. They argue that dissent emerges as a product of three factors: accelerated social change, mobilisation of new groups into politics and a political atmosphere filled with unfulfilled economic anticipation and/or a failed institution of governance (Huntington, 1968, p. 4). Although, this point stresses the importance of material grievances, contemporary studies of the same phenomenon have given more consideration to emotional drives which border on societal expectations (Aminzade, 2001; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001; Jasper, 1998; Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; Oliver & Johnston, 2000). From this perspective, Breuer (2012) explains that moral indignation may serve as a catalyst for contentious activities within a given society. In essence, individual action is determined by an emotional response to an unconducive state of affairs. Intense ‘reactive emotions such as anger, moral outrage, or confusion’ could be the stimuli and mobilise factors in the same scenario (Jasper & Poulsen, 1995; van Laer, 2011).
The attributes captured by both schools of thought are crucial in the context of contemporary protest in Nigeria especially when considering the underlying factors and motivations for contentious activities. In reality, as demonstrated in various cases, while new ICTs have undoubtedly opened up vistas of opportunities for communication and conflict mobilisations, there still exists constraints on the capacity of dissenting groups to channel their motivations and dissent into collective action. In particular, this is due to government monopoly and their direct or indirect hegemonic influence over the mass media, as seen in authoritarian systems. As Breuer (2012) succinctly puts it, within such contexts, the government controls the national narrative through a blend of censorship, intimidation and persecution to suppress information on economic malperformance, human rights violations, corruption or any other issue which may negatively reflect on the state (p. 5). Ultimately, the mobilisation of dissent and participation is weakened not curbed.

The rational choice approach to contentious activities, unlike the other previous perspectives, reduces the importance of emotions and grievances in the dynamics of political protests in favour of subjective, independent or personal beliefs. For instance, Tullock (1971) asserts that the notion of grievances is non-consequential to the choice individuals make to participate in contentious activities especially where such a person or individuals have personal interests. In this context, participation is essentially a product of individual judgements and more so when based on the benefit or importance of such activity to each participant. In other words, individuals are more likely to participate in an event based on the benefits to them. A major drawback of the rational choice approach is that, like the other perspectives described, it falls short of explanations with regard to conventional impact and uses of ICTs, everyday social media and the internet on the mobilisation of social resistance among dissenting communities. More so, the rational choice approach is also deficient because it predicts ‘excessive abstention’; in other words, the model contests the existence of protests (Breuer, 2012, p. 5), whilst the reality is that empirical evidence continues to demonstrate the existence of protest and conflict across the globe (p. 5).

Over the years, however, a few theorists in their approach to this subject have made stringent efforts to develop various integrated theoretical models to explain the phenomenon of the effect of ICTs on political protests in contemporary times and the general workings of political protest movements. Various theorists including McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) and van de Donk, Loader, Nixon and Rucht (2004) in their studies of social movements have attempted to explain the emergence, development and outcomes of such movements by addressing the following three interconnecting features: (1) mobilising structures, (2) opportunity structures and (3) framing processes. These features provided the mechanism with which the Garret (2006) framework assesses the relationship between ICTs and political protest movements (new social movements). According to him, developing a review within this parameter will aid ‘conversations across the field around common issues of concern, highlighting connections between scholars and research agendas that might otherwise be difficult to discern’ (p. 2).
1.2. The Cyberconflict Theoretical Framework

In an effort to bridge the gap among the diverse works on the subject of conflict in computer-mediated environments and the influence of ICTs on such conflicts, Karatzogianni’s (2006a, 2006b) theoretical framework provides a more in-depth study. Although Garret’s framework considers the socio-political dimension of dissenting movements, his analysis does not take account of the ethnoreligious (conflict) and media elements. A more integrated approach is considered in *The Politics of Cyberconflict* by Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) which extends the analytical tools by developing an analytical framework that considers CC by combining elements of social movement (resource mobilisation theory (RMT) and new social movement theory), conflict analysis and media theories in examining the impact of ICTs on conflicts and political protest movements across the globe. Karatzogianni’s comparative and integrated framework for understanding the connection between ICTs and political conflicts makes it particularly suitable for understanding political protests in the Nigerian context. As such, the present study will build upon the theoretical models developed by Garrett (2006) and Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) to advance the perspective this study seeks to uphold.

In its original formation, the CC framework was developed as an analytical approach for examining conflicts aided by ICTs, and/or occurring in virtual space, during the pre-social media era (pre-Facebook (FB) 2004, YouTube 2005 and Twitter 2006) of digital media development. In other words, the framework considered political protests that were transferred from real-life settings to cyberspace and vice versa between 2000 and 2005 (Karatzogianni, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, p. 3). Nevertheless, it subsequently proved useful for understanding protests and conflicts in the social media era. The notion of CC is situated within the principle of computer-mediated communication (CMC; Karatzogianni, 2006a, 2006b, p. 94). The trust of the framework is rooted in a consideration of how ICTs are used as either resource or weapon in both online and offline propaganda wars by the state and political protest movements (Karatzogianni, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c, p. 1). For a succinct exposition of the contentious activities, the CC approach situates the discourse on contentious politics in cyberspace around two broad categories of conflicts that occur in the global landscape: socio-political and ethnoreligious.

The former, that is, socio-political protests, can be explained in terms of political action against authorities. In this context, the protagonist is usually social movements, civil society and radical insurgency groups. While the opposition are the state and/or institutions that represent the state. Socio-political CC encompasses such conflicts or political protests as in the case of anti-globalisation, anti-capitalist and anti-war movements (social movements) and the effect of ICTs and the internet on their mobilisation processes. The struggles of such movements are usually characterised by socio-political and economic inequalities, as well as the abuse of civil and political rights. The Zapatista movement of Mexico, the anti-globalisation movement and Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement are classic cases that provide illustrative examples of socio-political CC.
The Zapatista movement emerged in the state of Chiapas in southern Mexico. This movement typically exemplifies a group motivated by socio-economic and political grievances. According to Taylor and Jordan (2004), the Zapatista movement actors demanded for health, welfare and citizen rights during the uprising. But what is equally crucial is that the internet provided the impetus for communicating their grievances. ‘In this struggle, the Internet functions as a medium through which the demands for these rights and the struggles around these 18 rights can be communicated’ (Taylor & Jordan, 2004, p. 94). The struggle started originally as an insurrection guerrilla warfare style but rapidly mutated and decreased into a mediatised conflict. Following the commencement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which introduced the free trade zone, Zapatista movement actors occupied a part of the Chiapas region in Mexico in protest. The intervention of the army forced movement actors to retreat into the rainforest. Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) argued that movement actors innovatively engaged with media tools to the extent that the Mexican authorities were compelled to negotiate to evade the conflict mutating into a full-blown war. Jordan (1999), corroborating this point explained that the Zapatistas were only able to archive such degree of success owing to the unimpeded flow of information which the internet champions. For Ronfeldt, Arquilla, Fuller and Fuller (1998), the innovative uses of new media at the time was unconventional especially when set against the backdrop of the norm (in regard to tactical repertoire) during such kinds of conflict. Movement actors used media tools and the internet to mobilise Mexican civil society to participate in the struggle for social, economic and political change, while calling on the international community to observe the conflict (Ronfeldt et al., 1998, pp. 2–3).

A decade later, the OWS movement like the Zapatista movement is another seminal example of a socio-political movement. In addition, while Zapatista mutated between radical and non-radical conflict strategies, OWS emerged more or less as a peaceful movement. OWS emerged in 2011 in New York in response to what protesters believed was socio-economic inequality and the dominance of a few hands who controlled the means of production. According to the OWS website, the struggle was against ‘the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process, and the role of Wall Street in creating an economic collapse that has caused the greatest recession in generations’ (Occupy Wall Street, 2011).

What is however crucial about this movement is their innovative uses of ICTs, the internet and contemporary social media tools. The uses of everyday networked social media (FB and Twitter) was the main highlight of this movement in concert with various physical occupations that were staged by dissidents. Movement actors combined both online and offline tactics in there mobilisation, making it easy for them to communicate with each other and circumvent limitation (Castells, 2001, pp. 171–178; Kavada, 2015).

For the other kind of protest or conflict which Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) identifies as ethnoreligious CC – these are mainly ethnic, religious and/or culturally motivated associated groups in conflicts with the state or opposition movements. In the CC contexts, such contestations are carried out in virtual spaces as
they are in everyday real-life setting (Karatzogianni, 2006a, 2006b, p. 5). The idea is that similar to their socio-political counterpart, the struggle could occur in real-life settings and have a spill over into cyberspace and vice versa. It is crucial to state that the use of the phraseology ‘ethnoreligious’ does not necessarily mean that the struggles of such movements are on the whole ethnically and/or religiously motivated. While such affiliations exist, the interests, struggles and motivations of such movements could also be sociopolitical and/or economic.

 Israeli vs Palestinian, Indian vs Pakistani conflicts and the Arab upspring are good illustrations of ethnoreligious CCs. In the first two cases, the conflict was essentially carried out in cyberspace with either sides engaging in reprisal cyber-attacks. Websites of both parties in each individual case were targeted with defacements and denial of service (DOS) attacks, thereby imbedding the uses of ICTs. For instance, in the India vs Pakistan case, perceived Pakistani intelligence operatives had taking over the Indian Army’s only website, posting alleged images that depicted torture of Kashmiris by the Indian security operatives (Karatzogianni, 2006b, p. 348). A short while after, the Pakistanis responded by defacing 600 websites and temporarily taking over government and private computer systems (Karatzogianni, 2006b, p. 348). Although their actions were mostly virtual, it represented a spill over from offline conflict.

 As noted earlier, in articulating the uses of the internet and ICTs by socio-political movements, and since majority of the social groups discussed previously employ these tools as resources to facilitate their activities, both frameworks put forward by Garrett (2006) and Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) employ the RMT to understand the emergence, expansion and consequences of social movements. The focus is on a consideration of the effect of the internet, ICTs and corresponding applications on three interconnecting dynamics: mobilising structures, opportunity structures and framing processes. Before going into an examination of these using the CC theoretical framework, a brief consideration of the motivations of contentious movements is crucial.

 Following the RMT perspective, Dalton and Van Sickle (2005) argue that rich and less restrictive societies offer a more encouraging atmosphere for contentious politics and political protests to flourish. While different theories have attempted to understand disidents of particular communities participating in conflict, RMT helps to demonstrate how new ICTs, ‘fits largely within the resource mobilisation perspective as one means for aggregating grievance, building networks and communicating strategies for opposition to the regime’ (Breuer, 2012, p. 6). The CC theory takes this further by harnessing the components of the RMT, media and conflict theory in view of the influence of the internet, ICTs and social media. What follows is a brief discussion of the influence of ICTs on the components (mobilising structure, opportunity structure and framing process) of the RMT.

 In order to therefore provide a lucid exploration of the subject of the present study, the analysis that follows draws on the Karatzogianni 2006 CC framework. Drawing on the CC framework, any consideration of conflict movements must starts with an examination of the environment of conflict. This allows for
an assessment of the online (virtual) and offline (real world) component of the conflict. The framework will then draw on elements of social movement and mobilization, conflict and media theories to understand the activities of contemporary conflict groups.

Accordingly, in relation to the environment of CC, the Karatzogianni (2006a, 2006b) framework puts forward the reversal argument that ethnoreligious CCs represent loyalties of hierarchical apparatuses while socio-political CCs are empowering network forms of organisation. Furthermore, actors engaged in ethnoreligious CC need to operate in a more network fashion if they are fighting network forms of terrorism or resistance, while actors in socio-political CC need to operate in a more organised fashion and more conscious of the rest of their hosting network if they are to engage with the present global political system.

Second, the CC framework looks at socio-political CCs and the impact of ICTs on (1) mobilising structures (network style of movements using the internet, participation, recruitment, tactics and goals); (2) framing processes (issues, strategy, identity and the effect of the internet on these processes); (3) political opportunity structure (the internet as a component of this structure); and (4) hacktivism. For ethnoreligious CCs, the focus is on (1) ethnic/religious affiliation, chauvinism and national identity; (2) discourses of inclusion and exclusion; (3) information warfare, the use of the internet as a weapon (hacking), propaganda and mobilisational resource; and (4) conflict resolution, which depends on the legal and organisational framework, the number of parties and issues, the distribution of power and the content of values and beliefs.

The third aspect of the CC framework considers media components which include (1) analysing discourses (representations of the world, constructions of social identities and social relations); (2) control of information, level of censorship and alternative sources; (3) Wolsfeld’s political contest model among antagonists, which involves the ability to initiate and control events, dominate political discourse and mobilise supporters; and (4) media effects on policy (strategic, tactical and representational) (Figure 1.1).

1.3. Methods and Materials Used

Research design and data collection are an essential component of any research process. The question of how the researcher intends to collect relevant data among a research population is a crucial question that forms the essence of a given study. Hence, the importance of methodology, which is a fundamental foundation of researching into the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of a phenomenon. Bryman (2012) explained that the assumption and perceptions of how research should be carried out affect the research process. The methodology prescribes a set of principles and guidelines through which the research objective will be attained.

There are two methodological paradigms of inquiry in social research: the qualitative and quantitative paradigms. Quantitative methods deal
with quantity — an evaluation or interpretation of events using numeric measurements and statistics to access relationships (Janićijević, 2011; Pandey, 2009; Žydžiumaite, 2007). The advantage of the quantitative research approach is that it provides a platform for capturing a large proportion of a study population. Besides the size of the study population, Janićijević (2011) further argues that the approach also affords a platform for generalisation and quantification of results. The shortfall of this approach, however, is that data analysis is mostly reduced to evaluation of numbers through questioners and surveys. The numeric values and statistics form the basis for hypothesising and the generalisation which Janićijević referred to earlier. The qualitative paradigm is a direct contrast of the quantitative approach. The qualitative approach as a tool of inquiry is multi-method in nature, issue oriented and involves a natural way of deducing or understanding a phenomenon (Anderson et al., 1998; Berg, 2001; Dabbs, 1982; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).
The approach involves descriptive connotation of an event using a narrative approach. According to Creswell (2014):

Qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. [...] the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature or call for change.

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Furthermore, ‘qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 3).

The method is interpretive since it encompasses an exploration of in-depth understanding from the population of study. It therefore allows the researcher to explain events in the context of their existence. While both paradigms (qualitative vs quantitative) can function independently, yet depending on the subject of inquiry, the two paradigms can be harnessed to yield specific results (Blake, 1989; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989, Rossman & Wilson, 1991). The last decade witnessed a surge in contentious politics involving protests, activism, insurgency and violent militancy groups across the globe. In view of these conflicts, a number of studies have attempted to explain the developments in connection to ICTs, the internet and social media using various approaches. While some explore a wholly qualitative or quantitative paradigm, others harness the components of the two paradigms to achieve their aim.

For instance, Lui (2012) employs a wholly qualitative paradigm in his analysis of how Chinese dissidents use mobile phone to engender change in politics and democracy. Lui’s research therefore employed a multiple case study approach and draws on participant observation and interviews as the principal technique for data collection. In a different study, Miere (2011) harnesses quantitative and qualitative analyses in examining whether ICTs empower states as against civil society or vice versa. The approach unites statistical findings with the findings from a qualitative approach in a comparative discussion of multiple case studies. For the researcher, the main objective is ensuring that the approach is appropriate for the domain and purpose of inquiry (Janwoski & Wester, 1991, p. 46).

The current study aims to explore in-depth meanings of events that would yield comprehensive understanding. In order to achieve this aim, the inquiry considers attitudes, personal experience and opinions of individuals. Jensen’s
point above on the ‘how’ and ‘what’ and ‘why’ serve as a guiding principle in exploring the phenomenon conflict in the Nigerian context. Specifically, the study investigates the influence of ICTs on the mobilisation of dissenting socio-political and ethnoreligious groups in Nigeria. The study takes into cognisance the use and benefits of new ICTs (in particular mobile phones, the internet and everyday social media networks). It is noteworthy to state that the generalisability of research on the influence of new ICTs on political protest and conflict in the Nigerian context is problematic. Moreover, the discussion offered in this study will draw a cross-comparison between the socio-political movement and ethnoreligious movements under examination. This makes the present study crucial, especially in the context of contributing to existing knowledge in the literature on protests and conflict in Africa’s largest economy.

1.4. Collecting the Data

A single data collection technique will fall short of the desired expectations due to certain factors including variations in the structural dynamics and orientations of the different case studies. As such, the study harnessed different approaches under the qualitative paradigm to fully achieve methodological profiency, rigour and relevance. Berg (2001) argues that the implication is ‘a better, more substantive picture of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts and a means of verifying many of these elements’ (p. 4). In the present context, the use of mixed techniques is mainly to bridge the gap created by the structural differences between the movements, which include issues of accessibility and security concerns. Second, the mixed method approach ensures rigour and replication of perspectives, especially in the second case study (ethnoreligious movements) (Figure 1.2).

In the first case involving Occupy Nigeria, a combination of ethnographic interviews was the principal data collection technique. Although there are

![Figure 1.2. Data Collection Techniques Explored in the Study.](image-url)
different ways to administer interviews including email and telephone interviewing, the interviews were administered face-to-face in the field to fulfil some of the characteristics of ethnographic interviewing. For instance, one-to-one interviews in the field enabled the researcher to contextualise the issues raised by respondents against the backdrop of their natural settings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) considered ethnography in terms of participation. However, this is not necessarily in terms of being actively involved with the activities of the studied group. Drawing on the point advanced by Hine (2000), the approach enabled the researcher to benefit from the interactive characteristics of ethnographic research that allows the researcher to not only observe (as a non-participant observer) the phenomenon and the context within which the event happens, but also interact with participants to gain much deeper insights into certain characteristics exhibited by the researched population. Besides the ethnographic interview approach, the discussions and perspectives of participants are also considered alongside secondary sources including audio-visual material broadcast by dissidents and the media through online media during the protests. As one commentator noted:

The data of qualitative inquiry is most often people’s words and actions, and thus requires methods that allow the researcher to capture language and behaviour. The most useful ways of gathering these forms of data are participant observation, in-depth interviews, group interviews, and the collection of relevant documents. Maykut & Morehouse (1994, p. 46)

1.5. Semi-structured Interviews

There are different types of interviews that the research can employ as part of the research design. This includes the structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview techniques. Lussier (2009) explained that in structured interviews, all interviewees are asked the same questions from a pre-planned list, while the unstructured interview is the direct opposite of a structured interview in that there is no list of questions or pre-planned list of topics (p. 240). The third interview technique, the semi-structured interview, falls in-between the first two. Here the researcher has a list, but does not necessarily follow the list to the letter and will often ask unplanned questions and probe responses (Lussier, 2009, p. 204). The researcher’s choice of a particular interview technique for a study depends on the objectives, goals and what the research aims to achieve. Consequently, for this study, semi-structured interviews were selected as the main technique of inquiry.

Other mixed methods (under the qualitative approach) were employed in order to ‘increase accuracy of research findings’ (Gilbert, 2008, p. 127). The choice of the semi-structured interview is because it conforms to the overall aim of collecting in-depth perspectives of participants. As a consequence, interviews are able to also tell their stories. Another benefit for the researcher is that the
semi-structured interviews enabled a series of probes, which helped to yield clarity on issues put forward by interviewees. Interviews can be administered in a number of ways, but the more familiar approaches include face-to-face and/or one-to-one interviewing; other methods include conventional approaches like mailed or self-administered questionnaires, email and telephone interviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 48) and more recently video conferencing interviews. That said, the different techniques are harnessed in order to manage and fully maximise the potential of the method. The benefit of using various techniques is that it helps to manage the challenges of insufficient data and the lack of accessibility to a study population.

1.6. The Case Study Method

Having chosen the qualitative paradigm, the researcher determined the case study method as the best approach that expresses the technique explored in the study. Besides case studies, there are other qualitative research designs. For instance, we have the biography, phenomenology, ethnography and grounded theory research designs. However, for the sake of the present study, the focus is on the case study approach. Case studies have a rich history of being well explored and embedded in clinical research (Crowe et al., 2011) and widely used in social science research (Amerson, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Crowe et al., 2011). According to Creswell (2014), the scope of the case study method also extends to legal and political science research. Case studies could be explained as a qualitative approach useful for examining issues in a real-life setting, a current case or numerous cases in a time frame using in-depth data collection techniques (Creswell, 2014, p. 97).

Baxter and Jack (2008) identified different types of case study research designs. Drawing from their theorisation, a case study can be explanatory. According to Yin (2003), the explanatory case study is employed to provide answers to studies that attempt to expound on causal links in real-life conflicts between two parties. For Yin, the usefulness of the explanatory design hinges on the difficulty of other methods like the survey or experimental strategies to provide deep insights into the intricacies and complexities of real-life issues. According to Yin (2003), ‘In evaluation language, the explanations would link program implementation with program effects’ (cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 547).

Besides the explanatory case study design, other types of case studies include the exploratory design. Yin (2003) explained that this type of research design is used to explore circumstances in which the case being evaluated provides no clear or particular set of outcomes. There is also the ‘intrinsic’ case study approach, which helps the researcher to better understand a given case, and the ‘instrumental’ case study design, which is used to shed insights regarding an issue and could be instrumental in redefining a given theoretical framework. Furthermore, and particularly crucial for the current study, Yin (2003) also identified the descriptive and multiple case study designs. Yin explained that the descriptive approach is used to provide a lucid account of a phenomenon and the context in which it exists, while the multiple case study provides a
comparison platform for the research to engage in a cross-comparison between different cases under examination. For Yin (2003), the objective of the multiple case study is to duplicate findings across the case examined. The research can then predict parallel occurrences across the cases, or inconsistent findings across the cases and in reference to theory. Hence, the present study draws on the multiple case study and descriptive methodological designs. The choice of the research design approach is decided by the nature of the case studies.

1.7. Selecting Case Studies

Having identified the objective of the study, that is, a consideration of the influence of ICTs on conflict mobilisation in Nigeria, it served as the initial starting point of the research phase. The choice of subject was decided by crucial changes in the nature of the activities of dissenting mobilisations in Nigeria since the democratic transition emerged and especially in the wake of the technological revolution which emerged concurrently. A study of conflict in computer-mediated environments in the Nigerian context is useful for understanding the general workings of movements engaged in conflict, as well as the uses or influence of ICTs on groups engaged in conflict in Nigeria. Undertaking this study provides a platform to contribute to improving knowledge by bridging the gap in the literature with regard to digital activism as a field of study, an examination of ICTs in three political movements of various ideological underpinnings in a single country and considering the study in a developing non-western context.

In order to therefore obtain a succinct understanding of the dynamism of conflict in Nigeria, two types of conflict were identified between 2006 and 2014: one socio-political and the other ethnoreligious. Since the study considers conflict movements that take root in both socio-political and ethnoreligious dimensions, a multiple case study approach (see Yin, 1994, 2009; Yin & Moore, 1988) in concert with a descriptive method provides a platform for a lucid description of events and a comparison across the different cases. The choice of the multiple case study approach was arrived at by a consideration of three movements (Occupy Nigeria, Boko Haram and MEND) with distinct orientations. The method provides a platform for a cross-comparison between the three cases under examination. By comparing the three cases, the researcher is able to identify common trends, generally shared traits and differences between the different cases being studied. This approach enables the researcher to have a platform to consider a ‘contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

While Nigeria has a huge population and an enormous geographical landscape, therefore the concept of multiple cases helps to avoid over generalisation of conclusions. One case study will not be sufficiently representative of the huge population of Nigeria, especially where questions of ‘why’ individuals use ICTs, their motivations or ‘how’ new ICTs are being deployed are raised, just to mention a few of the issues that did arise in the course of the study. Therefore, the multiple case study design addresses such complexities and divergence, which will in turn ensure replication of findings and comparison across contexts.
Ultimately, by considering cases of ICT-mediated protests (radical and non-radical) happening concurrently, engineered by different movements and within a different geopolitical setting in Nigeria, the study is able to provide cross-comparative conclusions. Hence, a research approach using multiple case studies, as espoused here, is crucial for an informed explanation of computer-mediated forms of conflict in Nigeria.

The focus of the present study is on contemporary cases of conflict in Nigeria within the period of democratisation (post-1999 era), a period which spans over a decade. For the present study, however, it will be a herculean task to consider all cases of conflict that have emerged within this period. Since the study’s focus is on socio-political (non-violent) and ethnoreligious (mostly violent militancy and insurgency) conflict movements, the study choose the most contemporary cases of conflict to reflect both dimensions of conflict within the time frame. Occupy Nigeria movement provides an example of a socio-political movement. Jamā’at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da’wah wa’l-Jihād (People Committed to the Prophet’s Teachings for Propagation and Jihad), popularly known as Boko Haram, and MEND are examples of ethnoreligious movements.

The selection of these cases was guided by the following criteria. First, these cases represent novel, most recent and ongoing cases of conflict. All three cases occurred between 2006 and 2014 and some are ongoing. More importantly, these cases specifically reflect computer-mediated forms of conflict and demonstrate the influence of ICTs on the mobilisation and organisation of contentious activities within the period being examined. It is noteworthy to note that these cases represent mediated forms of conflicts; however, there are also differences in terms of their orientation. The latter two cases (Boko Haram and MEND) take on a violent militancy and insurgency orientation, and the former (Occupy Nigeria) takes on a peaceful social movement type of orientation. Yet one could observe common trends and comparative dynamics across the three cases. Chapter 7 addresses the cross-comparative dynamics across the three cases. The contemporary nature, currency and ongoing activities of some of these cases provided a platform for an examination of the issues in their real-life context.

The next step which involved interviewing participants allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth opinions of actors in the protests. The semi-structured interview only applied to the socio-political case study involving Occupy Nigeria and served as the principal data collection mechanism. The researcher therefore embarked on fieldwork. Interviews were undertaken in Nigeria, where the perceptions and opinions of individuals who participated in the January 2012 Occupy Nigeria protest were collected. What follows is a description of the processes involved in the interview phase of the data collection.

1.8. Constructing the Interview Questions

As highlighted earlier, one of the benefits of the semi-structured interview method is that, unlike the unstructured approach, it allows the researcher to develop a set of questions that mostly serve as a guide for the interviews.
A second benefit, unlike the structured approach, is that the researcher can often probe the interviewee on certain interesting points that could yield novel findings. For the present study, the research questions were broken down into sets of interview questions to serve as a guide for the interviewer and a means for facilitating the interviews. The interview questions were informed by the Karatzogianni 2006 CC theoretical framework. In particular, the questions were constructed based on the socio-political components of the framework. Note that the socio-political component of the CC framework considers the effect of ICTs on the mobilising structures, opportunity structures and the framing activities of conflict movements. Thus the interview question is categorised according to the socio-political dynamics mentioned earlier.

There were three main sections. First, the mobilisation section with questions about the influence of ICTs on conflict mobilisation during the Occupy Nigeria protests. The second section takes on the opportunity structure, with questions on the political opportunities for contentious activities and the effect of the ICTs on such opportunities for bypassing censorship and shaping public opinion, just to mention a few. The third section involves the framing activity of the movement. Here, questions were raised about the role of the media (traditional mainstream) and the influence of ICTs in countering the narrative of the state and the media. The list of questions under each section served as a guide for facilitating the interviews and a useful means for organising the data, both for transcription and analysis. At different intervals, a series of probes were introduced as a means of eliciting deeper insights from interviewees of issues raised. These probes were later captured under the relevant sections. Ultimately, the essence of the interview question guide and the series of probes that followed was to ensure that interviewees touched on crucial areas of the study. In order to build rapport with interviewees following phone conversations, each interview commenced with an introduction, which provided the interviewees with a brief data on the researcher, the research and the structure of the interview.

1.9. Identifying Participants

For the first case study (Occupy Nigeria movement), which employed interviews chiefly as the main data collection techniques, a total of nine semi-structured expert interviews were conducted between November 2013 and January 2014 during fieldwork in Nigeria. These included face-to-face interviews with the exception of one interview, which was obtained through email. Although the interview population may seem small, nonetheless (Mark, 2010) this is not an uncommon characteristic in qualitative studies. As Mark (2010) explains, there is a point where more data do not necessarily produce more information. More so, the in-depth nature of semi-structured interviews means that, as in the current context, the researcher can collect a rich and comprehensive information about the phenomenon under study. The interviews achieved saturation, given that a careful evaluation showed no generation of significantly new data from the ninth interview. The interviews lasted between 40 minutes to about an hour.
each. Given the scope, effectiveness and impact of the government’s policy change, which resulted in the Occupy Nigeria movement protest in January 2012, the outrage that ensued started from Nigeria with Nigerians as its main protagonists. These included a culmination of both formal and loose civil society groups, Nigerian workers, independent activists, students and various other civil society organisations including the clergy from different religious settings and ordinary men and women. As such, this study carefully identified and selected key civil society actors and activists who participated in the protest. For one, these actors were selected based on their role and their level of participation in previous protests and contentious activities.

In order to achieve rigour and reflect the diversity of the Occupy Nigeria movement, selected participants included a traditional member of Labour Congress. The Nigerian Labour Congress represents a coalition of 43 professional workers unions. The selected member of the Nigerian Labour Congress actively participated in the protests, using ICTs to mobilise and influence public opinion. The labour union has a rich history of being at the epicentre of political protests, collective action and political action in Nigeria and beyond. Members of the union played a seminal role in the Occupy Nigeria protests in January 2012, including organising strike actions, boycotts and participating in the negotiations with the government. Besides, participants were also drawn from other civil society organisations with elements and characteristics of contemporary social movements. These organisations and individuals also have a rich history of involvement in political struggles in Nigeria, dating back to the anti-military and democratic struggles in Nigeria. Their involvement contributed to the emergence of the present democratic culture. To reiterate, through respondent-driven sampling (RDS), participants were selected based on the role they played prior to, during and after the Occupy Nigeria protests, their uses of ICTs and their expert opinions given their rich antecedent of participating in collective action and protests. Participants were drawn from the United Action for Democracy (UAD), Medical and Health workers Union of Nigeria (MHWUN) and the Joint Action Front (JAF). Although participants were drawn from these organisations, nonetheless they spoke independent of the organisations they represent, narrating their roles in the Occupy Nigeria protests, why they participated and the influence of ICTs. Other participants included independent activists, including journalists, as well as ordinary Nigerians.

Due to confidentiality reasons and the need to fulfil ethical considerations, names and identity of participants are anonymised. These methods have gained wide reception and legitimacy within social science and humanities research (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 48). That said, these different techniques were harnessed to manage and fully maximise the potential of the method being explored. For instance, initial communication with participants was done via telephone and email; subsequently, participants were met individually having agreed a date and time to be interviewed. The availability of various techniques helped to manage the limitations. As part of the data collection process and to effectively manage the data elicited from participants during the interview, note-
taking practices in concert with audio recording were employed, given prior consent of participants.

To locate participants, the snowball sampling and RDS methods were employed. As we may already know, the identification of participants during protests and conflict can be a difficult task. Due to the sensitive nature of contentious politics, getting access to key actors within such networks can become difficult. Both techniques, snowballing and the RDS, bridge the gap by providing an alternative and easier way to access difficult to reach research populations in society and key movement actors (Heckathorn, 1997, 2002; Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004; Wejnert, 2009; Wejnert & Heckathorn, 2008). In Nigeria, like any other political setting whether democratic or dictatorial, citizen participation and engagement in contentious activities (protests and conflict) come with high risks. In the past, we have seen how the state uses its security apparatuses to witch-hunt civil society activists. In particular, the state does so through arrests, detention, torture and even extra-judicial killings, which have become prevalent instruments used by the authorities as a repercussion for dissent and conflict especially during military dictatorships.

In environments of conflict, one can reasonably expect that actors can become difficult to access especially in an attempt to get them to speak on issues relating to their activities. By this token, civil society activists, including other conflict movement actors in the present, are qualified as hidden population due to their usual hesitation to expose their identities (Heckathorn, 1997, p. 174) for fear of scrutiny from the state. In the Nigerian context, there was a general reluctance among some participants to have a discussion about individual roles during the protest for the fear of exposing their identities. The RDS therefore provided a platform for bridging the difficulty involved in accessing key civil society and movement actors who participated in the Occupy Nigeria protest. RDS is similar to other chain-referral methods like the snowball sampling approach. The central idea is that one informant who is an insider of a particular conflict movement volunteers or is recruited by the researcher. The informant becomes the link to other members of the movement unknown to the researcher. According to Heckrathorn (1997), the RDS contrasts the snowball sampling in the sense that the latter relies on an incentive for participation. The RDS advances two incentives for the participant. For one, the interviewee’s benefit from being interviewed, and second, the interviewee has the leverage of suggesting, nominating or recruiting other key participants in the study (Heckrathorn 1997, p. 178). In the Nigerian context, the researcher sets out a criterion to avoid interviewees from suggesting participants who could divert the research direction. For one, interviewees were properly briefed on the research direction, including the aims and objectives of the study. Second, interviewees were requested to suggest participants based on the role played by such participants in the Occupy Nigeria movement.

The RDS approach is also crucial for the Nigerian context due to the huge population of participants that attended the January 2012 protests. While a number of participants when contacted declined to be interviewed, out of the few that offered to be interviewed, an initial participant in the protests was
identified to serve as an informant. The informant was chosen based on his/her involvement in the protests in Abuja. This informant later produced the contacts of other key participants. The informant being an insider means that he/she had the necessary link, individual relationship, inter-organisational relationship and trust of other participants, which the researcher leveraged upon. This leads to criterion sampling, which best explains the scenario between the informant and his/her links to other participants. In criterion sampling, the researcher selects his/her interview population based solely on their involvement in the event. As Creswell (2014) theorised, ‘the criterion sample works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon’ (p. 155). The benefit of relying on eyewitness accounts for the study is that it can guarantee that the researcher obtains first-hand information, which further impacts positively on verification of facts and validating claims.

The informant and interviewees were then interviewed as part of a process to check the accuracy and clarity of the proposed interview technique. Prior to this, an informal interview was carried out with four other volunteers to ensure that the research questions were clear. Having interviewed the first interviewee, he was also given the opportunity to suggest other key actors in line with the objectives of the study. The process is repeated with other interviewees. The main interview comprised of participants identified by the informant and others suggested by interviewees who met the criteria for the study. The research benefited from the trust and bond formed between the informant (as an insider) and some other participants on in the Occupy Nigeria movement protests. The recommendation from the insiders (informant) made it easy for participants to offer access and bond with the researcher. More so, some of the participants interviewed also suggested other key participants in line with the direction of the research.

1.10. Administering Interviews

Interviewees were then asked to confirm their details which included names, vocation and age group. This was followed by some questions to confirm participant’s involvement in the conflict (in particular the Occupy Nigeria protest) and their use of ICTs (which ones and for what purposes). Having established their familiarity with ICTs, the next session involved the three sections structured according to the framework. The interviews were conducted in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory and the seat of power. The choice of Abuja is for a number of reasons: (1) although the uprising spread across major Nigeria cities (Ilorin, Ibadan, Lagos, Kano and Kaduna, to mention a few), Abuja represented the main centre. The Capital also serves as a miniature Nigeria with a good representation of the diverse population and culture and religion that embodies the spirit of the country. (2) The main negotiations between dissidents, civil society and the Nigerian government took place in Abuja. (3) Abuja is concentrated with key civil society organisations, social movements and their head offices. It is noteworthy to state that political commentaries on the Occupy Nigeria movement were collected and studied. These included blogs, social media and in
particular various online news media reports. This was helpful especially for providing sufficient information to respondents, clarifying issues and probing their response during the interviews. The in-depth nature of semi-structured interviews meant that the researcher was able to probe the perceptions of the interviewees on the influence of ICTs during conflict in computer-mediated environments.

In the long run, the semi-structured interview approach gave interviewees a free hand to narrate and demonstrate their experience and opinions freely with regard to varied facets of ICT uses for collective action and political protests. During the fieldwork in Nigeria, the researcher only had the opportunity of interviewing participants once. As such, it was crucial for the interviewer to use the avenue to probe interviewees on the main issues by asking a series of sub-questions and rephrasing some questions to validate claims made by interviewees. The series of probes that followed fell within the confines of the interview guide which was structured according to the CC framework. Depending on the participant and in order to ensure that they understand the issues, the interview questions were seldom asked word-for-word. The original questions were employed as a general guideline for the thesis (Table 1.1).

### 1.11. Secondary Data, Audio-Visual and Textual Data Online

The Occupy Nigeria case study also draws on secondary data, including audio-visual and textual material online. This included data from social media including FB, Twitter and YouTube. Others included online news media materials that included political commentaries on the Occupy Nigeria movements as it unfolded during the protests. While interviews were used as the principal tool for collecting data in the Occupy Nigeria case study, other sources including social media data and online news data complemented the interview data. Social media is particularly useful for understanding the framing activities of conflict movements. Besides FB and Twitter, the research also drew from ‘Nairaland’, an online media platform. Like FB and Twitter, the platform provides an avenue for discussions and communication between individuals across the border. Yet the forum mainly targets Nigerians. In 2016, the website of Nairaland recorded roughly over 2 million members online. The social media forum was created and managed by Seun Osewa, a Nigerian. Nsehe (2013) in a Forbes report explained that ‘for perspective: In Nigeria, Nairaland gets more visits than Wikipedia’. The forum, such as FB and Twitter pages and groups created by Occupy Nigeria, was crucial for understanding the Occupy Nigeria discourse during the protests. The choice of these platforms is based on the fact that postings are principally made by Nigerians either at home or abroad and as such reflect the sociopolitical, economic and ethnic discourses characteristic of Nigerians.

For the second case study involving Boko Haram and MEND, the study principally relied on secondary online sources. These included online textual and audio-visual materials. The main source of data collection included a selection
Table 1.1. List of Interviews with Individual Participants in Occupy Nigeria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S No.</th>
<th>Name of the Participant</th>
<th>About the Participant</th>
<th>Date and Location of Interview</th>
<th>Reason for Interviewing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Interviewee 1</td>
<td>Educationist/and civil society activist</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 11 December 2013, Abuja</td>
<td>Participated in both online and offline mobilisation of the Abuja protest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Interviewee 2</td>
<td>Journalist and activist</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 17 December 2013, Abuja</td>
<td>Actively participated in the Occupy Nigeria online mobilisation during the protests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Interviewee 3</td>
<td>Veteran activist, lawyer/civil society actor</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 20 December 2013, Abuja</td>
<td>Participated in the Occupy Nigeria protest, spoke at rallies and contributed to online media (audio-visual) commentaries during the protests and social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Interviewee 4</td>
<td>Official of the labour union</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 1 January 2014, Abuja</td>
<td>Participated in the online mobilisation of Occupy Nigeria protests. Contributed to online media commentaries during the protests including social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interviewee 5</td>
<td>Official of social movement organisation, member of labour union</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 6 January 2014</td>
<td>Veteran activist, participated in the Occupy Nigeria protest. Member of the Labour Civil Society Coalition and striking committee. Participated in the negotiations with the government during the protests. Contributed to online media commentary including on social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S No.</td>
<td>Name of the Participant</td>
<td>About the Participant</td>
<td>Date and Location of Interview</td>
<td>Reason for Interviewing</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Interviewee 6</td>
<td>Individual participant</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 11 January 2014, Abuja</td>
<td>Civil society activist, participated in the Occupy Nigeria protest. Contributed to online media commentaries during the protests. Actively participated in online and offline mobilisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Interviewee 7</td>
<td>Civil society actor/civil rights activist</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 15 January 2014, Abuja</td>
<td>Participated in the Occupy Nigeria protests. Actively involved in the online mobilisations during the protests and contributed to online media commentaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Interviewee 8</td>
<td>Veteran activist, educationist, conveyner of social movement and civil society organisation. Member of labour union</td>
<td>Face-to-face interview, 15 January 2014, Abuja</td>
<td>Activity participated in the Occupy Nigeria protests, member of the Labour Civil Society Coalition and striking committee. Contributed to online and offline media commentaries in both local and global media and social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Interviewee 9</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Email interview, 29 April 2014, online</td>
<td>Participated in the demonstrations, rallies and occupation in Lagos</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of online news reports from mostly Nigerian online news media and a few global media sources online (see Table 1.2). The choice of mainly Nigerian media sources was based on the fact that media organisations are mostly based in Nigeria and they provided a diverse array of perspectives, interviews and opinions on the movements. This included commentaries from movement actors, the government, civil society stakeholders, security experts and ordinary Nigerians. More so, media reports examined also provide up-to-date information and insights into the activities of the concerned movements. In total, five main Nigerian newspapers online were identified and selected for analysis. Across these 5 online media portals, 75 reports focusing on the Boko Haram and MEND were selected and examined to cover the period between 2006 and 2014. This specific time frame was chosen to reflect the structural dynamics in the origins, development and advances of the respective movement and due to a number of important events that took place in these periods, most importantly the mutations in the movement’s tactics and strategy.

In addition, the study collected other audio-visual data online, including documentaries and political commentaries on the ethnoreligious movements. The data collected also comprised journal entries and publications on the movements published by Nigerian and global researchers. Harnessing all these sources provided a platform for validating claims and replication in line with the principle of triangulation. Journal publications on the movements provide relevant data for cross-comparison across the groups, yet there is a general discrepancy on the origins of the ethnoreligious movements. The data generated and discussions that follow will attempt to shed new insights and perspective on these movements, especially in view of the influence of ICTs, the internet and social media on the general working of these political protests or more aptly conflict movements. In this context, the ethnoreligious components of the CC framework were the basis for the analysis of the secondary data. The data collection technique used in the case study is sensitive to the peculiarities and structural dynamics of each case in the sense that, since the study considers both radical and non-radical political protest groups, the technique deployed is dependent on the case study and other socio-political considerations. For instance, in this

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Online Nigerian Newspapers</th>
<th>Major Global Media Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Premium Times</em>, Nigeria (online)</td>
<td><em>BBC News</em> (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Vanguard</em>, Nigeria (online)</td>
<td><em>The Guardian</em>, UK (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sahara Reporters</em> (online)</td>
<td><em>New York Times</em> (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Daily Times</em>, Nigeria (online)</td>
<td><em>Global Bulletin</em> (online)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>The Nigerian Guardian</em> (online)</td>
<td>And others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1.2. Main Sources of Secondary Data Collection Online News Media Surveyed.
context, a consideration was whether the political environment was conducive enough at the time for data collection. Put differently, the case study determined the data collection instrument employed. The next section provides a general discussion of the analysis of data collected.

1.12. Thematic Analysis

The study used thematic analysis against the backdrop of software-assisted computer technology for coding and structuring the research documents for the analysis. Over the years, several social researchers employing qualitative approach have employed such software. In this case, NVivo was employed as the principal technology-assisted software.

The use of computerised software packages to aid data analysis is not a new phenomenon in research. In fact, these systems have benefitted researchers within the quantitative paradigm for some decades. For instance, software packages like SPSS have been used by researchers as an analytic tool to measure surveyed opinions of participants in quantitative research living out qualitative research. But in more recent times, software packages for data analysis within the qualitative paradigm have also emerged, greatly impacting the way and manner through which qualitative researchers make sense of their data and fieldwork notes. According to Bazeley and Richards (2000), these tools have become recognised and integrated within research in academia.

Although these softwares have been developed with the researcher in mind, it is noteworthy to clearly state that the role of computer-assisted programs and/or better still CAQDAS, as it is popularly called, in research is limited to facilitating the data analysis process in contrast to such software doing the data analysis in itself. In other words, ‘such software does not carry out the analysis for you — unfortunately, this is still the domain of humans, who must inject their imaginative reflection into the data’ (Bryman, 2002, p. xix). Nonetheless, the software enables the research to get familiarised with the data while also providing a platform for the researcher to adequately organise, store and structure his/her data. Much of the analytic responsibility relies on the interpretation, creativity and knowledge of the researcher.

In the context of the present study, the NVivo software, which has become the most popular qualitative assisting data software and developed by QSR International, was employed strictly to organise and structure the data in a process of identifying and coding the data collected during the data collection process. This process applied to both interviews conducted with Occupy Nigeria actors, other materials collected and in the two other cases, Boko Haram and MEND. The analysis process began with an initial process of transcription following the interview sessions with respondents. The next step was to import into NVivo all the transcripts. The same process was applied to the other case study; although in this context there was no need for transcription, online news materials were simply imported into the software.
The software was particularly useful for storing transcripts while also serving to organise initial views, concepts and thoughts in the various interviews. The process involved a step-by-step creation of nodes and sub-nodes or better still categories which reflect new trends and associations within the transcriptions. Memos are also used to store important ideas that could impact on the final analysis or serve as a link to important ideas. Interestingly, the tools also provided a platform for editing and proofreading materials and documents that had been imported. The software also facilitated an in-software transcription of video files imported into the package. In other words, once the video was imported into the software, while listening to the video one could also target specific segments within the video and transcribing them.

By documents and materials, this chapter refers to data that have been imported into the NVivo software for the purpose of analysis and coding. In the present context, imported documents included interviews, videos and news articles and political commentary on blogs as shown in the diagrams later. These documents, with the exception of the interviews, which require transcription and computer imputation are usually in the form of ‘rich text files’ or ‘proxy representing files’ which made it easy to simply upload such files into the software directly from the internet site. Each interview and document is imported into NVivo independently. Similarly, with online texts, the researcher captures and imports web pages and their content directly into the software using a feature in NVivo ‘NCAPTURE’. Having collected all the data in software, the interactive interface allowed for various tasks to manage the document including editing, proofreading, copy and pasting between documents, folders and files. The software’s benefits which aids data storage and the platform it for coding helped in the analysis of the data collected during fieldwork. The thesis benefited immensely from this process. Nevertheless, much of the analytic construct is a product of independent thought, reflection, personal construction and in-depth interpretation of events based on the data. In other words, the researcher plays a central role in dissecting the components of the data to reveal new ideas and thoughts.

In order to fully grasp the intrinsic ideas embedded within the data, researchers harness the components of specific qualitative analytic tools and or established methods of analysis. In this case, a thematic analytical framework succinctly fits into the objective of the current study and is therefore employed in the computerised software to provide an interpretation of the data collected across the socio-political and ethnoreligious case study. The essence of an analytic tool in a methodological context is for the researcher to make sense of the data, and likewise for the relevant audience. Before going on to establish the step-by-step procedures of the thematic analysis, especially as employed in the current study, it is first useful to establish what exactly the concept of thematic analysis entails. According to Greg (2011) and Bryman (2012), thematic analysis is one of the most explored forms of analysis within social research. It is a process through which the researcher identifies recurring patterns, themes, topics and relationships across data collected during fieldwork for final analysis.

The researcher, through a careful reading of data collected during fieldwork, will be able to identify the most important themes that make up the data. The
entire process revolves around what has been described by Holloway and Todres (2003, p. 347) as ‘thematising meanings’ (cited in Virginia & Victoria, 2006, p. 4), in other words, the extraction of themes and their meanings from data gathered during a research process. In terms of the process and procedures involved in the thematic analysis, it is difficult to delineate this approach from other analytical approaches for data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). In fact, Ryan and Bernard (2000) argue that the thematic approach follows similar practices with other analytical frameworks like the grounded theory. The crucial point is that the different frameworks all pursue coding in view to identifying unique characteristics across studied texts. The thematic approach nonetheless focuses on identification of themes.

The analysis here refers to the process of reporting findings, juxtaposing findings with the literature, raising questions and putting forth a theoretical framework. This process cuts across all forms of data sources collected from interviews to the analysis of media reports, documents and audio-visual material. It is with these in mind that the computer-assisted software becomes relevant, especially as a facilitator of the processes described. The thematic analytic process began with data collection. Once the data were collected, then in the case of interviews, the next phase was the transcription of the audio into text. ‘In the case of the research by Jones et al., once the transcripts had been incorporated within the software, the authors say they conducted a thematic analysis’ (Bryman, 2012, p. 13).

In the present context, the thematic process began with a careful examination of transcribed interviews and other collected data. Having examined the documents, the next phase included computerisation of the interviews and other online documents collected for the ethnoreligious movements being considered. By computation, what is meant is the process of transferring data to the NVivo software. This stage is particularly important as it also facilitated easy accessibility and retrieval of such documents as the analysis progressed. Once the documents had been transferred to the computer program, the software facilitated some word frequency queries as seen in Figure 1.3. The word frequency provided a platform for examining the different issues participants were discussing. It also enabled a check across the interviews and other documents to see the most commonly used phrases among respondents or across the other documents, thereby exposing the most recurring themes in all the interviews and other documents.

The use of the word frequency allowed the researcher to familiarise himself/herself with the issues being raised and discussed amongst participants. But more specifically, the word search also revealed major hints on, for instance, motivation of the group, ideological orientation, issues, challenges and other structural dynamics like the highlight of the movement’s activities. For instance, from Figure 1.3 ‘Boko Haram’ stands out in the image, which points to the text as the central issue or main point of discourse; the use of Nigerian, Nigeria, Africa and the north are also key indicators of the groups’ location and target. However, ‘Islamic’, although minutely reflected in the images, tells of the group’s identity and ideological orientation. This pointer became useful during the analysis, especially in identifying key codes (Figure 1.4).
Next, in order to identify trends and particular themes, a second and more thorough reading of each interview transcript and secondary data collected online was carried out within the software. This time, the first set of codes are generated and highlighted using the NVivo software to organise the codes usually in nodes. Several nodes are generated and organised based on prior research questions and theoretical instruments. The idea at this stage is to identify connections, repetitions, reprises and replications, inter-connections across the data and conceptual assumptions on ICTs and contentious activities. These initial codes generated and organised are then reduced by harnessing key thoughts and ideas with shared commonalities or characteristics across the interviews and other documents examined in each case study.

This process of reduction allowed for the generation of the first set of themes that are more defined compared to the broadly generated codes. A further careful consideration allowed for more streamlining of similar themes under one principal theme so that a principal theme could have sub-themes and categories for easy understanding of causality and relationships. These final themes become the unit of analysis. In other words, the themes become analysed to represent new...
Figure 1.4. Screenshot 1: Example of Document Imported into NVivo Using N-Capture.
thoughts and ideas in the study. The reduction process helps to break down the large data that have been collected into ‘parts’ and or fragments to ease analysis and understanding. With these processes, Bryman (2012) explains that data are being managed since transcripts are being made more manageable through the process of reduction; the coding process that follows get the research more acquainted with the data (s)he seeks to understand and the data are simultaneous being interpreted in connection with the research question, theory and literature. The Nvivo software facilitates these processes with several inbuilt structures for reducing, merging codes (nodes) and managing huge data (Figure 1.5).

In contrast to other data interpretative strategies, the thematic analysis is not a method of inquiry that has a distinguishable or particularly unique custom or that has been delineated in relation to distinctive cluster of techniques (Bryman, 2012, p. 578). In other words, it is not a straight jacketed methodical approach with a much pre-determined set of structures. The main focus here is on a consideration of thematic preoccupations (which are important ideas within a data set) and theme generation as the tag ‘thematic analysis’ suggests. Nonetheless, as is the culture of several analytic techniques, identification of themes and coding are a generalised component of most if not all qualitative and quantitative data analyses. In other words, the thematic analysis is not an exception. In essence, although there is no clear-cut approach or set of techniques set out as identifiable guidelines or principle as some schools of thought argue (Bryman, 2012, p. 578), yet, there are similar practices in the design and procedure for analysing data across the different analytical approaches. In simple terms, the thematic approach follows the general principles of data analysis (Figure 1.6).

The thematic analysis is employed to understand the main issues across the socio-political and ethnoreligious movements despite the differences between the three cases examined. In the ethnoreligious case study, since data relied principally on secondary sources, in particular online news materials and videos, the sources for both cases (Boko Haram and MEND) were carefully selected based on their coverage of the activities of the movements. These included mainly Nigerian online newspapers and a few other global online media organisations. The use of mainly secondary sources is due to the limitations highlighted elsewhere. More so, data in this context are rather easily accessible on the internet. In addition, the internet provides an archive of both text and video data from the insurgency groups that will be useful in analysing the ethnoreligious and likewise the socio-political dimensions of their activities. Some of the main Nigerian online media sources identified include Vanguard Nigerian, Premium Times, Sahara Reporters, BBC online, New York Times online and Global Bulletin to mention but a few of the notable ones.

1.13. Book Structure

Moving on from this chapter and following the rational of the CC framework, Chapter 2 sets out a discussion mapping the environment of conflict. The analysis considers the political landscape, media landscape and the development of
Figure 1.5. Screenshot 2: Developing and Reducing Themes in NVivo.
Figure 1.6. Screenshot 3: Example of Themes and Sub-themes in NVivo.
ICT infrastructure from a historical perspective. The aim is to situate modern conflict in Nigeria within broader historical influences. The discussion provides a foundation for understanding the discourse in the empirical chapters and provides an overview of the developments in ICT infrastructure. This section argues that gradual advances in media opened the environment to participation and an inclusive culture. Chapter 3, relying on empirical cases, undertakes a review of essential debates on ICT uses in computer-mediated environments and looks at youth engagement and digital activism in sub-Saharan Africa and across the globe. The discussion in this section uses empirical evidence to underscore the significance of communicative technologies for contentious politics. It then reflects on the limitations of ICT in contemporary conflicts.

Chapter 4 sets out a discussion on the Occupy Nigeria movement. This chapter explores the role of digital media in mobilising structures, opportunity structure and framing during the January 2012 protest. The focus turns to Boko Haram in Chapter 5, where the discussion considers the role of digital media in the movement’s conflict. The study examines the mobilisation, opportunity structure and framing processes of the movement and other parts of the ethnoreligious CC framework. Following the same rationale, Chapter 6 looks at the role of digital media in activities of MEND. The ethnoreligious and socio-political elements of the CC framework also provide a mechanism for the mapping the activities of MEND. In Chapter 7, the study concludes by re-examining the use of digital media in conflict and highlights key findings across the study and recommendations for future research.