

Nigeria's Silent Recolonization?

Foreigners and local collaborators are bleeding our mineral resources in the name of banditry

The night the attackers came to Oke-Ode, Kwara State, the villagers thought it was just another herder incursion. But as the bullets tore through mud walls and flames engulfed the harvest, it became clear this was no ordinary clash. “They told us to leave or die,” recalled Amos Ajibola, a farmer who fled with his family into the forest. “When we came back days later, strangers were already digging in the hills where we farmed.” Stories like Ajibola’s are multiplying across Nigeria’s mineral-rich communities. Officials and media often dismiss them as “Fulani–Farmer clashes.” But beneath that narrative lies a disturbing truth: the violence is carefully targeted at communities sitting on gold, tin, lithium, and other strategic minerals. Once villagers are displaced, the land is quietly taken over by illegal miners tied to powerful cartels with foreign backers.

The New Masters: China and France; Security experts and local leaders increasingly point to a slow-motion recolonization of Nigeria, one driven not by treaties or flags, but by economic predators. China and France are the most frequently named, both with long track records of extracting African resources. France has never hidden its dependence on Niger’s uranium, while China has poured billions into Africa under its Belt and Road Initiative. In Nigeria, their interests intersect with a shadow economy of illegal mining. “These are not random clashes,” said one Abuja-based security analyst who requested anonymity. “They are calculated displacements. The real battle is not over grazing routes, but mineral veins. And the buyers are waiting in Lagos, Dubai, and Beijing.”

Imported Terrorists, Local Collaborators; The system runs with brutal efficiency. Nigerian collaborators, often businessmen or politicians, first identify communities sitting on mineral deposits. They pass the information to their foreign backers. Armed groups, sometimes Fulani Ethnic Militias, sometimes mercenaries from Mali, Chad, or Niger, are then deployed to terrorize locals until they abandon their lands. A

Nigerians are persuaded and believe that under the present leadership of President Bola Ahmed Tinubu and the current Service Chiefs the federal government will confronts this reality, by standing firm to investigate transparently, and breaks the chains of collaboration else Nigeria's mineral wealth will continue to build other nations' industries while Nigerians bleed.

conflict researcher with the Centre for Democracy and Development put it bluntly: “What the public sees is another farmer–herder clash. What is really happening is organized displacement for mining access.”

History Repeating Itself; This pattern echoes Africa’s darkest chapters. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, wars over Coltan and cobalt have killed millions while enriching foreign corporations. France has kept a stranglehold over uranium mining in Niger for decades. Now, Nigeria’s lithium and gold deposits are drawing similar interest, and similar bloodshed. The losses are staggering. Nigeria officially bleeds \$9 billion annually from illegal mining. Zamfara alone has seen gold smuggled to fund arms purchases by terrorist groups. In Nasarawa and Kogi, truckloads of lithium vanish under the radar, shipped abroad without any benefit to the host communities.