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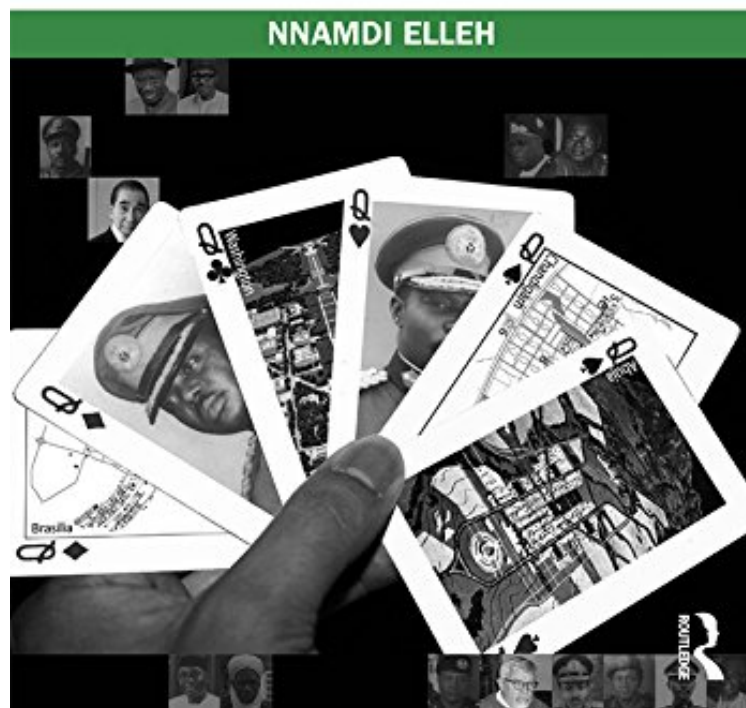
## Architecture and Politics in Nigeria: The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja, 1900ndash;2016

*Nnamdi Elleh*

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### ARCHITECTURE AND POLITICS IN NIGERIA

The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century  
Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja,  
1900–2016



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**Nnamdi Elleh : Architecture and Politics in Nigeria: The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja, 1900ndash;2016** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Architecture and Politics in Nigeria: The Study of a Late Twentieth-Century Enlightenment-Inspired Modernism at Abuja, 1900ndash;2016:

In 1975, the Nigerian authorities decided to construct a new postcolonial capital called Abuja, and together with several internationally renowned architects these military leaders collaborated to build a city for three million inhabitants. Founded five years after the Civil War with Biafra, which caused around 1.7 million deaths, the city was envisaged as a place where justice would reign and where people from different social, religious, ethnic, and political backgrounds would come together in a peaceful manner and work together to develop their country and its economy. These were all laudable goals, but they ironically mobilized certain forces from around the country in opposition against the Federal Government of Nigeria. The international and modernist style architecture and the fact that the government spent tens of billions of dollars constructing this idealized capital ended up causing more strife and conflict. For groups like Boko Haram, a Nigerian Al-Qaida affiliate organization, and other smaller ethnic groups seeking to have a say in how the country's oil wealth is spent, Abuja symbolized everything in Nigeria they sought to change. By examining the creation of the modernist national public spaces of Abuja within a broader historical and global context, this book looks at how the successes and the failures of these spaces have affected the citizens of the country and have, in fact, radicalized individuals with these spaces being scene of some of the most important political events and terrorist targets, including bombings and protest rallies. Although focusing on Nigeria's capital, the study has a wider global implication in that it draws attention to how postcolonial countries that were formed at the turn of the twentieth century are continuously fragmenting and remade by the emergence of new nation states like South Sudan.

"Elle's story of the development of the city of Abuja is likely to be one of the most important books on the impact of urban planning and architecture to emerge from the African continent. Set within the intrigues of colonial and post-colonial Nigerian politics, and enlivened with insights into Elle's own colourful experiences (as a child and later as a researcher) in Nigeria, it makes gripping reading. Significantly, however, it supports wider arguments about the role of master planning and modernist architecture in the global South (see UN Habitat's 2009 Global Report on planning), which suggest that these approaches are frequently used to promote the interests of powerful commercial and political elites, and have very little to do with the making of locally appropriate, well-functioning and sustainable cities. Even more damning, as Elleh shows, is the complicity of international planning and architectural 'stars'; those global professionals concerned primarily with making their name on projects such as this one. Misguided desires by Nigerian politicians to show that they could 'catch up with the West' aligned with design professionals unable to think beyond 1930s Corbusian modernism, but neither offered much comfort to the many thousands evicted and displaced in the name of urban progress. Elleh is a wonderful story-teller with a real gift for explaining a complex development project in an accessible way to a wide readership." - Professor Vanessa Watson, School of Architecture, Planning and Geomatics, University of Cape Town

About the Author Nnamdi Elleh, Ph.D., is Professor of Architecture at the University of Cincinnati, Ohio. His research interests include modern and contemporary architecture understood as diverse, multi-centered, regional, vernacular and localized experiences in different parts of the world.