

**Terrorism, Militancy and Insurrection in Nigeria:
The Inevitability of Adopting Appropriate Conflict Management Strategies**

Iyabrade Ikorukpo

Department of Political Science
Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island,
Bayelsa State, Nigeria

and

Vincent Tam Eremie

Department of Political Science
Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Rumuolumeni,
Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract

The acts of terrorism, militancy and insurrection in Nigeria have assumed a frightening dimension and these have continually threatened the country's stability, prosperity and peace for its people. Attempts have been made by scholars and layman over the years to offer their views and sometimes contradictory opinions on the origin, violent nature and justification of these acts. This paper critically examines the emergence of the various groups perpetrating these acts, their modus-operadi and justification for their acts. We relied on the secondary source of data collection and using the structural functionalism approach as its theoretical framework, the paper posits that the state has demonstrated lack of capacity through its reactive/palliative crises management strategies to tackle the menace of these groups. The paper further argued that the seemingly helplessness of the state has resulted in some of these groups seeking for self survival and sustenance techniques. It is the position of this paper that unless different crises management strategies are adopted, the corporate existence of the Nigerian state is not guaranteed. The paper made implementable recommendations.

Introduction

Nigeria currently experiences severe threats to its corporate existence and survival occasioned by acts of insurrection, militancy and other security breaches. Separatist groups such as the notorious Boko Haram that operates in the North-East, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra has recently reactivated the separatist sentiments of the defunct Republic of Biafra in the Ibo heartland in the South East and the ever, present resource control induced violence in the Niger Delta Region all manifest the deep, rooted challenges that confront the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Nigeria's political history is replete with violence and politics induced crises even before the attainment of political independence. However, the current level of political instability and separatist movements are unparalleled and unheard of in the history of Nigeria. This is in the face of the attempts made by successive administrations in the country at both national and regional levels, aimed at promoting national unity and integration.

Against the above background, this paper attempts to investigate the propellants of these dispersion currents and trends. The paper attempts to answer the following questions:

Why is Nigeria's currently awash with an avalanche of political violence, economic sabotage, insurrection and militancy? Why is it that no part of the country is free of these debilitating socio-political vices? Did the political leadership take proactive and decisive steps to nip these crises and challenges in the bud? Do these challenges not call into question the capacity and ability of the political leadership to provide effective leadership in the country? The objective of the paper is to unearth the historical antecedents that propel the current high level of insurrection and instability as well as bringing to the surface the inadequacies of the state that strengthen the hands of the insurrectionists. The paper argues that the current high level of militancy, insurrection and terrorism demonstrate the ineptitude of the political leadership, its lack of decisiveness in tackling national issues, and its comprador character. The weakness of state institutions, as well as the weaknesses of the individual who operate those institutions and their lack of commitment to the national survival explains why a concourse of negative political forces now govern Nigeria. The paper adopts secondary sources of data such as textbooks and newspaper reports, and subjects the data to a thorough and in-depth descriptive analysis.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is conducted within the framework of structural functionalism. This framework has many variants, and it is considered in certain academic quarters as moribund, no longer effective and ineffective.

However, its adoption in this study is based on our position that the paradigm is still capable of locating the relevance of socio-political institutions. The Talcott Parsons' variant of structural functionalism is anchored on AGIL where: A= Adaptation G= Goal Attainment; I= Integration, and L= Latency (pattern maintenance) (Ritzer; 2012:241-2). Ritzer (2012:242) goes ahead to discuss the acronym:

1. **Adaptation:** *A system must cope with external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environment and adapt the environment to its needs.*
2. **Goal attainment:** *A system must define and achieve its primary goals.*
3. **Integration:** *A system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It also must manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (A.G.L)*
4. **Latency (pattern maintenance):** *A system must furnish, maintain and renew both the motivation of individuals and the cultural pattern that create and system that motivation.*

The system has a primary obligation to source for all relevant resources, within and without, to effectively achieve AGIL. The discharge of the afore-stated obligation's naturally produces shocks and stress as a logical outcome. Thus Merton (1968) cited in Thompson and Hickey (1996:22) talks of manifest functions as “ *The anticipated and intended consequences of social institution*” and latent functions as “ *the unintended and unrecognized consequences*” The system therefore has to display an increasing capacity to generate outcomes that enhance social stability, law and order while at the same time curtailing the unintended outcomes.

Mindful of the existence of latent functions, growth and expansion in social system, Talcott Parsons developed the “*equilibrium theory of social change*” Thomas (1995:464), citing the works of Parsons, posits that a change in one part of the social system produces corresponding changes in, other parts as well. This falls in line with the conception of the

society as a living organism. *“When stability is disrupted by change in one part of the system, the other parts of the system adjust to the degree needed to bring the system back into balance or equilibrium.”* The restoration of order does not take society to its previous position: restoration of order merely brings back stability to the system. Fundamental adjustments might be required, such as the encouragement of certain norms and values, strengthening existing institutions and even creating new ones.

The choice of this paradigm is in part predicated on our assumption that the Nigeria State operates within this paradigm, even though the originators of the framework have since moved on. It is, therefore, needful to examine the issues of the state's role in terrorism and insurgency using the language of the operators of the Nigeria State. Thus, the use of the paradigm will enable us to expose the inability of the state in Nigeria to adapt to the changing environment in which it operates. It will also expose the inability of the state to attain the goal it set for itself in the constitution and other legal documents.

3. The Nigerian State and Conflict Management

The Nigerian state inherited a lot of crisis at independence including ethnic nationalism, minority agitations, and revenue allocation crisis. Many of these crises crystallized in the post-colonial period and this, in addition to the many other crises which the dynamics of the postcolonial state politics had generated. Some of the latter includes: The terrorism in the North-East which has claimed tens of thousands of lives of defenseless Nigerians; the resource control induced economic sabotage and civil disobedience in the Niger Delta, and the claims of the Ibos that they are marginalized, claims that led to a thirty-month civil war which claimed hundreds of thousands of lives between 1967 and 1970. In this section, some of these crises will be high-lighted the state management of the crises will also be looked at. The analysis will reveal the lack of the political will on the part of the leadership.

Marginalization and Abandonment: the Ibo Demands for Inclusion. The Ibos are located in the eastern part of the country, one of the dominant ethnic groups in Nigeria. They are found in the states of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. At independence in 1960, they had the ceremonial head of state, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, dominated the military hierarchy had control of the National Council of Nigerian Citizens, one of the leading political parties which served as the junior partner in the Federal Government. In the aftermath of the January 1966 coup, a coup which was executed by mainly soldiers of Ibo extraction, an Iboman, Maj. Gen. Aguyi-Ironsi, emerged as Head of state and Supreme Commander. However, later developments made the Ibos to cry foul. First, their head of state Maj. Gen. Aguyi-Ironsi, was killed in the revenge coup of July 1966. Next, there was what Ruth First (1970) cited in Ogunsanwo (2009:12). Described as *“their business of killing Ibos”* The Ibos became targets of mass killing in the North as ably presented by Achebe (2012:8081) *“Marauding Northern youths armed with machetes knives, and other instrument of death attacked unsuspecting civilians, mostly Igbos”* Achebe (2012:82) continues his description of the pogroms: *“But in this particular case a detailed plan for mass killing was implemented by the government the army, the police - the very people who were to protect life and property. Not a single person has been punished for these crimes.”* The climax was the thirty months civil war which was fought by the federal forces (the rest of the country) against the breakaway Biafra. Even though the regime of Gen. Gowon came up

with the 3Rs - “reconstruction of the damaged infrastructures of war, rehabilitation of existing infrastructures and reintegration of the defeated Igbos into the mainstream of the Nigeria society” (Ogunsanwo, 2009:30) though the three Rs programme was hailed at the time, it appears the Igbo people were not properly reintegrated back into the Nigerian society because they continue to talk about marginalization and neglect. They have gone ahead to rekindle the philosophy and principles of the defunct Biafra Republic that was defeated in January 1970. They have gone ahead to establish a Radio Biafra where anti- Nigeria sentiments are broadcast. Shortly after the 2015 general elections the Igbo held rallies and demonstrations in several Nigerian cities, including those outside their zone in which they clearly canvassed separatism and independence from Nigeria.

The Nigerian state has not contained this force of disintegration and the nation continues to live under the tensions generated by ethnic nationalism; “*Resource Control Induced Violence and sabotage in the Niger Delta*. In November, 1990, the Ogoni ethnic nationality, one of the ethnic nationalities located in Rivers State, proclaimed the Ogoni Bill of Right. In the background to the Bill, the Ogonis, amongst other things, state that oil was struck in commercial quantities in 1958 at K. Dere, and that the contribution of the Ogoni people to the nation is in excess of forty billion dollars through their oil. In spite of this huge investment in project Nigeria, no reasonable level of development (human, environmental, material) can be found in the area. In the light of the above, the Ogonis demanded for political autonomy within the Nigerian federation, management of their oil revenues, tackling issues relating to the environment and so on. In pursuance of their objectives, the Movement of the Survival of Ogoni, People, MOSOP, was formed.

The MOSOP position has to be put in the proper historical perspective. Isaac Jasper Adaka Boro, the Niger Delta revolutionary, put it graphically. Boro (1982: 116-117) “*Therefore, remember your seventy-year-old grandmother who still farms before she eats, remember also your poverty stricken people, remember too your petroleum which has been pumped out daily from your veins, and then fight for your freedom. May God bring success to our endeavors. A-men*”. The Adaka Boro group went ahead to declare the Niger Delta Republic and confronted both the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the defunct Eastern Regional Government on the basis of their exploitation and marginalization. Their effort was brutally suppressed. Their line of thought and understanding of their state of being were not, and could not, be suppressed or crushed. The Ogonic revolt against the federal might in the days of Gen Abacha's regime was in the same philosophical and existential reality. The people of Rumuecheme in Rivers State were also brutally crushed in 1990 for simply expressing their exploitation and pauperization at the hands of the Nigerian state and their multinational oil companies collaborators. The brutalization of the protests and revolts by the Nigerian state failed to cow the persons and groups involved; if anything the suppression has served as fuel to their course.

Thus, in December 1998, the Kaima Declaration was made. The Declaration observed, among other things, that British colonialism forcibly incorporated the Ijaw into the Nigerian state, and that association has meant exploitation, marginalization, suppression and repression for the Ijaw nation. They gave the issue of revenue allocation. The Declaration notes that: “*the principle of Derivation in Revenue Allocation has been consciously and systematically obliterated by successive regimes of the Nigerian state. We note the drastic reduction of the Derivation Principle from 100% (1953), and 50% (1960),*

45% (1970), 20% (1975), 2% (1982), 1.5% (1984), to 3% (1992), and a rumored 13% in Abacha's 1995 undemocratic and unimplemented constitution. The explanation for the drastic reduction of the derivation principle was simply the oil, the current primary contributor to the Nigerian economy, is produced in Ijaw land, a minority group seen as a group that can easily be crushed and put under the boots of the great majority groups. The Declaration therefore demanded for the control of the resources located in the Niger Delta region. On the basis of the Declaration Ijaw youths rebelled against the Nigerian state, sabotaging the economic base of the country and tens of thousands of the youths willingly paying the supreme prize at the hands of the Nigerian state. The administration of late president Yar Adua declared amnesty to the militants and the hostilities ceased at the time. The fundamental issues remain unaddressed and unresolved.

Okoko, Nna and Ibaba (2006:3) make a direct link between resources and conflicts in the Niger Delta. As they put it, *importantly, oil resources remain under exclusive control and management of the federal government and so, the communities remain deprived of the right to own and manage their oil resources. This has accounted for most of the conflicts and crises in the region and thus, the struggle for self-determination and resource control in the Niger Delta*". Indeed the fundamental or central argument of Okoko, Nna and Ibaba in their work is that the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, its exploitation and exploitation led to the underdevelopment of the region. That underdevelopment is the cause of conflicts and crisis in the area. We could not agree more with them. Professor Tekena N. Tamuno looked at the situation from the historical point of view. Tekena (2011) shows that the current conflict in the Niger Delta region actually began in 1849 when Britain established consular jurisdiction over the two Bights of Benin and Biafra. That establishment pitched two parties against each other the masterminds of British imperialism who were interested in getting cheap palm oil and palm kernels and the natives and the owners of the palm oil and palm kernels. The British were eager to get at much below the market prices. The discovery of crude oil in 1958 made the soon-to-depart imperialists to tighten the choke hold on the regions economy. The professor goes ahead to show that the new managers of post-independence Nigeria learnt the strangulating holds of the British and applied them with even greater vigour and viciousness. The summation of the professor Emeritus deserves a lengthy quote, as postulated in Tamuno (2011:X):

All that needed emphasis was the continuity between THE Colonial Era of warfare, to protect primary palm oil assets and the persistent turmoil which followed the efforts of new rulers, after Nigeria's independence, to build castles for themselves through the dominant roles played by crude oil and associated gas resources in Nigeria's Economy... Nigeria had not known real peace. In turn, that long era of Oil wars in the Niger Delta helped to threaten the interests of foreign stake holders as well.

The painful observation is that the persistence of the war that effectively began in 1849 is a clear testimony to the ineffectiveness of conflict management approaches adapted by the Nigerian state. The approaches have, in the main, remained unchanged—the stick and the carrot approach, but much more of the stick approach. The colonial imperialists adopted gun-boat diplomacy through which they threatened, bombarded, and militarily occupied the Niger Delta and indeed in any part of Nigeria where their interests pursuit clashed with the well

being of the local people. The successor post-colonial state has continued in the same path: the military destruction of Ogoni land in Rivers state in the days of Gen. Abacha's regime, and the Odi massacre by the Nigerian military under the watch of Chief Olusegun Obasanjo as the Commander-in-Chief, are a few instances. On the carrot end of the scale the Nigerian state has created states; scaffolded some members of the Niger Delta into the national ruling class; established the Niger Delta Development Commission and Niger Delta Ministry; and tired of killing defenceless Niger Deltas who were protesting the underdevelopment of their region, the Nigerian state declared amnesty in 2009.

The ineffectiveness of these measures is obvious enough. The big stick the state wields the spirit and the resolve of the people remain unbroken. If anything, it has strengthened the determination of the people to demand the restoration of their economic and political rights stolen from them since 1849. In the same vein, the carrot measures are incapable of addressing the deeply entrenched contradictions.

iii. Boko Haram: The Malignant Cancer.

The activities of the Boko Haram terrorists, home grown and made in North East Nigeria, has effectively put Nigeria on the world map of international terrorism. The activities of this terrorist group has decimated the population of the North-Eastern geopolitical zone of the country, and has cost the nation billions of dollars and thousands of the lives of military and security operatives in efforts to contain the cancer. The cancer is a malignant one as it has spread to other parts of the country and into the adjoining countries of Niger, Chad and Cameroun. However this cancer could have been effectively contained at the starting blocs if prompt and relevant medication was administered by the state. Unfortunately the Nigerian state, as usual, failed to apply appropriate measures to tackle the situation.

Olusegun Adeniyi, the special adviser to late president Yar'Adua on Media and Publicity, gave a front row account of the rise of Boko Haram. He traced the origin of the sect to 2002, starting that Muhammed Yusuf, an influential moslem cleric in the Maiduguri, who gradually turned his pulpit into a radicalization platform and before long attracted large following among the member of the exploited classes first in Borno state and later in the entire North-East. Powerful local patrons, such as Baba Fugu, his father in law, soon began funding Mahammad Yusuf activities. The ruling class at both regional and national levels saw nothing wrong with Yusuf's approach to the propagation of Islam even Adam, Yusuf's former mentor exposed the dangers of Yusuf's position. The inaction of the state gave Yusuf's and his disciples time to organize themselves, expand their territorial holding, acquire hideouts, source for funds, and map out this strategies. The Special Advise went ahead to show that the sect came out vicious, deadly, ruthless, and adequately equipped to take on the Nigerian military and security apparatus. In line with their upsurge in the sect confidence, Adeniji (2011:108) recounts that the group "*re-emerged and launched attacks on some police stations in Barna and Gwoza in Borno state, where they killed policemen, including an assistant police commissioner; carted away guns and ammunition...*"the sect has grown from this "humble beings" to become a giant in the global terrorist community. Boko Haram has killed more people in its areas of operation than the dreaded Islamic state.

The response of the state can at best be described as "typical" and "as usual" the member of the armed forces were detailed to combat the terrorists, turning the north-east into

a theatre of war, violence, instability and uncertainty. While they deployed the military to curb and subdue the insurrectionists, the state failed to deploy any measures to tackle the radicalization process which even predated the armed struggle. Boko Haram therefore readily recruits young impressionable minds and turns them into suicide bombers, soldiers and other level of operatives. This paper thinks the operations of Boko Haram defile any logic of civilized living, their activities are bad, against both divine and human reasoning and antithetical to all known religious and decent philosophical theory and practice. Our point however is that the state handling of the crisis has been mediocre not based on an appropriate principle of warfare. Our thinking is that given the nature of the problem, the state would have acted promptly when the situation was still restricted to the Maiduguri area. In addition a deliberate ideological battle ought to have been stated to undo the radicalization process to which the youths in the geopolitical zone were subjected.

4. **Conclusion: Evolving an Appropriate Conflict Management paradigm.**

The central argument of this paper is that the proliferation of conflicts and crises in Nigeria is precipitated by an endemic lack of capacity, on the part of the state, to evolve effective and appropriate strategies for conflict management. The omnibus application of violence to every conflict situation is incapable of resolving conflicts that were generated in the first place by a deep-rooted feeling of alienation, marginalization and suppression. Military action only serves the latent function of re-informing the pillars upon which the conflicts and crises are hoisted. This explains the persistence of the Biafra crises and the Niger Delta Situation.

The use of palliatives remains what it is - palliatives incapable of addressing the issues at stake. This is the case with the use of interventionist agencies such as the Niger Delta Development Commission and the Niger Delta Ministry, 13% derivation principle, and so on. These agencies build an eight classroom block somewhere and renovate an old health centre there, and award scholarships to two students in another community. These efforts are incapable of halting the decay, underdevelopment, environmental degradation, unemployment and dearth of social amenities in the area. The people are aware of the ineffective nature of such measures, and so they continue their revolt.

In the specific case of Boko Haram the inability of the state to act promptly enabled the sect to consolidate and gain more territories, evolve a recruitment strategy, and establish guaranteed sources of arms and finance. The sect has therefore become a monster too powerful for the state. The politicization of the activities of the sect by the competing elements of the ruling class has also helped and strengthened the hand of the group. The current response of the state is therefore incoherent, uncoordinated, and driven by political, rather than tactical considerations.

In the light of the above there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift. The state needs to admit the failure of its conflict and crises management strategies inherited from the colonial state. We strongly recommend a strategy that engages the communities directly using the language of the people concerned. In addition, the state has to realize that certain conflicts such as Boko Haram's in the North-East need ideological inputs because these conflicts require getting the hearts and minds of the people. Once an adequate deradicalization process is put in place, it will be difficult for the insurgents to recruit people to execute their schemes.

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