

Threat to Nigeria Since 1960: A Retrospection

L. Andy Afinotan^{[a],*}; Victor Ojakorotu^[b]

^[a]Department of Political Science Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji, Ilesha, Nigeria.

^[b] Prof. Department of History, South-West University Mafikeng, South Africa.

*Corresponding author.

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Abstract

The post-independence Nigerian state was faced with the intractable task of governing a multifaceted nation, comprised of 36 regional states which were divided along ethno-religious lines, up to 300 ethnic groups and a plethora of linguistic dialects, in addition to three (3) distinct religious groupings. The challenge of the post-colonial Nigerian state was the efficient administration and governance of a broad-based society with a multiplicity of interests, values, traditions and cultural inclinations. The culmination of an atmosphere of mutual mistrust and dissatisfaction from different regions of Nigeria came with the advent of the Biafra secessionist battle of 1967. Following the end of the Biafra conflict, the Nigerian society became characterised with struggles and resistance against the state system in various forms, with the gripes and disquiets of various groups coming to the fore in various, often violent ways. Making use of library research and content analysis methodologies, the authors trace the sequence of crises faced by the Nigerian state since independence, with a keen focus on the Biafra War of 1967, the Niger Delta crisis (particularly, the botched Amnesty Programme of 2009), as well as the current threat of Boko Haram terrorism which has taken hold of the Nigerian society since 2009. The paper concluded that, for the high ideals of Unity and Faith, Peace and Progress to be attained in Nigeria, the State must deal with corruption, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and security related crimes, while doing more to restructure the polity and enthrone free and fair elections.

Key words: Retrospection; Aggression theory; Post-independence Nigerian state

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria gained its independence from British colonialism in 1960, and advanced to a post-colonial order which was replete with socio-economic and political quandaries inherited from the erstwhile administration. The post-independence Nigerian state was faced with the intractable task of governing a multifaceted nation, comprised of 36 regional states which were divided along ethno-religious lines, up to 300 ethnic groups and a plethora of linguistic dialects, in addition to three (3) distinct religious groupings. As a nation which was artificially instituted by the British colonial powers at the expense of deep-rooted divergence between the array of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups, the complexity of governing such an amalgamation in the post-independence era lay with new leaders with limited experience in statesmanship and public administration. Therefore, the key challenge for the state in the post-independence era and beyond was patterning a diverse array of socio-economic and political exigencies stemming from distinct social groupings into a single state; each with distinct and non-mutually exclusive interests, an addition to the constitutional function of evolving such inherent differences into a practicable social contract.

Essentially, the main source of the leadership quandary faced by the state since the post-independence era lies in the fact that the Nigerian nation is devoid of a common sense of affiliation and a shared bond between the various ethnic groups. (Carens, 1988) As stated by Carens, the establishment of a nation is determined by the sharing of commonalities in language, culture and traditions, by a range of national groups which have engendered habits of cooperation among one another over time (Carens, 1988). The case of Nigeria presents a contrary paradigm.

In a similar manner to other colonised sub-Saharan African states, the European colonialists amalgamated nations out of numerous ethnic groups, which proved ungovernable for a majority of post-independence leaders. The Nigerian nation is comprised of three major ethnic groups, including the Hausa/Fulani, Igbo, and the Yoruba, in addition to a myriad of smaller units. While the Nigerian state grapples with governing such a multifaceted society at the administrative level, at a social level, the divergence in views, values and interests between the various groupings has proved to be a source of inter-ethnic and inter-religious indignation. To this extent, among the range of factors which have contributed to the series of crises which Nigeria has witnessed since independence, the Nigerian problem can be attributed to the endemic level of inter-ethnic tensions, as well as religious and sectarian divides.

A further element of the ethno-religious complexity was affixed to the Nigerian administration with the discovery of oil in 1956 in the Niger Delta region in the south of the country. The subsequent commencement of commercial production in 1961, which became predominated by foreign energy multinationals, introduced new political and economic dynamics, as increasing production instead led to the disenfranchisement of the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta, and the increase in state oil revenues at the expense of the well-being of a large proportion of Nigeria's populations (Johnson, 2011). While the export of oil resources has led to the marked growth of per capita income levels to more than \$2700 and an average GDP growth rate of 7% annually, with oil production and exports accounting for approximately 98% of export revenue and 83% of state earnings, the daily socio-economic challenges which confront a majority of Nigeria's inhabitants remain distinctly juxtaposed to the abundance of the oil wealth which has been amassed by the state since 1961 (Oludaru, 2008).

To this extent, the main gripes of oil-bearing communities who have been marginalized from the benefits of the petroleum industry include concerns on the sharing of oil revenues, in addition to the management and control of oil resources, and the compromised ability of locals to derive any form of income from the oil sector. Resultantly, the disquiet from a significant proportion of Nigeria's population stems from a combination of economic concerns relating to the perceptibly inequitable manner in which resource revenues are allocated to various ethnic groupings and their respective regions on one hand, and politico-economic foreboding stemming from concerns of political disenfranchisement and exclusion from the administrative dispensation of the Nigerian state based on ethno-religious and religious variance on the other. In light of these inherent complexities in Nigeria's social composition, the state has been faced with recurrent socio-political crisis rooted in the multiplicity of interests from the various sub-groups since independence. Many a time, the various demands of the distinct ethnic and religious groupings which have been further compounded

by regional disparities have manifested in the form of violent struggles (African Development Bank, 2011).

While such tussles against the perceived injustices of the government by the various groupings have resulted in widespread infrastructural damage and innumerable human casualties since the post-independence era, the most prevalent casualty at the federal level has been the Nigerian state polity. Some of the various crises which have threatened the Nigerian state since independence are: i) the series of military *coups d'états* of 1966, 1975, 1983 and 1985; ii) the Biafra Secessionist battle of 1967-1970; iii) the Twelve Day Revolution of February 1966; iv) the Niger Delta crisis, which took a violent turn in the early 1990s and has since induced a spate of recurrent violence of militant the Delta's militant groups; v) the more violent threats from the *Boko Haram* terrorist group in recent times; vi) a succession of elections which have been marred by violence and irregularities. All of these tumultuous events, among several others, have posed a grave threat to the national fabric, the stability, the overall functionality, and the foundation of the Nigerian state.

In light of the mounting threats from the *Boko Haram* group, and the unrelenting menace of the Niger Delta's militant groups, the authors' intent in this article is to analyse the implications of the crises on the Nigerian state and leadership, the West African region, and the continent at large. The authors' perspective in this regard is focused on the allusion of the consequences, if the Nigerian state was to disintegrate as a result of the debacles. The case studies that will be analyzed in this article include the Biafra Secession of 1967, the Niger Delta Crisis, from the perspective of the failures of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme of 2009 and the implications of its collapse for the state, as well as the mounting threat of the *Boko Haram* group in light of the spate of daunting terrorist attacks carried out in various localities since 2010.

1. THE REALIST APPROACH

As a theoretical framework for analysis of our current problematic, one is inclined towards the realist approach, not only for its innate dynamism and empiricism, but also for the comprehensive and enduring nature of its postulations, deriving as it does, from man's innate desire to amass power and use it for the acquisition of fundamental values which he considers indispensable for his peace and happiness. Here power is seen as the most fundamental value, in the wake of which other values are bound to follow. The *Boko Haram* insurgency which is fast degenerating into an all out war between the Al Qaeda backed terrorist network and the Nigerian State is seen in this context.

The realist approach, as an outstanding contribution to the theoretical approaches to international politics, made its appearance in 1948 after the second world war, in Professor Hans J. Morgenthau's "*Politics among nations*". According to Morgenthau, international politics is a struggle for power. "States are impelled by the urge

to amass, protect and manipulate power: Power is the single “national interest” of everyone. He argued that, this clue to the behaviour of States would unlock the riddles of international politics and provide the scholar with the insight to understand the process and to give useful advice to the policy maker. (Lerche & Said, 1979, p.4)

But power has been defined as; “the ability of an actor on the international stage to use tangible and intangible resources and assets in such a way as to influence the outcomes of international events to its own satisfaction. (Rosen & Jones, 1980, p.203)

Power is thus seen as a means to an end, and an instrument for achieving objectives. Power is thus meaningful only within the context of its ability to create values in being able to bring about the attainment of set objectives. But since in the international system, power is relative, each state works assiduously and with all means at its disposal to establish and increase its power in relation to that of other states. This inclination among states necessarily generates a spirit of competition for power, developing into rivalry and fuelled by fear and suspicion, with its imperatives of a feeling of insecurity, precipitates or exacerbates conflict and an over-heating of the international system.

It is however pertinent to point out here that the concept of power does not necessarily involve the use of force. In certain circumstances the use of force may even be antithetical to the exercise of power, which rests in the ability to exert an influence to induce obedience or cooperation. Power is therefore not forced, and the ability to exert power is not limited to forceful situations (Rosen & Jones, 1980, p.204). This fact notwithstanding it is important to note that power is not separable from the force. Indeed force is the *extreme use* of power. According to Rosen and Jones (1980), force should be thought of as residing at the extreme end of a continuum of choice available to a nation when its agents want to manipulate the outcome of events.

But since the struggle for power among groups in Nigeria not only heightened tension, overheated the system and created circumstances of frustration and restless urge for power and control, the prevalence of insurrection and terrorism as well as the almost complete helplessness in trying to stop it, cannot be fully explained by the struggle for power alone. Hence the necessity for a complementary theoretical framework to be applied to our understanding of the causes of conflict and political violence in Nigeria: the Frustration – Aggression theory.

2. THE FRUSTRATION—AGGRESSION THEORY

The basis of the frustration – aggression theory is found in the works of John Dollard (a psychologist) and his associates in their pioneering work on the subject and in later research work carried out by Leonard Berkowitz (Dollard et al., 1937).

Political Scientists who have employed this approach as a general basis for the explanation of political violence are, among others: James C. Davious, Ted Gurr, Ivo and Rosalind Feierabend and Douglas Bwy (Midlarsky, 1975, p.29).

This theory presents the idea of relative deprivation as a perceived disparity between value expectations and value capabilities. Or the lack of a need satisfaction defined as a gap between aspirations and achievement (Midlarsky, 1975). Simply put; when there is a gap between the level of value expectation, and the level of value attainment, due to lack of capability to establish a congruence between both levels, tension builds up due to the pressure of an unfulfilled aspiration or an unsatisfied urge or need. This, when not arrested in time leads to frustration. Frustration when it builds up leads to the rising up of suppressed emotions of anger which is often directed against the party considered to be the source of deprivation of satisfaction. This strong emotion finally finds an outlet through aggressive and invariably violent disposition towards the environment. That frustration invariably leads to aggression is already amply demonstrated in the Middle East by Palestinians, in the Persian Gulf by Iraq, in apartheid South Africa by the ANC and other liberation movements, and in Northern Ireland by the IRA, among so many others.

One is not unmindful here of the problems and limitations of the frustration – aggression thesis, such as the fact that an aggressive response to frustration may be dependent upon the individual’s level of tolerance. Or the fact that frustration, need not lead to aggression or that aggression need not always be negative and violent, but could also be positive and constructive. However, it is an established fact that frustration does produce a temporary increase in motivation, and thus lead to more vigorous responding. (Bandura & Walters, 1963, p.135). And this is perceived to be of sufficient generality to provide a basis for the explanation of virtually all forms of aggressive behaviour including political violence, which is of course a most apposite description of not only the Biafran debacle but also of the Niger Delta conflict.

It has been argued elsewhere that there is a certain inevitability about the association between such deprivation and strife; or that the basic relationship, is as fundamental to understanding civil strife as the law of gravity is to atmospheric physics (Gurr in Midlarsky, p.310). Although this may well be an exaggeration, it nevertheless underscores the relevance of this thesis to specific conflict scenarios in Nigeria. It is thus a valuable complement to the realist theory of power, as our framework for analysis of the problem of war and internecine conflict in the beleaguered nation.

2.1 The Biafra Secession of 1967

The Biafra Secession of 1967, which has also been termed the Nigerian Civil war, reflected the violent manifestation of deep-seated tensions between the various

ethno-religious and regional groups of the country. The amalgamation of various ethnic groups into a single Nigerian entity by British colonialists led to the implosion of the nation in the immediate post-independence era. The combustive events which took place within the early years of the post-colonial period were, largely, the result of marked incompatibilities between the leading Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani ethnic groups, each with a distinct religious and socio-economic culture, in addition to variance in the regional location of each unit. Following independence in 1960, the severe cacophony between the three major ethnic groups which had been festering prior to the departure of the British administration culminated in the fervent clamber for state power of each ethno-regional unit. (Udofia, 1981) The ethno-regional and religious divide characterized by differences in leadership styles and socio-economic culture between the Hausa/Fulani of the North, the Igbo of the south-east, and the Yoruba in the south-western areas of the country led to the outbreak of violent inter-ethnic and inter-regional hostilities.

In the decades leading up to the Nigerian Independence of 1960, the Igbo and Yoruba groups had become the spearheads for the nationalist struggle against colonialism, with each *ethnic group* holding a vision of how the post-colonial state would be organized. While both the Igbo and Yoruba groups envisioned a federal state system for the post-colonial Nigerian polity, the Northerners, mainly comprised of the Hausa/Fulani group, chose to adhere to their traditional Islamist outlook and resist the development of a system of governance which would give primacy to western rule dominated by the southern ethnic groups. Notwithstanding the divergence between the northerners and the groups from the south of the country regarding the post-colonial order in Nigeria, post-independence Nigeria became a state comprised of three main regions, with Governor-General Nnamdi Azikiwe as the first leader of the new state by 1960.

While there were a series of events which revealed the acute level of ethno-regional divergence during the maiden tenure of Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe, the real challenge to the post-colonial state became apparent in the post-electoral period. Following the general elections of 1964, the ethnological and regionally-based discordance came to the fore in the form of sectarian violence, indiscriminate and predominant attacks against the Igbo populations of the south-eastern regions of the country. (Mustapha, 1986) The low-level violence erupted as a corollary of irregularities in the elections, and the refusal of the Igbo leader Dr Azikiwe to proceed with governmental appointments amid the electoral fracas. Following a series of increasingly flawed Western region elections in 1965, the antipathy from across the country induced anti-governmental sentiment, eventually leading to the overthrow of the Azikiwe administration, culminating in the *coup d'états* of 1966 (Mustapha, 1986).

Although the leaders of the coup, including then army officer Major Kaduna Nzeogwu and Major General

Aguiyi Ironsi (both Igbo from the East) may have had well-founded intentions relating to steering Nigeria onto a path of improved political and socio-economic governance, the blaze of ethno-regional indignation which stemmed from the murder of Northern leaders during the state seizure led to the onset of low-level violence between Nigeria's Eastern and Northern ethnic groups. During the coup of 1966 which culminated in the state leadership of Major General Ironsi, numerous prominent members of the erstwhile Azikiwe administration and the armed forces were murdered, many of whom were of Hausa/Fulani (northern) descent. The corollary of the apparent targeting of Hausa/Fulani military officers and political officials during the execution of the coup that brought Ironsi to power led to growing suspicions amongst the northerners that the new incumbents of the Nigerian state had ethnologically inspired intentions to bolster the predominance of the Igbo group in Nigerian politics at the expense of the Hausa/Fulani group and their respective region. (Shelton, 2005) Among the prominent northerners who were killed during the coup were the then Prime Minister, Tafawa Balewa, as well as Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sarduna of Sokoto – a state in the north-western region of the country (Agbese, 1990).

The hostilities relating to the execution of Northerners during the initial coup of 1966 led to a counter-coup, which was launched by a Hausa/Fulani military leader, Lieutenant Colonel Murtala Mohammed. This particular coup eventually led to the ousting of Igbo political domination, and the installation of a Northern oriented government under Lieutenant Colonel Yakubu Gowon in July 1966 (Agbese, 1990). Following the Northern revolution in Nigerian politics, an ethno-regional retaliation followed in the form of the widespread massacre of the Igbo populations by enraged Northerners (Murray, 2007). Resultantly, from September of 1966 until the early months of 1967, the massacre of the Igbo people by Northerners spread throughout much of Nigeria, with casualties increasingly including innocent civilians (Udofia, 1981). As a rejoinder to the calamitous extermination of Igbo victims, the governor of the Igbo dominated south-eastern region, Lieutenant Colonel Odumegwu Ojukwu, declared the enclave an independent nation.

In effect, the execution of Northerners during the initial *coup d'état* of 1966 engendered a manner of violent and, fervently, reactive hostility which eventually fanned the embers of secession among the Igbo groups of the East (Mustapha, 1986). On the 30th of May 1967, the Republic of Biafra was announced, with aggressive reactions from the Hausa/Fulani-dominated central military leadership (Mustapha, 1986) Consequently, the ethno-regional strife which culminated in the declaration of Biafra independence resulted in a civil war and a brutal secessionist battle which extended to 1970.

2.2 The Implications of the Biafra Secessionist Battle on the Nigerian State

The secessionist conflict informed by the creation of

Biafra represented the culmination of inter-regional and inter-ethnic discordance in the Nigerian national climate. The immediate corollary of the conflict, in addition to the mass murder of Igbo easterners and their predominantly Hausa/Fulani opponents in the North, was the ethnic and tri-regional cleavage of the Nigerian society. To the extent that the post-colonial polity was already battling with governing the trio of largely distinct ethnic groups effectively since the departure of the British colonialists in the 1960, the combustive inter-group tensions exemplified in the Biafra secession revealed the fragility of the Nigerian state system, and the undermined ability of the state to preside over a multifaceted nation. The claims of ethnic preference within a single multicultural and pluralistic nation as evidenced in the series of coups in 1966 and the attendant secessionist battle exposed deep-seated contradictions in Nigerian society.

The extent of the atrocities against the eastern Igbo nationals, and the extreme state of anarchy provoked by the 30 month war between the state security forces and the people of the said Biafra territory not only had dire humanitarian implications, but it equally altered the dynamics of political leadership in Nigeria as a whole. By the end of the war, the secessionist fervour of the Igbo population had become muted. Following the official surrender by Biafra's chief of army staff, Major General Phillip Effiong on 12 January 1970 as a result of his declaration that the people of the Biafra region consent to the "authority of the Federal Military Government," while equally accepting the "existing administrative and political structure of the federation of Nigeria," the Igbo people once again became a governable component of the Nigerian federation (Oko, 1988).

Due to the high rate of infrastructural destruction, the humanitarian damage in the form of mass deaths, widespread starvation and internal displacement within the eastern Igbo dominated region, the primary aim of the federal government, following the conflict, was the reconstruction of ruined properties, and the restoration of socio-economic order for the embattled peoples. Shortly following the end of hostilities in 1970, the General Yakubu Gowon administration instituted the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme, an initiative which was intended to engage in the appeasement of hostilities between Nigeria's ethnic groups, the restoration of infrastructure and homes that were destroyed in combat, as well as the relocation of internally displaced peoples and the rectification of the socio-economic challenges of poverty, disease and malnutrition amongst the victims. (Thomas, 2010) However, within the trajectory of inter-ethnic politics and deficient state rule as evidenced since independence in 1960, the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme became a blight of unfulfilled promises, a void in state legitimacy and public financial administration on the part of successive Nigerian governments.

The ensuing years following the end of the Biafra war, and the resultant *Reconciliation, Reconstruction*

and *Rehabilitation* programme witnessed a significant reorientation in the leadership and administration of the Igbo peoples by the Nigerian government. While the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme was lauded for its magnanimous intent aimed at redressing the agitation of the Biafra secessionist battle, the Gowon administration's lacklustre implementation of the scheme stimulated a well-founded sentiment of wariness and a lack of trust in the government's ability to deliver on its promises. The Igbo people were left desolate following the war, and they were left to their own devices on the socio-economic and political level. In addition to being denied access to basic infrastructural and social amenities within their region, the Igbo people became equally relegated from Nigerian politics, with members of the ethnic group being discriminated against in the state and in official political posts (Akale, 2009). In analyzing the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme, a member of the Biafran diaspora who fled Nigeria during the war asserted that the key flaw of Gowon's initiative is that it excluded the vital component 'restitution' (Simola, 2000). In this manner, the government neglected to compensate the Igbo people for the pogroms, and the misdeeds perpetrated against innocent civilians before and during the Biafra War (Simola, 2000).

Throughout the post-war era, the Igbo people came to be significantly marginalized from mainstream Nigerian society, becoming the victims of a widespread secessionist-inspired stigma; a trend which drastically undermined the principles of the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme (Simola, 2000) In attempts to articulate the dynamics of the systematic marginalization of the Igbo people in the post-Biafra War, some scholars have alluded to a sense of Igbo phobia which has since prevailed across the Nigerian society and, particularly, within the ruling class (Orji, 2001). The disquiet of the Igbo people stemming from the tame implementation of the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme was succinctly echoed in the sentiment of Nigerian academic, Femi Ajayi when he states that:

The Igbos, Isokos, Okrikas, everyone is crying marginalization, from Port Harcourt through Sokoto to Maiduguri. I am being marginalized because of my name, my religion, my height, my size, my voice, my education...If Nigerians are not exposed to the truth, about the atrocities of the past years of misrule, how can we reconcile Nigerians and relate among ourselves as brothers and sisters...If we do not hear from those that polarized Nigerians, how do we want to have [the] true federalism that we are all yearning for? (Quoted in Orji, 2001)

Within the context of the Nigerian polity, the systematic marginalization of the Igbo peoples played a key role in the long-term polarization of Nigerian mainstream society and politics. The failure of the *Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation* programme was a harbinger of the extreme bifurcation of public administration and governance of Nigerian society

along ethno-regional lines. The governance of Nigeria as a modern state has been reduced to the primordial inclinations, and ethnocentric allegiances, which manifest at the expense of a unified socio-economic and political national unit. The exclusionary principles of Nigeria's state politics following the Biafra War have been serially confounded by the recurrence and prevalence of state corruption throughout successive regimes which have, by and large, shown little regard for the politically and socio-economically disenfranchised Igbo populations. Over successive military regimes, until the comprehensive constitutional reorientation upon the democratic revolution of 1999, the exclusionary political principles which became entrenched in the wake of the Biafra war became the order of the day in a coercive state which has since been characterized by a coercive form of ethnic hegemony (Obiano, 2007).

2.3 The Niger Delta Amnesty Programme of 2009

Among several monumental events which have occurred in Nigeria that have, consequently, influenced the dynamics of state leadership and national governance, the Niger Delta crisis stands as one of the most predominant in altering the landscape of the national polity since Nigeria's independence in 1960, following the discovery of oil in the former Delta state of Oloibiri (now Bayelsa). Following the commencement of the production of commercial quantities, mainly operated by foreign oil companies, the environmental and socio-economic landscapes of the Niger Delta have transformed in manner which has had negative enduring consequences for the inhabitants of the region (Ojatorotu, 2008). Although the Nigerian state has acquired a majority of its export revenue from the oil industry, the oil-bearing communities of the Niger Delta have been significantly beleaguered with a resource curse of underdevelopment, poor infrastructure, a lack of jobs and employment opportunities, and the destruction of pastoral and aquatic farming livelihoods which had historically sustained the region. (Oyeshola, 1975) Notwithstanding the plight of the oil-bearing communities, and the grave injustices they have historically faced at the hands of foreign oil companies, the Nigerian government has equally played a pivotal role in the socio-economic suppression of the people of the Niger Delta. By and large, the disquiet of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta has gone unheard, leaving oil-bearing communities only to the utilization of extreme measures with no objective redressing of the discrimination they have faced from the state.

As a result of the destruction caused by commercial oil production, coupled with the largely negligent policies of the government, the inhabitants of the Niger Delta have taken up arms in the form of structured, ethnically-originated militia groups which directly challenge the government for their disenfranchised position. Since the post independence era, several groups including

the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Pan-Niger Delta Resistance Movement (CHIKOKO), the Environmental Rights Action, the Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), as well as the Movement for Reparation to Ogbia (MORETO), among several others, have blossomed from the Niger Delta in efforts to reclaim the human rights and dignity of the Niger Delta region, to restore the desired socio-economic liberties to the inhabitants and the political balance of power to the region (Hanson, 2007). Following the protracted violent onslaught against state security forces as well as the establishments and personnel of foreign oil companies' operating in the Delta region by the various militias, the oil-producing region has been characterised by incessant instability and recurrent hostility with the federal government. Consequently, in efforts to placate the unrest within the region, the government has recurrently made use of compensative measures to the belligerents for the purpose of restoring normalcy across the region.

One of such initiatives as launched by the state was the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme of 2009. The Amnesty Programme was launched by erstwhile Nigerian president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, in efforts to appease the belligerence of the militants from the Niger Delta, while offering the armed groups and the Delta society at large, compensation for the losses they have experienced as a result of commercial oil production. The Amnesty Programme was premised on offering the armed militias a 60 day grace periods within which they were required to hand in their munitions to the state, in return for financial recompense and reintegration into their immediate community. Essentially, this initiative was based on the *disarmament, demobilization and reintegration* (DDR) framework, which stands for a time-honoured conflict management and peace-building solution (Nwagbara, 2011). The scope of the Amnesty Programme was succinctly expressed in the brief of the initiative on the official programme website:

The offer for amnesty is predicated on the willingness and readiness of the militants to give up all illegal arms in their possession, completely renounce militancy in all its ramifications unconditionally, and depose to an undertaking to this effect. (Niger Delta Amnesty Programme, 2009)

Notwithstanding the praiseworthy intentions of the Niger Delta Amnesty Program in resolving the age-old Niger Delta crisis, the plan has fallen short of its tremendous expectations. Following the disarmament of several militias from the region, the disbursement of financial compensation to the neutralized combatants was widely reported to have been delayed, while some groups did not receive payments as entailed in the agreement (Sango, 2009). While a large proportion of the Niger Delta militias were seemingly forthcoming in adhering to the *disarmament* and *demobilization* components of the Programme until groups such as the MEND reneged on the

process, the government's delivery of its compensation as part of the *rehabilitation* component was equally lack-lustre. Although the Yar'Adua administration was forthcoming in liaising with the leaders of the MEND for the purpose of considering the core concerns of the group first-hand, the general lack of trust between the stakeholders saw the collapse of the dialogue, and the eventual relapse into armed violence. (Omadjohwoefe, 2011) As a rejoinder to the buckled dialogue between the MEND and the government, the leader of the militant group asserted that "I believe that all that you witnessed was a sham...fighting will resume soon." (Baldauff, 2010) The sentiment expressed by David Okah bore resonance with the trend of militancy in the Niger Delta and the general level of dissatisfaction with the government's approach to the proposed Amnesty agreement. The resurgence of conflict in early 2010 signalled the resumption of violence and agitation throughout the Niger Delta region, and the eventual breakdown in the objectives of the Amnesty Programme.

2.4 The Implications of the Botched Niger Delta Amnesty Programme on Leadership in Nigeria

The failures of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme can be traced to the historical ineptitude of the Nigerian government in addressing the core interests of its various regional and ethnographic groupings. Upon the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta, the newly independent Nigerian state devoted a considerable level of administrative commitment to the commercial production of oil for the export market, at the expense of the livelihoods and overall well-being of the oil-bearing communities. The bifurcation of Nigeria's ethnic groups and the respective geographic regions which became more pronounced following the Biafra War of 1967, led to the increased political neglect of the ethnic groups of the Niger Delta, with the government giving more primacy to bolstering the commercial value of the region to the state. In the long-term, the corollary of the negligent leadership on the part of the Nigerian state has been the dire destruction of natural environments in the Niger Delta region including farm lands, wetlands and aquatic resources from which the inhabitants historically derived their livelihood. Moreover, the enclave nature of the oil production industry has implied that a majority of the inhabitants of the Niger Delta have not been included at the employment level, leaving them to the limited options for generating income from the ram shackled economic conditions in the region. Accordingly, the militancy which has become characteristic of the Niger Delta milieu was a response from disgruntled inhabitants who had the aim of contesting the government's neglectful approach to their plight.

Within this historical perspective, the collapse of the Niger Delta Amnesty Programme of 2009 is rooted in the leadership failures of the Yar'Adua administration and the successive Jonathan government which has since taken the reins of the initiative. Although the Yar'Adua administration had shown proactive signs of commitment

to the plight of the people of the Niger Delta, the resultant reproach of the Programme from a significant proportion of militias and inhabitants alike revealed the high level of distrust in Nigeria's federal leadership. Critical to this lack of trust in the administrative objectives and practice of the Nigerian state was the contention that the government's approach to the Niger Delta crisis has not devoted enough attention to the root causes of the conflict. On the basis of this outlook, the state is significantly undermined in its ability to develop and deploy conflict resolution measures which have a lasting impact on the age-old tensions in the Niger Delta (Sango, 2009).

The inability of the state to tackle the quandary of the Niger Delta at the level of the root causes of the conflict has been echoed by *Jomo Gbomo*, the spokesperson of the MEND when he said that "we have no faith in the amnesty programme. Our position remains the same. We do not identify with an amnesty that does not give room for dialogue and fails to address the root causes that give birth to the struggle (Olukoya, 2010). Essentially, notwithstanding the federal government's commitment to delivering financial compensation to the demilitarized combatants, in addition to providing rehabilitation for their reintegration into mainstream Delta society, it is more imperative for the state to revert its efforts to the root causes of the current predicament, rather than devoting attention to the symptomatic elements of the protracted crises. Ultimately, the outcome of the Amnesty Programme is a fitting reflection of the magnitude of the protracted Niger Delta crisis. In a similar manner to other crises which have plagued the Nigerian society and state, the prolongation of the Niger Delta melee is an illustration of the ineptitude of successive federal governments in tackling the regionally based and ethnocentrically inspired quandaries which successive political leaderships have sought to grapple with, since independence. Thus, based on the succession of national calamities since independence, the willpower of the leadership has been intermittently undermined by the narrow ethno-political principles that have, consequently, led to the loss of faith in the state structure and the federal system on the part of the Nigerian citizenry. In recent times, ethno-religious and regional discordance has come to the fore in the form of terrorist attacks on national infrastructure and innocent civilians.

2.5 The Unremitting Threat of Boko Haram Terrorism in the 21st Century

While the crevices in the Nigerian polity and in the nature of the leadership began to appear in the post-independence era following the transition from the colonial administration, the vestiges of misrule and misgovernance have continued to plague the state and society at large. The antiquated ethnological, region-centric and creed-inspired leadership principles which were prevalent in the post-independence era have continued to trump the values, interests and traditions of a limited range of ethnic groups,

at the expense of those on the peripheries of political headship. To this extent, the range of crises which have affected the Nigerian state since independence, (most of which have had an ethnological, religious and region-centric inclinations), has continued apace well into the 21st Century. Among such crises in recent times include the spate of terrorist attacks as perpetrated by the *Boko Haram* group of the Northern areas of Nigeria.

The *Boko Haram* group is an extremist Islamist group which was formed in 2002 by fundamentalist Muslim cleric Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf, a Hausa/Fulani from the North of Nigeria, based in Kanamma, Yobe State. *Boko Haram*, which loosely translates to 'western education is evil,' is an organisation which is premised on the imposition of Sharia Islamic law in the north of Nigeria where the Hausa Fulani is the dominant ethnic group (Chothia, 2011). *Boko Haram* is the mainstream pseudonym for the organisation originally known as the *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which translates to 'People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad'. It was formed on the contention that Western education, democratic rule and secularism are largely corruptive to Nigerian society (Chothia, 2011). Accordingly, *Boko Haram* stands diametrically opposed to the Nigerian polity and has, since its inception, engaged in numerous violent attacks on key hallmarks of Western democracy as well as the establishments of Nigerian security forces. *Boko Haram's* stern opposition to democracy was encapsulated in a statement made by former group leader Mohammed Yusuf in an interview, in which he declared that "*democracy and [the] current system of education must be changed, otherwise this war that is yet to start would continue for long*" (Al Jazeera, 2009).

Although the group was originally formed in 2002, the spate of terrorist attacks committed by *Boko Haram* only came to the fore in 2009. In July of 2009, the extremist militants carried out a series of attacks across three states in the North of Nigeria, namely: Yobe, Kano and Borno. The series of attacks resulted in the death of approximately 700 civilians in the course of a brutal operation which lasted for a period of 5 days, from the 25 to 30 July (Al Jazeera, 2009). The attacks involved the torching of a police station in the Potiskum town of the Yobe State, in addition to the Maiduguri police quarters in the Borno State. In a succession of violent onslaughts, the *Boko Haram* militants proceeded to raze an additional police station, a local church as well as a government customs building in the Gamboru-Ngala town in Borno State (Chothia, 2011). The cycle of violent strikes by the *Boko Haram* group culminated in the apprehending and eventual execution of the erstwhile leader Mohammed Yusuf, in addition to the arrest of several other lower-ranking members of the group (Adesoji, 2010).

While the demise of the radical terrorist leader dealt

a severe blow to the operations of *Boko Haram*, the group has since reordered its undertakings, and it has continued to engage in violent attacks against civilians and significant establishments of the Nigerian state and society. Among the various acts of terrorist violence which the group has perpetrated since the death of Mohammed Yusuf are an attack on civilians in the metropolis area of Maiduguri on 1 January 2010; a pre-election attack on a police station on April 1 2010 in Bauchi; the bomb blasting of an election polling centre on 9 April 2010 in Maiduguri; the murder of several Muslim clerics, coupled with attacks on police officers in Maiduguri on 20 April 2010; a bomb attack on police headquarters in Abuja on 17 June 2011 as well as the more recent suicide bomb-blast on 26 August 2011, amongst a number of other attacks (Abdullahi, 2011). But perhaps the most significant and most devastating blows against the state, were the April 14, 2014 Yanya bombing that claimed 75 lives, injuring 60 others in the federal capital territory of Abuja, and the abduction the following day of over 200 girls at Chibok in Borno State of Nigeria. This not only precipitated global outrage and stern warnings to the Sect by the UN, but also brought US Special forces into Nigerian soil for military operations for the first time on May 6, 2014. On the 5th day of May 2014, three hundred unsuspecting civilians had been murdered in their homes and eleven more girls abducted in Gamboru Ngala, a border town with Cameroun. The American Special forces were to assist in locating and rescuing the abducted maidens.

2.6 The implications of Boko Haram Attacks on the Nigerian State Polity

This spate of *Boko Haram* attacks which came to the fore in 2009 represented the continuation of fervent attempts by the fundamentalist Islamist group to altering the ethno-religious and political dynamics of Nigerian society and polity from a secular to a theocratic order. While similar ethno-religious uprisings have previously been suppressed, including the Maitatsine clashes of 1980 in Kano state, the 1982 attacks in Kaduna and Bulumkutu as well as the violent onslaughts in 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi respectively, collectively, the series of ethno-religious attacks against the Nigerian state represent the widespread disquiet across society, based on largely exclusionary and ethnocentric leadership principles of successive governments. To this extent, the root cause of previous attempts to destabilize and, eventually, transform the Nigerian state stem from prevalent inter-group dissatisfaction with the socio-economic and political marginalization of different ethno-religious and regional groups at the expense of the ruling elite, which has oftentimes been organized around a single *ethnie*. In the same breath, the formation and eventual uprising of *Boko Haram*, beginning in 2009, is a reflection of decades of disenfranchisement, and displeasure with the leadership and administration of the Nigerian state and society.

Prominent Nigerian scholar and *Boko Haram* researcher has reiterated this contention, in stating that:

Boko Haram is essentially the fallout of frustration with corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment...The young generation see how [the nation's resources] are squandered by a small bunch of self-serving elite which breeds animosity and frustration, and such anger is ultimately translated into violent outbursts. (Mohammed, 2011)

Consequently, the reactive violence of the *Boko Haram* group has come to present a dire threat to the stability and overall functioning of the Nigeria state. Although numerous members of the group have often been apprehended following the series of onslaughts since 2009, the threat of Boko Haram has not subsided, and it continues fervently despite the barrage of sturdy reproach from the state and national security agencies. Moreover, since the arrest and execution of former leader Yusuf Mohammed in 2009, the group has reoriented its strategy and adopted a more underground organisational structure, relying on clandestine approaches and unfamiliar leadership formations in order to continue overriding the security measures of the Nigerian state (Mohammed, 2011). The resultant difficulty in managing a group which has assumed the elaborate organisational tactics of larger terrorist entities presents an almost daunting challenge for the Nigerian government, which already reveals its security and intelligence deficiencies in its inability to infiltrate the group and effectively intercept its activities (Adesoji, 2010). While the weaknesses of the Nigerian state in terms of delivering necessary socio-economic amenities to its population has long engendered mistrust and widespread discontent which has resulted in the emergent extremist resistance groups such as the *Boko Haram*, the attack on government institutions, security force personnel and innocent institutions manifests as a peril to the governability of Nigerian society.

3. CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES

Boldly emblazoned in Nigeria's Coat of arms are the words; Unity and Faith Peace and Progress. This no doubt encapsulates the hopes and aspirations of the founding fathers of this potentially great country wracked by the very same phenomena that constitutes the negation of these aspirations of the founding nationalists who worked assiduously for its emergence as a mighty player in the comity of nations. Finding itself in a state of anomie that has lasted for all of five decades, Nigeria faces the threat of disintegration and a collapse into its constituent primordial units.

Perhaps one of the most pungent pointers to this threat is the fact of the low key 2011 independence anniversary celebrations during which President Jonathan and other celebrants were for the first time restricted to the very precincts of Aso rock Villa, ostensibly because of the need for prudence, obviously on account of the threats from

not only the *Boko Haram* but also from the *MEND*, that has warned citizens to stay away from the Eagle Square during the period of the celebrations. *MEND* had in the 2010 independence celebrations embarrassed the Federal Government by planting explosives close to the Eagle Square in Abuja where the Country's 50th independence anniversary celebrations were being held.

The avoidance of the Eagle Square in this year's celebrations by the Government was perhaps simply a matter of prudence in the face of adverse security reports. The latest criminal gang on the national scene however is probably not the *MEND*, but the *Boko Haram*. This extremist Islamic sect with links to the Al Qaeda terrorist network and based in Maiduguri is demanding among other things, the imposition on Northern parts of the Country, of the Islamic Legal system. It has, in the last two or more years maintained bloody visibility through cold blooded murder of innocent people and members of the Police force using guns and bombs (Onabanjo, 2011).

On the 1st of October 2011 while the independence-day celebrations were on, the group had gunned down three innocent people in Borno State. Besides Boko Haram and the *MEND*, the Country is also facing the challenge of ethno-religious crisis in Plateau State in the middle belt region of the country.

Hundreds of lives have been lost in the Plateau pogrom, apparently sparked off by ethnic and religious intolerance. The raging crises in Plateau, Borno and Kaduna States have in the mean time led to the displacement of over one million residents. (Lawal & Garba, 2011). This is really not the total figure of internally displaced persons due to the crisis, but of only those being resettled in Bauchi State alone. Most of the persons who ran to Bauchi from Kaduna for safety are victims of the political crisis that erupted after the April 2011 Presidential elections. According to the Director-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Alhaji Mohammed Sani Sidi, over one million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been resettled in various locations in Bauchi State. (Lawal & Garba, 2011) Within a supposedly united Nigeria, parties to the conflict in Plateau State are insisting that they can no longer live together, reinforcing fears that the Country's fragile unity may collapse at short notice.

The North Central zone of the Country is not alone in the prevailing sentiments of dismembering the Country. There are States in other parts of the Country where citizens relate with one another with utmost mutual suspicion and sometimes hatred resulting in orgies of violence. For over a decade the Country has been buffeted by ethno-religious crisis compounded by Government's inability to address the issue of poor leadership, bad governance, corruption, unemployment, rigged elections, economic and socio-political marginalisation as well as a politics of exclusion, and prebendalism in zero sum perspectives.

According to Onabanjo (2011):

Indeed over the years, Nigeria as a united country has been bruised and brutalised, leading to destruction of lives and property. The prevailing high level of modern weapons of warfare like bombs and explosives has brought a new dimension into protests over disagreements among stakeholders in the Nigerian project.

Onabanjo further stated that in virtually all the instances, Nigeria's Unity ship has been strongly rocked as people were forced to leave crisis areas and return "home" to their kith and kin, to prevent avoidable deaths. There has also been trenchant calls for a restructuring of the Nigerian union through dialogue, referendum and sovereign national conference. Attempts to implement some of these in the past had met a brick wall as the government of the day, whether military or civilian paid only half hearted commitment to the idea, as they specified areas that could not be discussed or negotiated, such as; Federalism, Presidentialism, Secularism and Federal character. Some nationalities are now openly campaigning for self determination. The Ijaw National Congress (INC) and the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), for example have maintained at different times their commitment to self determination in the absence of equity and social justice in the Nigerian Federation. Nor is their position different from that of the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC) which was established to fight for Yoruba self determination.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 Presidential elections by the Babangida Administration had led some leaders from the South-West zone to call for outright separation from the federal republic or in the alternative a restructuring of the Nigerian State. Recently the national chairman of a major political party in Nigeria, the ACN, Chief Bisi Akande, had warned that; "there will be no Nigeria But by the grace of God, there will be the Yoruba nation." He further stated that, failure to restructure in order to give the Yoruba nation the autonomy to run itself will see Nigeria break up on its own without any further need for secession by any group (Onabanjo, 2011). Nor is Chief Akande alone in this prediction.

As far back as the year 2000, United States security report had predicted Nigeria's demise as a single political entity by 2015 (Akande in Onabanjo, 2011). John Campbell, former US ambassador to Nigeria, in his book "Dancing on the Brink", also warned that if care is not taken, Nigeria might fail as a united Country (Onabanjo, 2011). Campbell blamed Nigeria's situation on a set of dysfunctions: a weak government and rigged elections, a ruling elite who view the state as a dispensary for petro-profits, endemic corruption, bloody sectarian violence between radical Moslems and Christians as well as the curse of Oil wealth which encourages Nigerians to ignore industrial development and agriculture.

Whether or not these predictions will come to pass remains to be seen, but at the moment, with the on-going recurrence of endemic social threats like armed robberies, kidnappings, political assassinations, rape and unresolved

murders, creating and fuelling the existing state of anomie within the republic, there does not seem to be much hope for Unity and Faith, let alone Peace and Progress.

CONCLUSION

Since the prospects for fragmentation of the Nigerian State is no longer inconceivable in the face of the numerous and daunting security challenges, it may be pertinent in concluding this paper, to take a cursory look at the likely implications of a disintegration of the Nigerian State into its constituent primordial units. It is obvious that a division along the lines of three regions of North, East and West will hardly solve the problem of ethnic rivalry, of tribalism and of corruption. The existing animosities among ethnic nationalities in the Niger Delta, Kogi, Benue and plateau States where groups that have engaged one another over differences which include among other things Political dominance and Socio-economic marginalisation will certainly not disappear. It might even become exacerbated through an all-out struggle for control of oil fields. It might even result in ethnic cleansing operations similar to Rwanda or Yugoslavia.

Within each of the larger ethnic groups themselves, the contradictions run very deep, as there are further fragmentations among the Ibos, among the Yorubas and even among the Northern Muslims. Many minorities in the West detest the Yorubas. An attempt by the landlocked Ibos to gain access to the sea is bound to bring them into conflict with the Eastern minorities down South. This is why Lekan Oguntinyinbo, argued that disintegration of the Nigerian State would be unwise and would only lead the country down a messy path of unprecedented factionalism. According to Oguntinyinbo;

My second biggest fear is the impact on West Africa. Nigeria is the economic and military rock of the region. The West, the UN and AU count on our political and military support to help ensure stability in neighbouring countries. The disintegration of this rock will spell doom for the region. My other fear is that disintegration will encourage misguided petty potentates around the continent of which there is no shortage (Onabanjo, 2011).

This position of Oguntinyinbo was supported by Gabriel Olusanya, former Director-General of the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) who argued that Nigerians had developed certain integrating mechanisms over time, across the board, such as inter-marriages, business relations and other common interests that cut across ethnic and religious boundaries. These could be built upon and emphasized to begin the process of reconciliation and nation building. Besides, the State must deal with Corruption, ethnicity, religious fundamentalism and security related crimes with a very firm hand, while doing more to re-structure the polity and enthrone free and fair elections. This may not be easy but the alternative is not only foreboding, it would be absolutely unacceptable.

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