VIOLENT CONFLICTS IN THE NORTH CENTRAL STATES OF NIGERIA AND THE IMPERATIVES OF PEACE-BUILDING IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Conflicts in Nigeria have not only assumed a violent dimension, they are a recurrent decimal; ceasefire, disarmament, peace accords, silent and open interventions failed to guarantee improvement in safety and peace. Some of the self-styled post conflict environments give way to tension and even more threats to live than periods preceding violent conflicts. Plausibly, most interventions are superficial and fail to depict the motives of groups and individuals implicated in violent situations, by which the real and perceived sources of threats remain cloaked. This study has also observed that there is a stereotypic reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts in conflict environments with superficial attention on the extent of injuries incurred by victims of crises. The study examines the prospects of enduring peace, security (including human) and development through refining and reposing the custodianship of peace-building in the people through suitable reconciliation and rehabilitation. This research relied on primary and secondary sources of data. Data gathered from the field work was processed using the qualitative methods. The Liberal Structuralist Theory was adopted as the plank upon which this problem is driven. An intervention practice in post conflict peace building like social engineering is recommended.

KEY WORDS: *Conflicts, Peace, Peace-Building*

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INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian society, especially the northern part has witnessed series of violent conflicts. These conflicts are not limited to northern Nigeria, however they are more endemic in the north; and they assume different dimensions. Most notable among the crises in the north are the Maitatsine uprisings in Kano and Kaduna in the early 1980s, especially the Kano metropolitan riot in October, 1982; the Yola crisis in 1984; the Bauchi crisis in 1985; the Ilorin riot in March, 1986; Kafanchan, Kaduna, Zaria and Funtua religious crises in March, 1987; the Kaduna Polytechnic riot in March, 1988; the Zangon-Kataf riot of May, 1992; the Jos crisis of April 1994 (Isichei, 1987; Enwerem, 1999) The latest and most violent conflict in Nigeria has been the Boko-Haram insurgency in the north east extending towards the north-west and north-central States of Nigeria, which purportedly began with the extra-judicial killing in 2009 of Muhammed Yusuf, the group leader. Amaraegbu (2013:66-70)

The north central states of Nigeria consisting of the states of Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau, as well as the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) have witnessed frequent violent conflicts in the form of herders-farmers conflicts with the attending devastation, though it does not preclude the existence of other forms of violence. (Aderinto & Achem, 2019) Herders-farmers conflict which is the mostly pronounced in the north central is an old time phenomenon. (Charwin, 1989 cited in Onuora & Nwaneri, 2018). The existence of herders-farmers conflict has also been given a theological origin in the Biblical accounts of Cain and Abel; Abraham and Lot; and Isaac and Gerar. (Onuora & Nwaneri, 2018:128) Herder/farmer conflict according to Blench, (2014) has existed since the beginnings of agriculture, due to increased herd sizes, increased overall population and the mounding pressure on arable land. Odoh & Chigozie, (2012) cited in Onuora & Nwaneri, (2018) have adduced the herders-farmers conflict to increasing desertification and drought, referred to as Eco-Violence. It is apparent that some of these crises also purportedly have their roots in Nigeria's multi-nationality and the attendant suspicion, fear and animosity. Others have their roots in the religious coloration given by participants and the actions or inaction, or the unsatisfactory response by government at the various levels. (Onuora & Nwaneri, 2018:130). They have resulted most frequently from indiscriminate grazing on farms crops, blockade of transhumance routes by farmers, rustling of herds and retaliatory attacks. In this regard, the violence seems not to have an end in sight given that land resources do not expand and that these factors seem not to be waning in influence.

In the southern region, the most notable dimension is economic interests, resulting in criminal activities such as kidnapping, robbery, pipeline vandalisation and piracy. Militancy in the Niger-Delta region was directed at the Nigerian government and oil exploration companies over ecological desecration tacitly towards achieving resource control. The agitation in the south can be traced to Isaac Boro's struggles as far back as 1966. (Boro, 1982; Asuni, 2009; International Crisis Group, 2009cited in Jooji, 2018:73) When the option of military action against militants in the Niger- Delta region seemed not to be yielding positive results because of the loss of wealth of human and mineral resources, it was resolved by the government of former President Musa Yar'Adua to grant amnesty to repentant militants. However, a similar programme initiated by subsequent administrations for repentant terrorists in the north is heavily criticised by Nigerians basically because the crisis asymmetric, still rife and the victims of the crises are yet to be compensated adequately.

There are two types of conflict of particular concern in African development, according to Blench, (2004) they are socio-political and natural resource conflict. Natural resource conflict is which characterised conflicts in central Nigeria is more dispersed, and expectedly, government always intervened through the deployment of police and military personnel to quell attacks and reprisal attacks. However, it is usually occurring in inaccessible places at odd times, and according to Blench, (2014) most cases are unreported. Efforts in post-conflict environments by government and intervention entities focused reconciliation, rehabilitation, rebuilding and attending to the real and perceived sources of threat in order to forestall a recurrence. Early warnings have served to provide opportunities for timely intervention, yet justice seems not to be done even where seemingly genuine reconciliation is carried out.

Most post-conflict atmosphere remain charged, therefore peace is known to have lasted for a reasonably short period before a recurrence. This study finds the phenomenal reemergence of conflicts despite intervention by government through the use of force and the post-conflict programmes of reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction as a problem, to the extent even the efforts of donor agencies and the laborious efforts of scholars could not provide a lasting

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solution. The results of these efforts - where they exist - are inconsistent with the quantum of resources involved and successes achieved are provisional.

CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS
Conflicts

Conflict can be seen as a natural part of human life, (Weeks, 1992 cited in Faleti, 2016)) however, violent conflict is an anomaly. The bloodbath that followed the conflicts sometimes takes a genocidal dimension. (Daily Trust, 2016). The conflict sometimes assumed the posture of terrorism which can be described as those violent acts intended to cause panic, commit mass murder and are perpetrated for religious or ideological reasons, deliberately targeted at the vulnerable. Studies maintain that conflicts over resources can be settled to the satisfaction of warring parties, though conflicts over group or individual values may not easily be resolvable rather, it can be transformed or managed. Wilmot and Hocker (2011) described conflict as a felt struggle between two or more independent beliefs, over perceived incompatible differences in desire for esteem, control and connectedness. He says it must be people relating or depending on more another bound by certain social cords or nests.

To achieve any meaningful conflict resolution, it means that the deep-sitted sources of conflict are addressed and resolved, and social behaviour once more is enhanced. Mitchel and Banks (1996) refer to conflict resolution as an outcome in which the issues in an existing conflict are satisfactorily dealt with through a solution that is mutually acceptable to the parties.

Peace/Peace-Building

Peace has been defined by Francis, (2016) as the situation of equity, development and access to existential necessities of life. Peace can be classified as negative or positive according to Galtung cited by Francis, (2016). These two forms of peace include the absence of direct violence, war, fear and conflict at all levels and the absence of unjust structures, unequal relationships, justice and inner peace at individual level. Peace-Building or conflict resolution otherwise known as conflict prevention is aimed at overcoming the root causes of conflicts and forestalling a recurrence. Conflict resolution according to Mitchell and Banks, (1996) connotes a sense of finality where the parties to a conflict are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the conflict is resolved in a true sense. What is in question however is the acceptability of the peace-building process.

There are reasons for our choice to examine the north central and the peace building option. One of the reasons is to be able to discover variations in the form and features of the conflict relative to other parts of Nigeria. Part of the features that distinguish the conflict in north central Nigeria from others is its uniqueness as premised on the struggle for limited land, the ethnic and religious configuration of the north central and the complexity of the conflict due to its ancient origin and pervasive nature. Only genuine commitment from the government and the society can resolve this conflict because every participant seems to be justified for any actions taken, safe the cattle rustlers.

Theoretical Overview

This study took a panoramic view of some of the existing scholarly explanations for the phenomenal surge in violent conflicts or terrorism. There may not be a steel line between the varying perceptions, however, in order to put the causes, the dynamics and the effects of   conflicts in proper perspective and to proffer possible solutions to the identified problem, some theories become more suitable. There are two main schools of thought on factors that generate conflict in societies generally; these theories are classified into Radical Structuralism led by Marx, Engels and Lenin, and Liberal Structuralism led by Ross, Scarborogh and Galtung. Faleti, (2016:41) These scholars believe in either external or internal roots of the factors that cause perennial conflicts.

The former school believes that the causes of conflict are rooted in the ways societies are structured. The elements are exclusion, injustice, poverty, disease and denial of rights also referred to as 'Relative Deprivation' by Ted Gurr, (1970) The core of hypotheses is that the correlation between people's socio economic expectations and the actual distribution of political and economic goods and services render conflict inevitable. Amaraegbu, (2013) Exploitation and inequities or stratification according to Marx, Engels, Lenin and Tse Tung are attributes of capitalism which are to blame for societal conflicts. The struggle for control and use of natural resources are equally said to be responsible for conflict situations. Neo-Marxists of the Underdevelopment and Dependency paradigms represented by Gunder Frank, Rodney, Amin and Wallerstein (referred to as Third World scholars) blame the outbreak of conflicts on the exploitation of the Third World by the few, rich and powerful developed nations. Other Radical Structuralists adduce conflicts to deprivation in one larger section of mankind and of overabundance and over production in another much

smaller section. It therefore explains the impact of foreign influence on internal violence. Kerbo's (1978:1) The Frustration-Aggression Theory of Dollard et al, (1939) which believes that when people are being prevented from achieving set goals, their frustration leads to aggression is akin to the Deprivation Theory. (www.tutor2u.net>psychology>reference)

Above views can be classified as paradigms under the two basic theories of International Relations which liken all State behaviours to the nature of man. Without belaboring their conceptions of man and how they generate crisis, it is pertinent to consider the Liberal Structuralist approach of Galtung, (1967) which enunciated the Theories of Negative Peace and Positive Peace as explanation for the prevalence of peace either through the use of brute force by the State or by mutual consent over norms, rules and values. One notable difference between the Radical Structuralists and the Liberal Structuralists is the means of elimination of these defects either through revolution or war, leading to the overthrow of the exploitative system, or through policy reforms respectively. (Faleti, 2016:42) The conjectures derivable from exploring the differences between negative peace and positive peace forms the platform upon which this study is being driven. Peace, like human rights is an entitlement of the citizens which in all ramifications are inherent in human nature. Peace becomes temporal and conflict is prevalent when these entitlements are denied to the people who suffer at both ends of the resulting conflict, through victimisation during conflicts and inadequate post-conflict intervention by the State. (Faleti, 2016) It goes that the root causes of conflicts and their recurrence are found in the attainment of peace through repression, which renders peace susceptible.

Apart from poverty, democracy is a passing phase in the nation and (probably) democracy provides a dual service, as a means for participation and hope in the system and as a tool for manipulating the will of the masses by the elites through personal freedom that are available to the privileged. Ethnicity and Religion influenced minority politics and agitations as much as indigeneship contribute greatly to political crises. (Bala, 2015) Others have blamed violent crises and terrorism in Nigeria on population bulge among the unemployed youth which inadvertently triggered the level of criminality and terrorism in Nigeria. (Peter, Amana & Mafuyai, 2018) This though arguably subjective; whether the youths are employable depends on the availability of properly skilled youths, which phenomenon is a function of the political and economic stay. The most populated countries with a higher youth population hypothetically should have higher levels of crime.

Intervention Protocols

All interventions, whether in terms of military or the use of soft measures are philosophically premised on the obligations laid down in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights 1948, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, ECOWAS Protocol on Human and People's Rights and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria,1999 which provides for the dignity and the rights of every human being to life, liberty and respect for the security of persons. (www.un.org>universal-declaration-hum) ECOWAS protocol on free movement of persons and goods encouraged the movement of citizens, goods and services including cattle into the country. Following the pervasive herders-farmers clashes, a high level meeting of the Nigerian Government and the Ministers of Agriculture and Animal Resources from ECOWAS countries including Cameroun, Chad, Mauritania and the Central African Republic agreed on a protocol for promotion of peaceful cross-boundary transhumance in the year 2003.

Among other interventions is the United Sates Agency for International Development (USAID) funded the establishment of a grazing reserve at Wase in Plateau State in the year 1965, but it pulled out in 1995 and the programme came to a standstill. (Onuoha & Nwaneri, 2018) The National Economic Council at its meeting of October 23, 2014 attended by sixteen governors resolved to phase out open grazing and replace with modern ranches to be funded by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN). (Daily Trust, October 24, 2014) This programme has been widely criticised because of the cost implications and the limitedness of available lands. The programme according to Onuoha & Nwaneri (2018) has not proven to be really practicable or successful, for example in Tanzania where it was introduced in 1956.

THE IMPACTS AND CHALLENGES OF CONFLICTS

Apart from the elements of violent conflicts which makes peace building difficult and a recurrence of conflict a well nigh possibility, those forces that generate conflict in Nigeria have continued to frustrate or affect genuine peace building. In other to examine the prospects of peace building, we must ask germane questions regarding what happens to the unabated population expansion and the associated needs? What

happens to the static size of land in the north central zone of Nigeria? What happens to the desertification in the Sahel region that has continued to push inward migration of herders? What happens to the increasing poverty which has produced an army of frustrated youths and yielded them as ready tools for execution of violence? What should happen to the elites that have continued to deny the people access to stake in governance, and alternatively continued to hold the citizens to ransom through mis-governance and exploitation? What should happen to the corrupt officials who have access to public wealth or stealthily continued to siphon public resources by fanning the embers of ethnicity and religion to shield their activities from public consciousness? What happens to the economy of these conflicts which will continue to favour certain local and international entities?

For want of space, we wish to limit our illustration to one of the displacement tracking matrix reports from the World Bank and the National Bureau of Statistics. (Find attached Appendix 'A') It may not be adequately representative of all cases, yet it reflects some elements of the experiences among all other post-conflict environments. Generally, the conflicts and the spectre they leave behind in the north central include displacement, depopulation, destruction, and defoliation. Amongst the eight states of north central Nigeria affected by the crisis, Benue hosts the largest number of displaced individuals (81,132, or 26% of IDPs). Guma LGA, which is the LGA accommodating the most Internally Displaced Persons and is located in Benue state, alone hosts 48,558 IDPs (17% of IDPs) displacement in Benue state chiefly results from herdsmen-farmer clashes. A number of IDPs also relocated to Benue from Nasarawa state. Plateau hosts 14,521 IDPs (5% of total IDPs). This population was displaced following hostilities between herdsmen and farmers as well as communal clashes between religious communities. A vast majority of IDPs in the state (12,840 or 88%) reside in Barikin Ladi LGA. At the IDPs it is obvious that government attention is inadequate as the state of potable water, sanitation and hygiene is deplorable. There are evidences of open defecation since latrines and waste disposal system is equally disgusting. (dtm, NBS,2019)

In line with studies in other conflict areas, Brinkerhoff has noted that 'some estimates say 50% of conflicts return within five years.' Victories won through the barrel of the gun are most times pyrrhic. The first challenge is that there is inadequacy of systematic data on the costs of providing and sustaining security services. There are challenges associated with the cost of rehabilitation of the victims of terrorism and the sustainability of the post conflict period. Majority of people have suffered psychological trauma as a result of the insurgency and this may not seem to abate in view of government's inadequate attention especially at the IDPs including inadequate water supply, hygiene, sanitation, health care and education of the children. The truth however is that efficient and effective delivery of rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected areas require investment in the soft components of counter-insurgency strategies which comes with financial implications for either the providers or beneficiaries. Baregu maintains that terrorism is a global phenomenon arising from global processes and therefore requires global cooperation to counter it effectively. He suggests a focus on the root causes that breed terrorism and not just applying military tools to tackle the symptom of terrorism.

Other major challenges include the ability of ascertaining the ambiance of post-conflict programmes and the success of such programmes. Women and children were cannon fodder for the execution of terrorist acts and a means of producing new generation of terrorists. Peace building in such areas where children born to terrorists are rescued and rehabilitated is threatened by the perception of such children to whom their mothers pass down accounts of how the government and probably the society killed their parents for the sake of fighting for what they believe. No amount of economic or social palliatives will be enough to eliminate their perception of government and the society. Government posture may be responsible for the accentuation of this belief; it is equally responsible for ensuring that the atmosphere of suspicion is doused.

FINDINGS
Incidences of conflict and violence in North Central Nigeria remained steady from 2013 to 2016; of all the reported cases, more than half of the conflict events (55%) were caused by disputes over access to land or resources. About 33% of conflict-affected households had at least one member displaced as a result; 34% of the events of conflict in North Central Nigeria were never reported to any authorities. Perpetrators of murder and other inhuman acts walk freely, without any punitive measures capable of serving as deterrent; thus would-be terrorists are encouraged. From 2016 up to the present, it has assumed a more lethal dimension following the purported infiltration by foreign mercenaries.

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Households in North Central Nigeria are frequently displaced and receive no assistance following conflict events It is notable that rules and codes in Nigeria are enormous to cater for breaches of the peace; the successive governments themselves have indulged in acts of perpetual denial to the citizens of their rights especially to existence and to dignity. The intervention of government and donor agencies have appeared commendable, however their support to communities at the grass roots is virtually invisible because of their concentration on urban centres for reason of access and visibility. (Blench, 2004; Rowland, Amana & Abuh, 2016)

A society that is deficient in the rate of educated population lacks the value orientation that counters stereotypic compliance with intervention programmes whether good or bad. This region is blessed with solid mineral and other natural resources, but these resources have not been properly identified and harnessed to boost investment prospects, re-engineer the economy of the region and Nigeria in general. People have not been empowered through access to education, improve self-realisation or awareness and encouraged popular participation in decision making in order to give hope to the people. However there seems to be a deliberate attempt to frustrate proper exploitation of resources in order to keep the masses in check. The former report, in particular, proposes to create a 'peace building commission' to fill the institutional gap created by a UN system originally designed to deal with interstate war, and in which peace building activities are conducted in a disparate and not always coherent fashion.

This study does not examine the challenges, dilemmas and details of the few recent post-conflict operations, rather take steps towards a critical look at the contemporary practice of peace building. We first examine the underpinnings of this practice, arguing that most recent post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes have been conducted in an *ad hoc* and unsystematic way, with little critical self-reflection on the underlying assumptions or structural biases of peace building efforts. They rest upon an assumption that a sophisticated, yet still utopian, 'social engineering' approach could replace, or accelerate, a process of state formation that occurs rather more naturally. We then focus specifically on the connection, usually missing in the institutional practices of peace building and between security and development, in order to illustrate some of the structural biases of peace-building efforts. Since critical scholarship must go beyond critique, we finally argue that a practical rethinking of existing practices and programmes can be catalysed by examining post-conflict challenges through the lens of human security. Finally, relying on Karl Popper's distinction between 'utopian' and 'piecemeal' social engineering, we conclude by outlining the central tenets of a critical approach to peace building.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are various dimensions to government intervention which are focused on the quelling of the immediate conflict through the use of the military; addressing the root causes of violence and genuine post conflict peace-building with focus on evaluating the costs and losses incurred by actors and victims of violent conflicts. The national policy of intervention must target an elaborate programme of empowering the people. The poor are vulnerable and easy targets for cynical manipulation by the rich and desperate politicians.

Scholars like Awodola (2018) have recommended the introduction of Peace-Education and the Culture of Peace as a panacea for peaceful coexistence beginning with childhood development. Notably, peace as a culture can be cultivated over a long period through peer influence and formal education. Baregu notes that terrorism is a global phenomenon arising from global processes and therefore requires global cooperation to counter it effectively.

There is necessity to make a quest into the root cause(s) of conflicts or insurgency. Baregu suggests a focus on the root causes that breed terrorism and not just applying military tools to tackle the symptom of extreme violence. Earlier researches have opined that poverty remains the greatest contributor to human insecurity today. Poverty means limited access/choice, limited control over one's life, poor health, limited information, exposure to exploitation, almost no meaningful leisure, high anxiety and little expectation of change. It has therefore been recommended that empowerment programmes be embarked upon to help reconcile, reconstruct, rehabilitate and rebuild the areas destroyed by insurgency and related activities. This research will focus on genuine reconciliation and rebuilding process through the determination of the respective objectives of parties to the violence, whose approach is devoid of stereotypes that neglect variations in impulses of actors, the degree and dimension of injuries on victims. This research presents

a critical overview of contemporary practice of intervention which rests upon the assumption that a sophisticated social engineering can be used to accelerate the process of peace-building.

The missing link noted in this research is the fact that earlier programmes and researches have been conducted with critical reflection on the assumptions and bias that peace, security and development are intertwined and realisable through human security. There is yet a gap in identifying the peculiarity of cases towards specificities required in intervention through the establishment of perennial institutional framework for intervention to fill the institutional and finance gaps.

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Appendix 'A'

	North East		North Central		South South
	Households (%)	Community members (%)	Households (%)	Community members (%)	Households (%)	Community members (%)
Percent experiencing any conflict event	49%	72%	25%	47%	22%	49%
Type of Event (Household/Community member … since 2010)						
Killed	7.0%	34.0%	2.5%	15.0%	4.8%	24.0%
Physically attacked	5.0%	18.0%	2.8%	12.0%	3.5%	13.0%
Injured	5.4%	19.0%	1.5%	14.0%	3.0%	12.0%
Suffered sexual violence	0.0%	6.0%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	3.6%
Forced to work	0.9%	1.2%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Abducted	0.0%	7.2%	0.6%	8.0%	1.1%	13.0%
Robbed	12.0%	30.0%	6.0%	17.0%	2.4%	13.0%
Displaced	27.0%	30.0%	8.1%	7.0%	5.7%	11.0%
Dwelling robbed	22.0%	32.0%	5.5%	14.0%	6.4%	25.0%
Dwelling damaged	5.6%	20.0%	6.2%	9.7%	4.6%	11.0%
Land occupied	5.6%	9.7%	4.8%	9.1%	1.6%	6.3%
Assets destroyed	3.6%	11.0%	7.9%	10.0%	4.2%	7.0%
School access blocked	21.0%	26.0%	6.0%	7.2%	6.0%	8.4%
Health service access blocked	6.6%	11.0%	0.9%	1.4%	0.0%	1.1%

Source: *World Bank, National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria, Preliminary Draft Report, 2018*