JOURNAL OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE
ISSN Print: 2992-2763 - ISSN Online: 2992-4618. /vol 1, No 3 / September, 2023.
Https://www.jopd.com.ng

CONFLICT ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND BOKO-HARAM INSURGENCY: UNEARTHING A PEACEFUL PARADIGM FOR NIGERIA

By

ABDULLAHI ABIODUN OYEKANMI
Email- oyekanmiaa@tasued.edu.ng
Adeola Aderayo Adebajo Ph.D
adebajoade@gmail.com
Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun
Ijebu Ode, Ogun State
&
ADEMOLU OLUWASEUN ADENUGA
ademolu.adenuga@uniosun.edu.ng
Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Osun State University, Osogbo

ABSTRACT
Boko Haram insurgency has remained a recurring challenge to Nigeria's national security, having failed to respond to many provided solutions due to the activities of conflict entrepreneurs and profiteers of violence, whose business interest is directed to stimulate conflicts and elongate same through various methods. Thus, the research seeks to examine the culpability of business-oriented groups and individuals in Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, including their modus operandi. The paper adopted desk research methodology with secondary data from extant literatures and third-party intervention theory as explanatory framework. The result showed that conflicts such as Boko Haram insurgence in Nigeria is a product of state failure to offer the needed protection and apprehend conflict engineers and that availability of rich resources and struggle for political power are propensity for violence. It recommends for speedy trials of conflicts entrepreneurs and that federal government should disengage from rehabilitation of criminals and conflicts profiteers, including a paradigm shift from granting political and business patronage to conflict provocateurs across Nigeria.
Keywords: Boko Haram, conflict entrepreneurship, conflict, violence, security architecture

Introduction

Conflict is a perennial nature of all society, beyond geographical boundaries. It is at the heart of all socio-economic and political relationship where struggle for resource control and self-interest actualization exist. Hence, the popular classic 'point of contact is point of conflict holds sway'. This means where there are relationships, the propensity for disagreement and conflict becomes a possibility. The universality of conflict in all human engagements and in all climes was reiterated by Moliki and Oyekanmi (2020) that conflict is a global phenomenon with consistent regularity that has defiled permanent solutions from state actors. It is pertinent to situate that global conflict can be contextualized within violence, struggle, arms deployment and wars between states caused by internationally profiled terrorists' groups in the class of Islamic States (ISIS) Isbah, Al-Qaeedah, ISWAP and others, leading to humongous destruction of properties, environmental threats and loss of lives. This pattern of conflict can be classified as macro-public conflict. Macro-public conflicts are state centered, targeting political goals and weakness of government legitimacy. There are also conflicts at elementary level such as between individuals and communal clashes that are not influenced by political interests are classified as 'micro-publics.

Since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has had her fair share of perpetual conflict in many variations, dimensions, scope and intensity. In the position of Ogunyemi (2020) the trajectory of these

conflicts includes fratricidal thirty months civil war from 1967 to 1970, rostrums of protests against military interventionists, crisis of resource control and intermittent ethnocentric struggles across the North-South. However, the tragedy of Nigeria's insecurity and conflict assumed a new dimension in early year 2000 with the emergence of some acclaimed Islamic fundamentalists led by Muhammad Yusuf under the guise name of Jamahtul Al-sunah li-dawati-Islamiyah. Shugaba (2017) posits that the group earned the name Boko Haram due to their professed hatred for western education, state apparatus and western civilization. Events that followed have thrown Nigeria into tapestry of conflicts and war that have exposed the Nigerian state weaknesses and inability to perform her protective function. In the conclusion of Moliki and Oyekanmi (2020) when a state is unable to protect her citizens and safeguard her territorial integrity from terrorists', menace of Boko Haram and other residual conflicts, it has lost the true essence of statehood and its collapse is imminent. Although, concession to the perennial nature at which conflicts spread like wildfire should not be an indication that states and individuals do not place premium value on peace, progress and partnership. However, the precipitant to most of these conflicts is desire to protect economic interests and survival in an age of resource scarcity and artificial poverty (Oyekanmi, Adebajo & Omojowo, 2021).

It is in the dire need to strengthen the national security and retool all security architecture as lasting solution to Boko- Haram insurgency that successive governments in Nigeria have committed huge resources to fighting. This involved massive purchase of sophisticated modern weapons, technologies and investment in credible Intel to combat insurgency. Despite these efforts, conflict and insurgency have grown unabated with more daring approaches, intensity and consequences. Akinwale and Gbeke (2018) through their survey on conflict regularity in Nigeria submitted that third hands involvement in conflict through arms deal and antics of desperate politicians are responsible for the continued Boko-Haram insurgency, ethnocentric crisis and banditry in Nigeria. In sum, wars and conflicts are prolonged by the cryptic financial interest of veiled individuals and groups. These individuals in the conclusion of Berdel and Malone (2000) are known as 'Conflict Entrepreneurs' for institutionalizing conflicts for economic gains.

Thus, it is the locus of this paper to contextualize conflict entrepreneurship, examine the profiteering dispositions of individuals and groups to conflict engineering and perpetuation, with specific reference to Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, through desk research methodology. It is also poised to offer timely solution to end the prolong insurgency and other intermittent conflicts in Nigeria.

Conceptual Discussion of Conflict Entrepreneurship and Boko Haram Insurgency within the Context of Nigeria

In the conviction of Moliki and Oyekanmi (2020) conflict is a resilient expression of human nature that is rooted in aggression to prove self-superiority. It is argued that just like it exists at individual and group level, conflict exist within the large spectrum of state engagements. The universal nature of conflict and violence had earlier been strengthened by Morgenthau (1949) when he argued that the nature of man is chaotic and conflict motivated as he struggles to win over others. Conflict in this instance can be likened to the expression of hostility, negative attitudes, aggression, rivalry and misunderstanding. Adebayo (2018) asserts that conflict can be conceived as a by-product of irreconcilable differences arising from interest articulation and actualisation. Thus, this implies that propensity for chaos becomes higher when human interests are expressed at wide variance.

However, the new dimension to the consequences of conflicts as negative has given ways to new paradigms in conflict studies. The new global and national reality on state violence, insecurity and instability are the new opportunities in financial gains, state patronage and concession created new groups and individuals who are classified intentional conflicts originators. These are known as conflict entrepreneurs. Finkel (2019) and Yaronisa (2016) both contended that entrepreneurship is the creation of business opportunities through active participation in funding and supervision with a projected expectation of

marginal profits. In the light of this clarifications, conflict entrepreneurship, from the position of Ganson (2021), is an overtly orchestrated process through which individuals or groups are committed to elongate conflict, instigate war and encourage violence of far reaching consequences in expectation of financial gains or business growth. It can be inferred further that conflict entrepreneurs are crisis mongers and agent provocateurs with mutual and complementary responsibilities or roles in the elongation of conflict. These roles include the influence to determine, and direct the dynamism of conflicts, at any stage; manifest or latent stage. Bishirua (2018) argued that conflict entrepreneurship habitually promotes conflict for profits purpose, directly or indirectly through illegal economic activities that promote violence and lawlessness. There are different categories of conflict entrepreneurs. A key group are arms dealers with high stakes in extractive resources. They arm groups against themselves, sabotage peaceful efforts of government in all dealings (Adelaide, 2020). Another category is latent conflict entrepreneurs at state or local levels. These are individuals who provide essential services to insurgents, bandits and secessionists in their hide-outs. These individuals or group enjoy the business patronage of the criminals on food items, fuel, drugs, including regular supply of 'women of easy virtue' for sexual gratification. These services are paid for in manifold of the regular prices in the society. Thus, these individuals make more money from the continuity of conflicts and are never willing to supply security agents or peace makers with the necessary information.

Boko Haram Insurgency

By definition and operational tactics of insurgency invoke terror, destruction and rebellion against established states or legitimate authority. Thus, insurgency is a precipice to state fragility and imminent collapse. Okoroafor and Ukpabi (2015) stressed that insurgents are excited of the prospect of overthrowing legitimate government and causing pain and apprehension for the citizens. Nigerian example is a classic representation of the above stated submission where Boko- Haram has repeatedly unleashes mayhem in Northern Nigeria. Nkwede, Dauda and Moliki (2018) argued that insurgency is a threat to national security. The sect has been classified internationally as terrorists with links with Al Queda, ISIS and ISWAP. In recognition of the wanton destructions on human lives and Nigeria's economic progress, the Global Peace Index (2020) ranked Nigeria 3rd unsafe country to live in throughout the world. This was at the zenith of Boko Haram rampage on kidnapping of vulnerable school children, bombing of critical infrastructures of government and displacing millions of Nigerians from their houses. Boko Haram insurgency has dislocated the steady growth of Nigeria's economic development, human harmony and political stability in the North East such as Borno,, Yobe, Adamawa, Gombe, Taraba and Bauchi States (International Crisis Group, 2019; Rosenje, 2018; Obioma, 2013). The Boko- Haram, herdsmen and IPOB situations led to proliferation of arms through Nigeria's borders by conflict entrepreneurs and violence mercantilists.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts third party intervention theory developed by Wohlander and Scott Barry (2001) to explain the underlined reasons why conflicts are prolonged and have also defiled almost all known solution. The central assumption of the theory rests on the treatise that conflicts, wars and insurgency at macro-public and individual levels portends the greater propensity to assume intense dimensions and remain unamenable to solutions if third-party states, groups or individuals exist on the preferences of where the pendulum of victory or defeat should swing to. Thus, such intervention habitually comes in form of moral, financial, and weaponization of trusted allies against other warring factions. Many conflicts would have fizzled out within the shortest time if there are not unseen hands of interested parties, individuals or groups who invest heavily in the sustainability of violence and war to promote economic interest. The occurrence of third-party intervention in the guise of neutrality is responsible for most devastating conflicts in world history.

In the context of Nigeria's insurgency, conflict entrepreneurs are the third-party interventionists that have expanded the scope of violence, amplify the severity and duration of the fighting, and increase the overall amount of death and destruction credited to Boko Haram through illegal arms deal, cryptic financial

flows to sworn enemies of the state to continuously wreak havoc. Overall, the theory predicts approximately two-thirds of cases correctly when subjected to rigorous empirical tests on how the illicit financial flow into the hands of war mongers, helps to feed, arm and sustain the war against competing group or government. In addition, the theory produces theoretically interesting and empirically-supported insights about the immense role of finance in war prosecution and peace engineering.

However, the theory over emphasised the influential role of financial money mongers in the escalation of conflict without discussing the possible categories of conflict entrepreneurs and the differences in the interest they are pursuing. For instance, in Nigeria's Boko Haram insurgency, there are documented cases of military officers and top leadership in Nigerian Army supplying arms and ammunitions to bandits and kidnaper, just like there are many informants for Boko- Haram among locales. The theory was also not exhaustive in its analysis on why people or groups help to strengthen conflict and insurgence against the state. The theory already localised the primary reasons to financial profit. However, there could be people who buy guns for thugs and criminals to destabilise the state and cause social unrest, for political gain or a proof of superiority within social circles. Thus, conflict entrepreneurs are not only motivated by money, it could be the need to gain political advantage.

Global Methods and Approaches in Conflict Entrepreneurship

Support for militancy and separatist groups

Conflict profiteers are strategic individuals and group who are equally coordinated and precise in the means and dimension to further their businesses. Kantel (2015) declared that beneficiaries of wars and violence are quick to form alliance with disenchanted and disgruntled individuals or groups who have manifested the readiness to harm others through unconventional ways. It is pertinent to assert that militants and separatist groups across the world are the first line of targets by conflict entrepreneurs. A case in view was the speed at which the French government offered tacit financial supports to Biafra forces against Nigeria at the height of civil war. At the speed of light, they also recognised Biafra as a sovereign state and weaponised her forces which helped to sustain the war for a longer time (Oyekanmi, Adebajo & Omojowo 2021). In the investigation conducted Oluyemi and Kalejiaye (1982) on the rationale behind the supports to Ojukwu and his Biafra led forces, he reported that France had anticipated a profitable connivance to control the oil- rich region, with Odumegu Ojukwu in the eventuality of his victory against General Yakubu Gowon. The work of Adebola, Chekelu and Jamiu (2019) support this claim.

Instigation of civil uprising to weaken established state legitimacy

This is another conventional method of instigating and prolonging conflicts in foreign states by supposed big players in the international system. The method herein could be state sponsored or directed through range of network from Multinational Corporations in order to have a safe passage to the control of the resources in the affected states, which otherwise would not have been possible if the existing regime is still in- charge. The crisis in the Middle East and the Arab- Spring was adjudged to have been propelled by the United State economic interests to control the oil in the region. The manners in which western media war and propaganda strived to de-legitimise the leadership of Mahama Ghadafi in Libya and his subsequent removal and killing by internally sponsored misguided Libyans by Barrack Obama's Presidency was also economically motivated (Mathew. 2019).

Coup engineering

Oyekanmi, et al. (2021) asserted that it is ubiquitous to point out that in many of the countries that have experienced recurring military coups, there are abundant extractive resources and thus competition and struggles to control these resources remains unabated. The regularity and return of coups in African states in the recent time is a classic example. For instance, coup in Congo, Gabon, Guinea Bissau and others are

engineered by foreign nationals and state actors. In sum, coup sponsorship is another method by conflict entrepreneurs.

Conflict Entrepreneurship in Nigeria: A Brief Historical Analysis

Conflict entrepreneurship in Nigeria could be traced to the period between 1967 and 1970, the dark days of Nigeria's civil war, when the greedy war instigators encouraged General Yakubu Gowon to unleash military on the Biafra forces, as opposed to diplomacy and negotiated decisions. According to Barry (2001) some arms dealer within the military hierarchy, with cryptic motives influenced the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, into a damning military exercise or action. It became evident that a number of Nigerians suddenly became wealthy in the course and after the thirty-month-old war. This was due to their delinquent activities during those difficult times of war. From illegally possessing the properties of citizens who had fled for safety to certain parts of the continent or outside, diverting palliatives aids by international humanitarian agencies for victims of the disaster, to mention a few. Some of the Nigerians who claim to be wealthy today acquired their riches during this period. In addition, at the beginning of Niger Delta crisis in Nigeria, some politicians and community leaders were exposed, ceasing the crisis opportunity to set up groups with violent and criminal motives, without apparent mandates. This was to distract the government of the day, and thus, disturb the peace of the society, in order to get monetary concessions from the transnational oil companies in operation within the affected region, and also the federal government, with the excuse of assisting in providing security in these areas. This was how security and assurance of peace have over the years become means of income for many prominent Delta indigenes (Obuse, 2014).

In recent time, most warlords in the realm of Niger-Delta crisis like Asari Dokubo, Government Ekpemupolo, alias Tompolo and others have continued to enjoy business and political patronage of their state government, including at federal levels. Many of these dramatist personnel have entered into tacit partnership with government to offer protection for critical state infrastructures like refineries, guide against oil spillage and theft. The Niger Delta Development Commission created by federal government of Nigeria has enjoyed humongous fiscal commitment from successive government in the name of amnesty and rehabilitation programs. It is pertinent to situate here that these key warlords are the greatest beneficiary of government interventions in the orchestrated conflicts instead of the general public. The continued crisis through sit-at home order by Biafra foot soldiers in South-east and South-south has evoked raging debate as to the real motive of Biafra agitations. Many are of the opinion that the instigators have become mercantilists, making money through the spread of chaos despite the incarceration of Nnandi Kanu.

Conflict Entrepreneurs, Profiteers of Insecurity: An Appraisal of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria

Those who benefit from conflict include conflict commodity dealers, arms dealers, and military contractors, to mention but a few. Those who make their gains by marketing their products, usually seen as wares, to war engagers are arms dealers. While some of these dealers operate autonomously, some get their profit by partnering with those in power (Basir, 2014). Arms dealers can be classified into unstructured black-market operators or structured organizations. Another set of beneficiaries who gain from conflicts in many societies are known conflict commodity dealers. Conflict, for some people, usually would bring about scarcity of basic commodities. This shortage leads to higher revenues and prices of goods and services. The function of black marketers is instructive in this aspect. This is however not concerning the gains realized from regular commodity brokers; thus, there is a distinction between conflict beneficiaries and those who get their profits by contributing their resources to a war. The former saps the military strength, while the latter only have their quota, whether in kind or cash to contribute (Abdulrasheed, 2020). Contractors in the

military sphere also make up another group of conflict profiteers. The big conflict players such as Aegis Defense Services, Custer Battles, Boeing and Lockheed, General Dynamics, Raytheon, and many, have the prospective ability of getting returns from conflicts, or the war threats. These contractors sometimes manipulate war policies. The political class in Nigeria also gains from conflict occurrences; especially, through the roles some of these political elites play in instigating and ensuring the occurrence of conflict in the country (Henisz, 2021). These roles include championing conflict lobbies, seeking favours and bribes from organizations that deal with the war equipment production. These politicians occupy very significant place in most conflict establishment. Bala Mohammed, the Governor of Bauchi State has said that bandits terrorizing the country are not only from the Fulani ethnic group. He further added that there are the Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa politicians who are the real beneficiaries of the illicit trade (Bala, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

Conclusion and Recommendation

The research affirmed the global and inevitability of conflict, although with varying magnitudes. The veracity of conflicts and dimensions cannot be evaluated by monolithic indices because the contest for power, relevance and resources are the core determinants. Thus, conflicts cannot be eradicated as long as there are public and private interests to be protected. It is however possible to de-escalate its intensity and minimise the negative consequences through appropriate state measures and coordinated policies. The paper also established that conflicts such as the deadly insurgency of Boko Haram in Nigeria, banditry and kidnapping do not solely translate to agony, ruination of properties and underdevelopment. It stressed further, that a good number of individuals and groups become richer from the misfortunes of others. This justified while conflict, wars and violence last longer beyond the severity of the issues on which the conflict emanated from.

Based on the findings of the study, the paper therefore recommends that government and other state actors invest in the access to credible and actionable intelligence to unmask conflicts profiteers and war entrepreneurs that have penetrated Nigeria's security architecture. While the authors agree that conflict entrepreneurs are business and political hegemons, their speedy trials and just sentence is not only a possible solution to stop the rampaging Boko-Haram, it should remain a Biblical and Sunatic Article of Faith. This will serve as deterrents to others who are excited by the possibility of profiting from volatile and conflict-ridden situations. It is also recommended that the federal government current policy on rehabilitations of repentant Boko Haram, gun runners, bandits and militants should be reviewed or possibly stopped. It is likened to rewarding criminals and typifying a sense of mockery of every security agency or already killed security men in the line of duties.

References

Adalaide, O. C. (2019). Activities of bandits and insecurity question in Nigeria. *Journal of Conflicts and Management Review, 1*(9), 77-99.

Adebayo, B. (2018, July 21). Nigeria overtakes India in extreme poverty ranking. *The CNN*.

Adebola, M., Chekelu, O.,& Jamiu, L. (2019). Foreign complicity and economic interest in Africa: The role of France in Nigeria's civil war. *Journal of Peace and Development in Africa*, *5*(1), 32-43.

Abdulrasheed, O. (2020). Effects of armed banditry on human security in Kaduna State. FUDMA. *Journal of Politics and International Affairs (FUJOPIA), 3*(2), 116.

Agbiboa, D. E. (2013). Why Boko Haram exists: The relative deprivation perspective. *African Conflict and PeaceBuilding Review*, *3*(1), 144-157.

Afegbua, Z. (2016). *African states and self- betrayal in Congo crisis*. Enugu: McMillian Publishers.

Bala, M. (2021, February 19). Insecurity: Igbo, Yoruba, Hausa real beneficiaries of banditry.*ThePunch.*

Bashir, M. (2014, Sept. 4). Hopes for an end to cattle theft. *Daily Trust*.

Berdal, M.,& Malone, D. M. (2000). Introduction. In Berdal, M.,& Malone, D. M. (eds.), *Greed and Grievance Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bishirua, D. (2018). Political benefits in accruing conflicts in Nigeria: An analysis of Nigerian Fourth Republic. *European Studies Journal*, *2*(9), 31-52.

Finkel, R. (2017). A reasonable reason for entrepreneurs in conflict and societies. *African ConflictInvestiture*, *6(5)*, 308-323.

Ganson, B. (2021). The effects of banditry on firm-stakeholder relational strategies on conflict risk.*Academy of Management Review*, *2*(1), 11-24.

Gold, V. (2018). Corrupting or consolidating the peace? The drugs economy and post-conflict peace building in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, *15*(3), 405-423.

International Crisis Group (2016). The swamps of insurgency: Nigeria's Delta unrest. *African Report*, *115*(3). Accessed on 13th November.

Mathew, L. (2019). *Why do groups go to war?* Russia: Kremlin Publisher.

Moliki, A. O., & Oyekanmi, A. A. (2020). The futility of achieving sustainable development: An analysis of incessant conflicts and the Nigerian experience. In O. Oshin, B. Shogunro, I. Joseph, & O. Aluko, (Eds) *Reinvigorating Nigerian Universities for Sustainable Development* (529-542). Ajayi Crowther University.

Nkwede, J. O., Dauda, K. O., Moliki, A. O. &Orija, A. O. (2018). Insurgency and national integration crisis in Nigeria: Insights from Boko Haram movement in the North- East region. *EBSU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *8*(1), 79-91.

Obuse, J. (2014). *Instigationism and conflict entrepreneurship*. https://www.inigerian.com/instigationism-and-conflict-entrepreneurship/

Oyekanmi, A. A., Adebajo, A. A. and Omojowo, T. S. (2021). Resource-Based Conflicts and Human Rights Violations in Africa: Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria in Comparative Perspective. *Journal of Social and Management Sciences*, *3*(3), 80-89.

Oluyemi, E., & Kalejaiye, F. (1982). *Europe and the unseen hands in Nigerian civil war*. Yaba; Lagos Publisher.

Ogunyemi, L (2020). Tragedy of conflict in Africa: Lessons for the third world countries. *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa, 5*(2) 30- 42.

Gold, V. (2018). Corrupting or consolidating the peace? The drugs economy and post-conflict peace building in Afghanistan. *International Peacekeeping*, *15*(3), 405-423.