

Nigeria, a Country under Siege

Nigeria, a Country under Siege:

*Issues of Conflict
and its Management*

Edited by

Dele Babalola and Hakeem Onapajo

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Dele Babalola and Hakeem Onapajo.

INTRODUCTION

DELE BABALOLA AND HAKEEM ONAPAJO

One hundred years after the British colonialists unified two protectorates to create Nigeria, the problems inherent in lumping together a myriad of people with different histories, cultures, languages and religions continue to generate debate and controversy. Nigeria is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in Africa, with three dominant ethnic identities territorially concentrated: Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo together with some 350 supposedly linguistic minorities spread across a population of approximately 200 million people. One of the biggest challenges that has continued to confront Nigerian leaders since independence in 1960 is how to genuinely bring together the different people that inhabit the country. Political battle lines and alliances are often made with regional, ethnic, and sometimes religious divides in mind. This explains why accusations and counter-accusations of inequalities, marginalisation, and domination have remained a regular feature of politics and society in Nigeria.

Indeed, the above phenomenon has accounted for the country's plethora of conflicts and other forms of internal convulsions experienced since independence. It was believed that violence associated with military governments, given Nigeria's many years of military rule, was responsible for the upsurge of violent conflict in the country. Hence, there were increased calls by civil society groups and the international community for a democratic transition based on the belief that a democratic change would represent a panacea to the overwhelming conflict. However, contrary to this belief and their expectation of a positive outcome, the successful return to democracy in 1999 has been surrounded by a wave of conflict which has resulted in a huge number of deaths and the destruction of property. This clearly contradicts the underlying principles of a democracy characterised by pacifism, negotiation and civility, which the pro-democracy activists anticipated would usher in a more peaceful era. This perhaps explains why recent events in the country are attracting significant attention.

Some have perceived the increasing conflict in democratic Nigeria as an indication that democracy may not be the best system for the Nigerian people. Nigerians are seen as people of an entirely different specie who are perhaps best governed with the instrumentality of force. Thus, some have called for a return to the old military state, while others are of the opinion that a Nigerian version of democracy (with a touch of militarism) in congruence with the character and values of the people could be the best way to have an organised and peaceful society. These perceptions are faulty as they reflect the Western stereotype of Africans as uncivilised and ungovernable in a democratic system, which apparently supports the thinking of Western cultural superiority.

What can be deduced from the above is the clear fact that there were some unresolved issues before the country returned to democracy in 1999. Perhaps this is because of the hasty manner in which the military government of Abdul-Salami Abubakar arranged the transition programme, and the scepticism of the political elite and civil society groups about the sincerity of the transition exercise. It has formed the basis for the outbreak of violent conflicts in the post-transition period. Unfortunately, attempts to organise national conferences to discuss the root problems and find a generally acceptable solution to tackle the issues have not been successful because of clandestine moves by incumbent presidents to hijack the process for their own personal and political interests.

Although there have been useful studies on the problem of conflict in Nigeria, we can argue that they have not been sufficient because conflicts in the country have been on the increase rather than abating. More worryingly, there are ominous signs that new forms of conflict will soon emerge with the change of government following the overthrow of the erstwhile ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) in 2015. The aim with this book is not to replace the array of existing studies on conflict and conflict management in Nigeria. Instead, it is a modest attempt to offer a compendium of resourceful studies dealing with the problem of conflict and the methods for its management in the Nigerian contemporary democracy. This research effort is considered most useful at this time when Nigeria has been seriously battered by bloody conflicts from insurgencies, ethno-religious conflicts, election conflicts, communal conflicts, and others. Thus, the book aims not only to analyse the nature and causes of conflicts in Nigeria, but also to contribute to the search for more robust mechanisms for managing the conflicts that have become synonymous with Africa's most populous country. In light of this, the

book is predicated on three major thematic areas: concept and theories of conflict; nature of conflicts; and conflict management strategies.

Outline of the Book

The book is composed of thirteen chapters organised under three different themes. The first section deals with the conceptualisation of and theories concerning conflict. The second section focuses on studies dealing with the different forms of conflict that characterise the democratic era in Nigeria. The third section is composed of studies that analyse the methods for addressing the different forms of conflict in the country.

The first chapter, by Hakeem Onapajo, analyses the concept and theories related to conflict and sets the stage for the other studies in the book. The author examines the existing literature to demonstrate the usage of conflict as a concept amongst scholars. The author further illustrates the existing explanations for the causes of conflict. This chapter is used as an explanatory framework to search for reasonable elucidations of the complex situation in Nigeria. The author argues that, despite the usefulness of each of the theories, they do not have the capacity to speak individually to the Nigerian situation because of the intersections of identities and the interests of conflicting parties. The chapter also usefully identifies — with the aid of empirical data — the magnitude and trends in the forms of conflict in Nigeria's democratic era.

The second chapter opens the discussion on the nature of conflicts that have surfaced in the post-military era in Nigeria. The chapter by Dele Babalola focuses on ethnic conflicts in contemporary Nigeria. The author builds his argument on the fact that the problem of ethnic conflict is driven by the age-old problem of ethnicity in African societies, which is a feature of post-colonial states. The author shows that although ethnic conflicts have existed in Nigeria since independence and the military era, they have been on the increase in the democratic era. The author pays particular attention to the proliferation of ethnic militia groups after democratic transition and the politics of ethnicity used by politicians, from the Obasanjo to the Jonathan presidential eras.

The third chapter, by Bakut tswah Bakut, is built upon a critique of Western concepts in the literature concerning conflicts in Nigeria. He argues that there has been much focus on the concept of 'communal conflicts' while less emphasis has been placed on what 'communal' actually is. According to him, this is one of the reasons why scholars and

policy makers have not developed useful and practical strategies for conflict resolution in the country. The chapter addresses this concern in the literature and therefore focuses on the problem of indigene-settler conflict in Plateau State. The author argues that a lack of clear definition of the rights and entitlements of host nationalities and citizenship rights in the constitution plays a role in the problem of indigene versus settler conflicts and communal conflicts in Nigeria.

The fourth chapter, by Hakeem Onapajo and Christopher Isike, advances a political economic analysis of some of the incidents of conflict in the democratic era. The authors, using the issue of recurrent conflicts among the ethno-religious groups in Jos, Plateau State, argue that some of the prevalent analyses of conflicts in Nigeria fail to understand the significance of the economic factor in some of the incidents. To demonstrate the salience of the economic factor in the case of Jos City, the authors employ the Marxist political economy approach. They show that the different conflicts taking place in the city are about a struggle for economic space by the competing groups in the state. Other factors including politics, religion, and ethnicity, which are advanced as reasons in other writings, are secondary to the economic factor.

The Boko Haram terror, which is clearly the most apparent form of conflict presently in Nigeria, is discussed in Chapter Five by Benjamin Maiangwa. He challenges the clash of civilisations thesis of Samuel Huntington on the phenomenon of religious extremism and terrorism in contemporary times. The author argues that because religion has undergone globalisation, it has been a victim of interpretations and misconceptions, and he employs the case of Boko Haram and its violent interpretation of Islam as a basis to substantiate his argument. The author further argues that the propensity by the so-called jihadist groups, including Boko Haram, to engage in violence in their clamour for an Islamic state, is about asserting a sort of theological or political power and not necessarily a civilisation war.

Temitope Edward Akinyemi brings to the fore the under-researched topic of conflicts and climate change in Nigeria, in Chapter Six. According to him, concerns about the conflict-multiplier effects of climate change and, in particular, its environmental variability outcomes have been a source of concern, especially given the importance of renewable natural resources to livelihood systems among the population. He examines conflict and environmental resource scarcity pressures on Fulani herdsmen, in the context of resource-based communal conflicts in arable agricultural

ecologies, using the case study of Oyo State. The author demonstrates that inter-annual climatic changes, primarily, and the resultant migratory adaptations were the remote and immediate variables (respectively) in environmental vulnerability-conflict transformation accounting for farmer-herder conflict in host communities.

In Chapter Seven, Azeez Olaniyan and Akeem Bello analyse another important but overlooked issue of conflict in Nigeria. This concerns the case of urban conflict, which is increasingly becoming a regular feature in Nigerian cities. In this case, the authors focus on commercial bus drivers and consistent violent activities in Ado-Ekiti, the major urban centre in Ekiti State. They present an empirical analysis of the major instances of violence that have been perpetrated by the drivers, including the causes and consequences and state responses to the phenomenon.

Abdul-Wasi Babatunde Moshood examines the different mechanisms used by the federal government to address the Niger Delta conflict, in Chapter Eight. The author adopts a historical approach to understand the failures of the government's interventions and why the amnesty programme introduced in the area seems to be working. The author argues that the government's lack of political will explains why the problem lingered for some time: this particularly escalated the conflict from a peaceful protest to an intense, armed conflict against the state. According to him, the components of the amnesty programme introduced in 2009 — especially the reintegration aspect of the programme — have proved to be positive in addressing the problem. For this reason, there is a need for the government to sustain the programme to achieve sustainable peace in the region.

In Chapter Nine, Dorcas Ettang and Olusola Ogunnubi examine the role of religious leaders and religious institutions in conflict management in Plateau State, Nigeria. They acknowledge that the state has been one of the major zones of conflict during the democratic era. In addition, they identify the important roles of religious leaders and religious institutions in the management of conflict. The chapter therefore analyses the role of religious leaders and religious institutions within the context of conflict-management strategies, and examines how these actors and institutions have exacerbated or managed the conflict in Plateau State. The authors also identify the limitations that religious leaders face in contributing to peace efforts. The chapter concludes by providing lessons for other religious leaders and religious institutions involved in peace work.

In a similar vein, in Chapter Ten, Sunday Onwuegbuchulam emphasises the importance of religion in conflict resolution in Nigeria. The principal focus is placed on religious conflicts, particularly between the Christian and Muslim populations. Thus, the chapter looks at the phenomenon of conflict in Nigeria from a religious angle, while acknowledging religion has been overly abused in the country to serve ethno-political and socio-economic ends, which provokes animosity and sustains conflict between the adherents of the religions. Using John Paul Lederach's integrated model of peacebuilding as a theoretical framework, the study argues that Christianity and Islam have resources that can be used to transform animosity and conflict into sustainable peace. The author argues that dialogue is a mechanism that will enable the members of these religions in Nigeria to come together towards reconciliation and rebuild their relationship.

In his own contribution in Chapter Eleven, George Akwaya Genyi examines the neglected role of women in finding a solution to the Boko Haram conflict in the north-east of Nigeria. This is anchored on the advocacy efforts by civil society groups for gender mainstreaming in public policy. The author notes that, despite the significance of women in Nigerian society and their apparent roles in maintaining peace, the state is yet to accord them respect by appointing them to take active roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. This is the case with the women in the Boko Haram case. Notwithstanding their lack of recognition, the author demonstrates the useful roles women have taken to mobilise against insurgency in an environment that is traditionally hostile to women's voices and to actively challenge the religious extremism that fuels terrorism.

In Chapter Twelve, Benedicta Daudu offers a gender perspective on addressing the problem of conflict in Nigeria. The author analyses the participation and contribution of women in the traditional processes of resolving conflicts in Africa. She argues that women's involvement in traditional conflict resolution, unfortunately, remains almost insignificant. The author notes the valuable role that indigenous methods play in resolving conflicts in Africa (depending on the type of conflict) and argues for their application as opposed to the Eurocentric method (litigation) which is applied with little success to the conflict challenges in African societies.

In the final chapter, Ahmad Rufai Saheed offers an educational perspective on the issue of conflict in Nigeria. The author studies the potential of peace

education for the enthronement of a civilised and peaceful existence in Nigeria. The chapter highlights the ingredients of peace education in the Islamic tradition and articulates how such ingredients became dominant in the Western educational tradition and deficient in contemporary Muslim education. The author concludes that there is an urgent need for curriculum review and innovation in Nigerian Muslim settings, with a view to integrating peace principles into the education system and building Muslim personalities who would be more peaceful in their conduct.

CHAPTER ONE

PROBLEMATISING CONFLICT: THE CONCEPT, THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES, AND TRENDS IN NIGERIA

HAKEEM ONAPAJO

Introduction

This chapter provides the conceptual and theoretical background of the book. It examines the existing literature with the aim of demonstrating the usage of conflict as a concept amongst scholars. Most especially, it shows the analytical difference between the concepts of ‘conflict’ and ‘violence’. Analysis of the difference between these concepts is deemed important given the erroneous use of them interchangeably. Furthermore, the chapter illustrates the existing explanations of the causes of conflict. The review of the theoretical literature shows that four major perspectives are most prominent, particularly in the field of political sciences, as frameworks for the causes of conflict. They are the ‘civilisations/cultural’ perspective, the ‘relative deprivation’ perspective, the ‘greed and grievance’ perspective, and the ‘state capacity’ perspective. Despite the usefulness of each of these theories, they do not have the capacity to individually speak to the Nigerian situation, given the intersections of identities and interests of conflicting parties. Hence, the specific situation being studied and the parties involved might require a range of theories.

Conflict versus Violence: A Conceptual Analysis

Given the realisation that conflict is ‘normal, ubiquitous, and unavoidable’ in human societies (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 2008: 3), the concept has been overly studied across disciplines, especially in the social and management sciences. In light of its appeal to many disciplines, there are different conceptualisations around the concept, which essentially reflect the differences in the meaning, usage, and purposes it serves in the

various disciplines. In political science, which is the overarching discipline upon which this book is founded, conflict is essentially seen in the context of a 'struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the groups or individuals involved are to neutralise, injure or eliminate rivals' (Coser, 1956: 8). Clearly, this conceptualisation captures the underlying idea of politics itself — going by the definitional perspectives — suggesting that politics is more about 'the struggle for power' (Morgenthau, 1978). Notwithstanding the differences that characterise the conceptualisation of conflict, one theme that indisputably features prominently in most definitions is the fact that conflict is about different parties and their pursuit of incompatible goals.

For a proper understanding of the concept of conflict, it is also useful to clarify the concept of violence, which is often erroneously used interchangeably with conflict in different writings. Violence is an aspect of conflict behaviour where the use of force (or its threat) is employed to express disagreements in the pursuit of opposing goals by the parties involved. Remi Anifowose's (1982: 4) definition of the concept of violence is instructive in this regard. He conceives violence as the 'use or threat of [a] physical act' carried out by groups or individuals against one another with objectives that affect the structures of the society, leading to mass death and the destruction of property. As such, Samuel Huntington (1993: 25) argues that 'differences do not necessarily mean conflict, and conflict does not necessarily mean violence.' What this suggests is that violence may not be the only means through which conflict manifests. Other types of conflict behaviour, which are non-violent, are persuasion and reward (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 2008: 8-9). Persuasion is a verbal approach involving 'reasonable arguments, appeals to common interests, and reference to generally accepted values and norms of fairness and equity' (Bercovitch, Kremenyuk and Zartman, 2008: 9). Reward is a positive strategy of pursuing different goals, which involves the use of inducements to get the other party or parties to comply.

In light of the above clarification, conflict in this book is conceived in its violent form given that conflicts in Nigeria, which is the case study of this book, very often get to the point of violence. Therefore, the concern of the book's contributors is violent conflict — which characterises modern Nigeria — and the ways in which it can be addressed.

It should be mentioned that the parties in a conflict give meaning to the nature of that conflict. Several parties may engage in conflict. These could be state (nation states and their agencies) or non-state actors (individuals,

religious groups, ethnic groups, business organisations, and terrorist groups, etc). In terms of state and non-state parties in conflict, since its independence, Nigeria has witnessed a huge number of conflicts involving ethnic groups, religious groups, political parties, indigenes/settlers, terrorist and secessionist groups, amongst others. Quite often, the overlapping identities of the conflicting parties, because of background and location, make the nature of conflict more difficult to define. A good illustration is the case of the northern region. Given that people in the region are predominantly Muslims, conflicts arising from the region or involving northerners are usually seen as religious (Islamic) in nature, regardless of apparent signs that they are only ethnically based or politically motivated. This explains the huge amount of misleading writings, in both scholarly and media circles, about the conflicts in Nigeria.

Theoretical Perspectives

Given our conception of conflict, there are contending arguments concerning its causes. An extensive survey of the literature shows that four major perspectives have gained more prominence in modern times. Modern, in this sense, implies that they are products of the last two decades, mostly applied to study events of violence and conflict in recent times. They are, in some cases, modifications or nullifications of older theories of violence, such as the relative deprivation or frustration-aggression, systemic and group-conflict/primordial theories. In this chapter, the perspectives are classified as follows: civilisational/cultural; relative deprivation; greed and grievance; and state capacity.

The civilisations/cultural perspective

This perspective explains conflict in terms of the identity groups formed along religious, ethnic and customary beliefs, as major parties pursuing different goals which are primarily associated with their group interest. It derives its popularity from such writings as Samuel Huntington's piece, which was first published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993. According to Huntington, the source of contemporary conflict will cease to be ideological or economical and will occur as a result of divisions among humankind from different civilisations, defined in religio-cultural terms. Civilisations shape the worldview of the people living in them and thus create a fundamental difference amongst people of the world on issues such as governance, economics, diplomacy, familyhood and, most

especially, divinity (Huntington, 1993: 22-24). Huntington puts much emphasis on religion in his theory. According to him, in contemporary times, nation states are weakened as a source of identity and 'religion has moved in to fill this gap, often in the form of movements that are labelled fundamentalist' (Huntington, 1993: 26). He further opines that 'even more than ethnicity, religion discriminates sharply and exclusively among people' (1993: 27). The situation described by Huntington is not only limited to the international arena, as argued by some scholars. He postulates that clashes also occur at the 'micro-level' as 'adjacent groups along the fault lines between civilisations struggle over the control of territory' (1993: 29).

Buttressing Huntington's thesis are arguments raised in some scholarly circles which lay claim to the fact that identity groups — through their belief systems — promote violence. In the case of religion, there have been positions which state that most religions in contemporary times support the use of violence as it can be perceived as a sacred duty to sustain, promote and protect their interests (for example, Fox, 1997; 1999; Fox and Sandler, 2003; Juergensmeyer, 2003; 2007; McTernan, 2003; and Nelson-Pallmeyer, 2005). Ethnic nationalities also justify the use of force to secure their interests. In *Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon holds the view that the success of anti-colonialism is dependent on the extent to which a 'greater violence' is employed as a response to the violent process that gave birth to colonialism. Thus, violence is justified for the colonised Algerians (natives) against their colonisers (settlers), in their struggle for independence. This was also applied against the successors of the colonial masters in the post-colonial era, conceived as the new species of men who replaced the other species (Joseph, 2008).

The relative deprivation perspective

Under this perspective, theorists challenge the hypothesis of the culturalists in explaining the source of conflict. To them, 'the social fact that many people value shared identity is not intrinsically a source of conflict with other identity groups or the state' (Gurr, 2000: 5). Rather, what actually explains conflict in societies, especially the plural ones, is that it is a result of accumulated grievances from minority ethnic groups or excluded groups over matters of discrimination and deprivation. A major proponent of this position is Ted Gurr, who was synonymous with the relative deprivation thesis in the 1970s, on the cause of conflict. His recent research is predicated on the position that violent conflicts can be traced to the collective political actions of identity groups. Identity groups,

according to him, invoke their shared commonalities in situations where identity becomes the major determinant for the distribution of wealth and power in states. In situations where this is prevalent, there are bound to be advantaged and disadvantaged groups, as this promotes discrimination and repression of some groups against others. At this point, leaders of the minority groups mobilise members, who are mostly unemployed youths, to collectively address the structural anomalies responsible for their predicament (Gurr, 2000). According to Gurr:

For the disadvantaged groups, invidious treatment and repression are primary incentives for ethno-political action. Discrimination against members of ethnic groups contributes to poverty, powerlessness, and resentment of advantaged groups [...] discrimination and repression increase the strength of most people's identification with their kindred and motivate them to seek collective remedies. Skillful leaders build on these psychological dispositions to mobilise support for new and renewed campaigns of protest and ethno-rebellion (Gurr, 2000: 105).

Gurr further argues that discrimination in this context consists of various restrictions which might be political, economic or cultural and are imposed on a particular group as a result of public policy or social practice. Discrimination causes material inequalities, disempowerment, debasement of cultures and social victimisation. This therefore explains reasons why groups resort to violence in societies.

Similarly, based on her empirical study of twelve countries with cases of conflict, Beverly Crawford (1998) posits that groups do have the tendency to resort to violence, owing to their different interests. This happens, however, not on the basis of 'primordialism' or 'accumulated hatreds' but as a result of drastic changes in the structure of the society on account of economic globalisation and political liberalisation, 'where old social contacts permitted ethnic and religious criteria to guide the allocation of political and economic resources' (Crawford, 1998: 6). In other words, violent conflicts reign in a society where cultural identities shape the distribution of opportunities and privileges as a result of the feeling of favour or discrimination generated. Where identities dictate the status quo, there is an intense struggle between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The advantaged group struggles to maintain the status quo, while the discriminated group strives to displace it with the aim of effecting a re-ordering that favours its interests.

The greed and grievance perspective

This perspective which was originally developed to analyse the causes of rebellions and civil wars clearly depart from the preceding theories. Paul Collier, who is popular in this perspective, challenges the set of assumptions that characterise the culturalist and relative deprivation theses. Supported by several empirical studies, his studies advance the argument that there is no significant relationship between grievances over repression and discrimination by ethnic groups and conflict. According to him, 'ethnic minorities are just [as] likely to rebel with or without discrimination' (Collier, 2007: 23), and 'rebels usually have something to complain about' (Collier, 2007: 24). He has also invalidated the argument that plural societies are prone to conflict because of divergent interests. According to him, most societies which are peaceful in the world are multi-ethnic, while Somalia, a 'completely ethnically pure' state, has been thrown into a persistent 'bloody civil war' (Collier, 2007: 25). Collier's theory agrees that poverty is a major cause of conflict. To him, low-income countries are more prone to conflict and civil wars than high-income ones. The relationship between poverty and conflict is simultaneous. As much as poverty fuels conflict, conflict also leads to poverty. Capable young, unemployed men can easily be recruited in poor states to advance the cause of rebels because 'life itself is cheap, and joining a rebel movement gives these young men a small chance of riches' (Collier, 2007: 20).

Although poverty has been revealed as a strong variable to consider in explaining conflict, Collier and Hoeffler contend that the 'greed' variable (the selfish material motivations of the main actors in a conflict) is a stronger explanatory factor. They argue that poverty exemplified by low income and a slow or stagnated growth rate is connected to the greed of rebel leaders in states where the economy is strongly attached to natural resources such as oil, diamonds or timber. Natural resources increase the chances of leaders looting and acquiring funds to not only enrich themselves but also finance the conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002). Therefore, according to this perspective, a resource-rich country is at a higher risk of conflict than countries that are less dependent on natural resources.

The state capacity perspective

This relates conflict to the failure or weakness of states. It derives its source from the 'failed states' literature which conceives a state as failed

or failing when it has a weak capacity to deliver public goods, of which security is most paramount (Rotberg, 2002). States are expected to provide security against internal and external threats; protect the fundamental human rights of the people; ensure justice through an effective judicial system; provide effective health care; provide affordable housing to the people; and guarantee a good educational system for the citizens. The logic of state failure is premised on two major theoretical perspectives on the *raison d'être* of the state. These are the Weberian and welfarist conceptions of the state. Given Max Weber's theory (1958), the state is required to possess the legitimacy for the monopolisation of the use of force in order to maintain order in its defined territory. On the other hand, according to the welfarist, a state evolves for the purpose of ensuring the economic wellbeing of its citizens and the management of the economy (Milliken and Krause, 2002: 760). In accordance with this, Ali Mazrui highlights six functions of the state: sovereign control over territory; sovereign supervision of the nation's resources; effective and rational revenue extraction from people, goods, and services; building and maintaining an adequate national infrastructure; rendering basic social services; and governance and maintenance of law and order (Mazrui, 1995: 28).

A state that lacks the capacity to fulfil its primary obligations, as highlighted above, is more prone to conflict and violence. Thus, violent conflicts are expected in such states as a result of the following realities in a weak or failed state: (i) a deregulation of the use of force, as failed or failing states lack the capacity to monopolise the use of force expected from an ideal state; (ii) the loss of capability to control the borders and a loss of authority over sections of territory; (iii) the widespread use of arms due to their easy availability because of smuggling across the borders; (iv) high rates of urban crime and a rise of criminal syndicates, as a consequence of the porousness of borders; (v) the privatisation of security with high levels of patronage from mercenaries, private guards and security consultancy services in response to increased rates of crime; (vi) a loss of faith in the government's ability to provide security, resulting in citizens seeking refuge with non-state and informal actors such as the warlords, religious and ethnic leaders, and political elites; (vii) activation of ethnic, religious or clan solidarity and absolute loyalty to them for security; (viii) weak and corrupt law enforcement capacities, providing opportunities and lower costs for terrorist organisations to flourish; and (ix) easy recruitment of large numbers of insecure, aggrieved and unemployed youths for terrorist activities (Zartman, 1995; Rotberg, 2002; Piazza, 2008).

Nigerian Conflicts and the Theories

As alluded to earlier, there are overlapping identities in the parties involved in conflicts in Nigeria. This makes it difficult for a social scientist to rely on just one theory to analyse the phenomenon of conflict in the country. For instance, Nigeria is indeed a country composed of an army of unemployed youths, and is a place where poverty prevails. This makes the relative deprivation perspective and the grievance strand of Collier's theory relevant to explaining some of the conflicts bedevilling the country, especially if emphasis is to be placed on finding the root cause. It should further be noted that, to mobilise against competing groups in order to promote their own personal interests, ethno-religious and regional leaders often exploit the problem of unemployment and poverty. These personal interests are usually couched in ethnic and religious terminologies, hence giving the conflicts that emerge in the process an ethnic and religious outlook. Obviously, this might mislead some scholars into employing the civilisational perspective to analyse the conflicts. Clearly, this would be wrong as a lens to explain the phenomenon, as the real truth about the incidents would not be meaningfully unravelled if emphasis is placed just on ethnicity and religion.

Furthermore, the fact that the issue of natural resources is central to conflict in the Niger Delta region, for example, could make the 'greed' element of the greed and grievance theory plausible on the surface, to explain that type of violence. In fact, many studies have explained the Niger Delta crisis only from this angle, which has produced some useful outcomes. Yet, other inter-related factors such as poverty, unemployment, and state inability to address the grievances of the people in the region — which the rebel leaders build upon — cannot be neglected. Indeed, this brings to the fore the factor of state ability in explaining the many conflicts in Nigeria. It cannot be disputed that Nigeria is a country that has clearly exhibited degrees of failure in its institutional and functional capabilities over the years, which are caused by deliberate human errors. The state has not been able to deliver public goods to its citizens and has especially lacked the capacity to properly distribute goods among its people and resolve the conflicts that have arisen. Clearly, this makes the variable of the state's capacity an important factor in analysing conflict in Nigeria.

Therefore, social scientists involved in the enterprise of researching conflict in Nigeria must take into consideration the different theoretical perspectives, as highlighted above. The Nigerian situation defies a particular theory. The phenomenon of conflict in Nigeria is far more

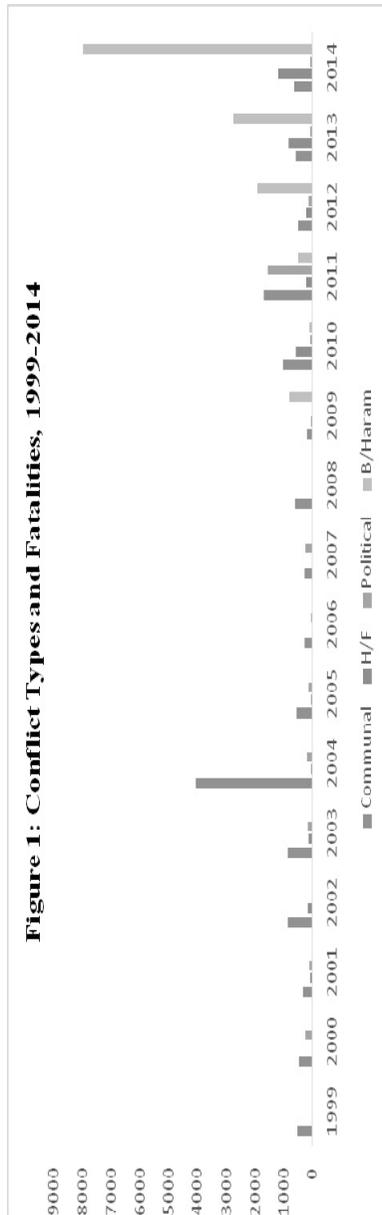
complicated than can be meaningfully explained using the many variables that exist in the different theories.

Conflict in Nigeria, 1999 - 2014: Trends and Magnitude

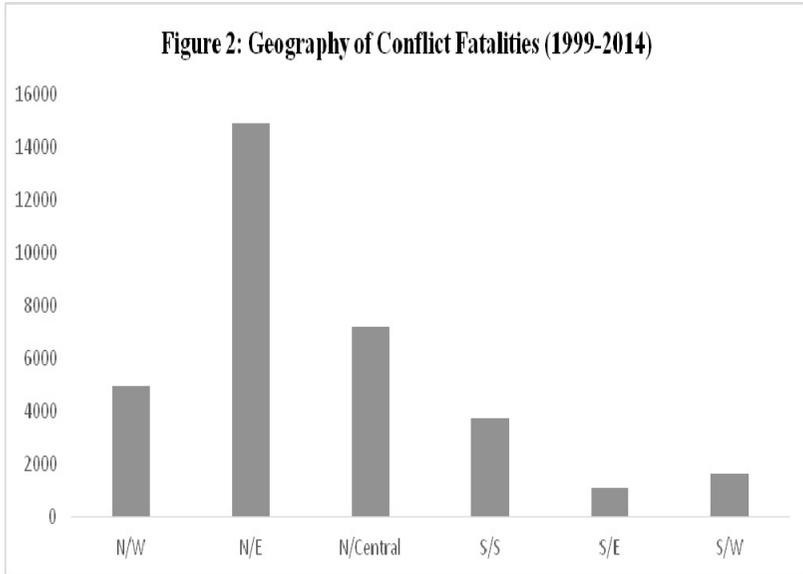
Unfortunately, reliable data on the incidents of conflict, like any other important events in Nigeria, are difficult to access given the poor management of records. Scholars researching the topic often rely on media reports, which have the major shortcoming of limited coverage of all conflict events in the country. In fact, media coverage of events is, in most cases, influenced by the special interests of the media organisations concerned. More pathetically, most of the existing databases that have been created for useful data on conflict events in the country are from foreign institutions. For example, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), which has its origins at the University of Sussex under the leadership of Clionadh Raleigh, provides country reports (including on Nigeria) on incidents of political violence and conflicts in developing countries, especially Africa and Asia. Also, the Nigeria Security Tracker (NST), created by the Council on Foreign Relations of the United States, documents conflict events in the country since 2011 after the emergence of the presidency of Goodluck Jonathan. In a similar vein, the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) of the John Hopkins University, under the leadership of Peter Lewis, established the database under the label of the Nigeria Social Violence Dataset (NSVD), to track events related to conflicts since 1998.

A close reading of the reports suggests that, since the return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria has been in transition from one conflict to the other in all corners of the country, with a painfully high number of fatalities. The conflicts are categorised under the following types: communal conflict, state-related violence, political violence, secessionist claims, and Boko Haram insurgency.

As demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2, Nigeria has apparently been under the siege of conflict since its return to democracy in 1999. This has manifested in different forms with wanton loss of life and property. The post-democratic transition period was immediately followed by increased communal conflicts defined by ethnic, religious, tribal, or cultural cleavages. Political conflicts, characterised by partisanship, have also featured prominently as a type of conflict in the country. The idea of politics in Nigeria based on the 'do-or-die' philosophy has been a major driver of this type of conflict, usually on the rise during the electoral period.



Source: Nigeria Social Violence Dataset (NSVD) (accessed 15 January 2016)



Source: Nigeria Social Violence Dataset (NSVD) (accessed 15 January 2016)

electoral period. As shown in Figure 1, the electoral years of 2007 and 2011 were notorious for this pattern of conflict (with 252 and 1561 deaths respectively). Insurgency in the Niger Delta reared its ugly head amidst intense inter-ethnic conflicts from 2003 until 2009, following the introduction of the amnesty programme. Clearly, this accounted for many deaths over the years in conflicts in the country. The most significant has been the Boko Haram insurgency, which surfaced in 2009 and has been a major contributor to conflict fatalities recorded over the years, as well as a major source of international concern.

In geographical terms, as shown in Figure 2, the northern region has recorded more incidents of conflict than other regions. Before Boko Haram started and overwhelmed the north-east, the north-west and north-central had experienced a series of ethno-religious and herders-farmers conflicts, especially during the 2000s. The ethnic conflicts and insurgency in the Niger Delta account for the prominence of the south-south in Figure 2. Other geo-political zones, the south-west and south-east, have relatively fewer incidents, although the regions have been a significant contributor to various incidents of ethnic, political, and urban conflicts.

Conclusion

As a natural occurrence in human societies, the phenomenon of conflict is a well-researched topic in various disciplines, especially the social sciences. There have been sufficient analyses of its conceptualisation and causes in the literature. In this chapter, it has been revealed that the concept of conflict, as seen by scholars, is the pursuit of incompatible goals by different parties, which may be expressed in violent and non-violent forms. The chapter further highlighted the major perspectives surrounding the understanding of the causes of conflict in the contemporary literature: the cultural/civilisational, relative deprivation, greed and grievance, and state capacity perspectives. It was suggested that the usefulness of each of these theories may not individually provide answers to the Nigerian situation because of the intersections of identities, and interests of parties involved in the different conflicts characterising the state. Using empirical data, the chapter further illustrated the trends and extent of conflict in Nigeria. Given the revelation that the democratic era has been much characterised by different forms of conflict in all the zones of the country, there is no denying the need for more research on the topic in Nigeria.

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CHAPTER TWO

ETHNICITY, ETHNIC CONFLICT AND THE ELUSIVE QUEST FOR PEACE IN POST-MILITARY NIGERIA

DELE BABALOLA

Introduction

The Nigerian state has, since its creation, continued to contend with certain centrifugal forces, such as ethnic diversity, and its leaders have continued to struggle with the task of ensuring that the people occupying the geographic space continue to live together in peace. The description of Nigeria as ‘multi-ethnic’, ‘deeply-divided’, and ‘multi-national’ stems partly from the fact that people of diverse ethnic backgrounds populate the country. Nigeria is the most ethnically diverse country in Africa with the exact number of ethnic groups unknown. There are three dominant territorially-concentrated ethnic identities – Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Igbo – together with some 350 linguistic minorities distributed across the country.¹

As in other deeply-divided countries, ethnic cleavage in Nigeria ‘appears permanent and all-encompassing, predetermining who will be granted and denied access to power and resources’ (Diamond and Plattner, 1994: xviii). This inherent centrifugal force explains why ethnic conflicts have become almost inevitable in the country. We are aware of the need to avoid the pitfalls of ethnic determinism when dealing with the issue of conflict, especially in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, but it is also important to understand that this social phenomenon remains a considerable factor in the distribution of Nigeria’s scarce resources. In Nigeria, ethnicity plays an important part in determining who gets what

¹ Kirk-Greene (1967) and Otite (1990) identified over 400 and 374 ethnic groups, respectively.

and when, and the competition with ‘others’ more often than not provokes tension. Therefore, the social and political, as well as the economic, import of ethnicity cannot be ignored if a thorough analysis of Nigerian politics and society is to be undertaken.

The resurgence of ethnic conflicts following the termination of military dictatorship in 1999, and the challenges this has posed to the country’s nascent democracy, deserves a special place in any political discourse on Nigeria. Conflicts that had been suppressed by successive military juntas were rekindled, manifesting in agitation for resource control,² true federalism,³ self-determination⁴ and outright secession, among others. In particular, there have been cries of marginalisation by the country’s ethnic groups. This dates back to the 1950s when minority groups, out of fear of domination, clamoured for separate constituent units. They became louder, especially in the south-south and south-east geo-political regions of the country, and citizens there have neither ceased to demand their own exclusive political space nor stopped decrying the lopsided nature of their country’s distributive politics.

The central argument in this chapter is that ethnicity has not disappeared in modern African societies, and ethnic conflicts are real. There is no denying that ethnic conflicts have been the hallmark of Nigerian politics and society, even before independence, but they assumed an unimaginable proportion in the post-1999 era and have clearly threatened the fabric of the country. What follows is, therefore, an examination of the causes and nature of ethnic conflicts in Nigeria. By ethnic conflict, we simply mean the ruthless rivalry that characterises ethnic relations. The remainder of the chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section is conceptual, in which we draw on mainstream literature on ethnicity in Africa to discuss such concepts as ethnic groups, ethnicity and ethnic conflicts, especially in relation to Nigeria. The second section focuses on the ethnicisation of politics in the post-independent era, and demonstrates that ethnic groups’ competition for political and economic resources engenders

² In the Nigerian context, the term ‘resource control’ means the right of a region or community to control the oil resources found in its domain.

³ By ‘true federalism’, Yoruba elite and their counterparts in the south-east in particular mean a federal practice in which the constituent units of the Federation enjoy more fiscal powers than the federal centre.

⁴ In Nigeria, ‘self-determination’ means the right of an ethnic group to manage its affairs. Generally, self-determination is a political weapon usually employed by marginalised groups in their struggle for a just society.