INSURGENCY IN NIGERIA AND THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONHOOD
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ABSTRACT
Insurgency in Nigeria has become an endemic social ill taking toll on all categories of members of the Nigerian society as terror is unleashed with a corresponding incidence on the various classes of people in the society (the wealthy and poor; young and old; male and female; Indigenes and aliens almost alike). This condition which poses a serious security challenge to national integration is enshrined through the perpetuation of kidnappings, terrorism, etc. The study uses the library research data collection method and data were collected using secondary sources with rapid appraisal assessment. The study is framed on the basis of conflict theory of post-colonial states. The study suggest that true federalism, liberal democracy and improved political structure among other measures should be adopted to strengthen our internal democracy; installation of youth mobilization programme through massive job creation for all categories of the working class youth as well as resolution of internal grievances.

Keywords: Insurgency, Kidnapping Challenge, Nationhood, Kidnapping, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION
Insurgency is a condition of revolt against a government that is less than an organised revolution and that is not recognised as belligerency (Peter, 1964). It is the rising up against what is believed to be a constituted or legitimate authority. The term "insurgency" is used in describing a movement's unlawfulness and capacity to pose a threat to a state or seen as such by another authority, especially when viewed from the backdrop of its not being authorised, and therefore executing a cause that is illegitimate (Shafer, 1988). When used as in the consideration above, those causing the uprising are seen as rebels, whereas those rising up will see the authority itself as being illegitimate.

Insurgency is an act of rebellion against a legitimate authority. However, such an authority would have acquired the recognition by an international body such as the United Nations, while those taking part in the rebellion are not recognised as belligerents. It becomes deduced from the foregoing that if there is a rebellion against the authority (for example the United Nations) and those taking part in the rebellion are not recognised as belligerents, the rebellion is an insurgency. The United States Department of Defence (DOD, 2007) defines insurgency as an organised movement aimed at overthrowing a constituted government through the use of subversion and armed conflict. The threats of insurgency has intensified and assumed global dimension in recent times. However, not all rebellions are insurgencies. A rebellion may not be viewed as an insurgency if a state of belligerency exists between one or more sovereign states and rebel forces, even if the revolt takes the form of armed rebellion.

For example, during the American Civil War, the Confederate States of America was not recognised as a sovereign state, but it was recognised as a belligerent power and so Confederate warships were given the same rights as United States warships in foreign ports (Goldstein and McKercher, 2003). Some rebellions against an existing authority may be accompanied with non-violent act. One of such example is the case of non-violent rebellions using civil resistance, as in the People Power Revolution in the Philippines in the 1980s that ousted President Marcos (Roberts and Ash, 2009).

Having established the character of the Nigerian state which impinges on its ability to manage armed conflicts, an insurgency can be seen as an armed uprising against it. It is an organised rebellion aimed at overthrowing the constituted government of Nigeria through the use of subversion and armed conflict. There is therefore, an evidence of insurgency in Nigeria, with the presence of armed groups in various parts of the country who rise up in rebellion against the government. The ultimate goal of an insurgency is to challenge the existing government for control of all or a portion of its territory, or force political concessions in sharing political power. An insurgency can be fought via counter-insurgency warfare, and may also be opposed by measures to protect the population, and by political and economic actions of various kinds aimed at undermining the insurgents’ claims against the incumbent regime (Peter, 1964).

The exploratory approach is adopted in the study and using relevant literature, the insurgency conditions in Nigeria have been discussed. In doing this, consideration have been given to kidnapping, terrorism and militancy as forms of insurgency. The study uses the library research data collection method and data were collected using secondary sources with rapid appraisal technique (RAT). The rapid appraisal technique (RAT) is a data input and assessment technique which allows for an objective, transparent, and multi-disciplinary evaluation of data. The study is framed on the basis of conflict theory of post-colonial states. The aim of this paper is to investigate how insurgencies conduce to a ravaging Nigeria economy, and its
The crime of kidnapping can occur if an individual against his or her will is seized and detained by another individual in violation of the individual’s fundamental human rights. This position supports Goldberg (2000) who argued that kidnapping is a criminal act involving seizure, confinement, abduction, subjection, forcefulness, acts of threats, acts of terror and servitude. Therefore it is the crime of unlawful capture, seizure, forcible, wrong and illegal detention of a person against his or her will by abductors.

The challenge of kidnapping is apparent in the security threat it poses and the incidence of the menace on the population. Kidnapping has evolved over time from the hitherto infant or child abduction while asleep “kid-nap” to a constructed and systematized pattern of crime often with political and economic undertone (Tzanelli, 2009). In some extremist traditional practices particularly in stratified societies, it is shown that Slaves and other lower status categories of persons have sometimes been victims of ritual killings (Achebe, 2008).

Vold (1979) noted that, in classical criminology, the behaviour of the kidnapper is “a product of freewill or the choice of the individual, who assesses the potential benefits of committing the crime against its potential costs”. The Nigeria Criminal Code’s punitive prescription on act of kidnapping is that, any person who unlawfully imprisons another person against his or her will and without his or her consent or unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him or her from applying to a court for his or her release or from disclosing to any other person where he is imprisoned, or prevent any person’s entitlement to have access to him or her place of imprisonment, is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for ten years (Tar Hon, 2004; Okonkwo, 1990).

While many insurgencies include terrorism, there is no widely accepted definition of terrorism in international law. However, the United Nations sponsored working definitions as drafted by Alex P. Schmid for the Policy Working Group on the United Nations and Terrorism in 2002, delineate some broad characteristics of the phenomenon to include that terrorism is a criminal act, meant to inflict dramatic and deadly injury on civilians and to create an atmosphere of fear, generally for a political or ideological (whether secular or religious) purpose.


The Nigerian State and Insurgency

In modern political literature, as observed in Okolie and Chime (2008), the idea of state is often linked to the notion of an impersonal, legal or constitutional order with the capacity of administering and controlling a given territory. The roles of the state are many and varied, but for Onuoha (2012), the chief responsibility of the State is the maintenance of social and political order.

The history of Nigeria’s nationhood spans from the time it became a colony of Britain till date. Modern Nigeria emerged from the fusion in 1914, of what hitherto was seen as two British colonial territories. The amalgamation was an act of colonial fiscal and administrative convenience. It occurred mainly because British colonizers desired a contiguous colonial territory stretching from the North to the South, bordering at the Atlantic Coast, and because Northern Nigeria, one of the merging units, was not able to adequately meet with its administrative expenditures, while Southern Nigeria, the other British colony, generated revenue in excess of its administrative expenses. It was perceived therefore, that having one big colony instead of two smaller ones would enable the buoyant section to subsidize the fiscally challenged one (Falola et al, 1991). Within the above context, along with the existing disparities among the constituting groups, fans an ember of ideological differences which have been a source of political disagreements and suspicions between and within the two sections of Nigeria since colonial times. The Nigerian state has consistently failed to fulfil even the most basic obligations of a modern government, thereby opening the door for discontents and resentment across several aspects of social life, and provoking the surge by groups to challenge the legitimacy of the state and its constitutional authority.
Insurgency has posed serious security challenges for the nation as it affects foreign as well as indigenous investments, thereby hampering economic growth and leaving the country to face escalating youth unemployment. This and other social maladies present a negative image on the country. These distractive forces that severely challenge nation building, include; militancy, terrorism and kidnappings, and seem to be undeterred by government ultimate effort to oppose it. The restive oil militants from Southern Nigerian oil-producing region have over the years ravaged and undermine the oil economy, (the lubricating mainstay of Nigerian nationhood) and have largely eroded Nigeria’s revenue earning capacity. Acts of terrorism and kidnapping in Nigeria such as perpetrated by the Boko Haram sect in many parts of Northern Nigeria, but particularly in the North-eastern part is devastating, and cripples economic and social development.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, Niger Delta militants and a host of other ethno-nationalist groups like the O’dua Peoples’ Congress (OPC), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), and the Arewa Youth Congress (AYC) — all of them representing Nigeria’s tripod of the biggest ethnic groups, Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba, and Igbo — partook to varying degrees in the narrative of calling into question the authority and legitimacy of the state. Symbols, institutions, and personnel of the state also came under attack (Duruji, 2013). These organisations were made up of youths who were virtually unemployed, poor and frustrated with the system of government that exploits their resources, pollute their environment and leave their areas underdeveloped. The indigenes expected adequate compensations with infrastructural developments such as good roads, hospitals, good schools, modern commercial trading centers, good drinking water, and even award of scholarships to the indigenous sons and daughters for further studies as remuneration for the minerals extracted from their communities. The failures to reward those communities plus the stench from unemployment ignited and heightened the internal grievances against the Federal Government and the oil companies (Ordu, 2015). These acts of disservice to the indigenous communities continue to breed and build resentment and rancour among the local population. It is within this circumstance that these ‘local patriots’ particularly the youth takes up arms against government in an organised revolt.

The roll of insurgent groups in Nigeria increases by every passing period and include; Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta Revolutionary Crusaders (NDRC), Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), and Niger Delta Avengers (NDA). While insurgency continue to pose direct territorial and juridical challenge to Nigeria’s sovereignty, the current territorialised characterisation of the groups adds a deadly dimension to its usual character of terror tactics of carnage through arson, shootings, suicide bombings, raids, and general massacres.

Corruption especially at the leadership level is the major factor that instigates these myriads of social maladies, and one of Nigeria’s main challenges hampering efforts to combat insurgencies. This corruption thrives partly because many citizens and groups understand the state to be illegitimate; undeserving of loyalty, an entity whose resources can be appropriated for personal gratification (Ochonu, 2015). In the recent past, defence budgets were reportedly creamed off, leaving ill-equipped and ill-compensated soldiers to face a deadly, well-armed group of extremists. Many of Nigeria’s political class have been indicted of whopping loots of the national treasury for luxury, flying Nigeria’s naira in foreign accounts, while millions of Nigerians are living at various sub-standards of living. These groups of Nigerian leaders can best be described as deadly without armed weapons. The broad question that remains pertinent therefore is what the Nigerian government is doing to regulate human conduct toward accountability, provide a framework for a viable social order and promoting harmonious coexistence, as her primary responsibility. It is worrisome that successive governments have taken steps to forestall and checkmate the lee ways of corruption, but close to nothing have been achieved in this direction. It is even more worrisome when the government becomes aware of impending threat to peace and security and fails to act to forestall disorder (Onuoha, 2011). So far, only lips services seem to be the strongest commitment identified as part of government effort to contain with this menace. A typical example is the Chibok Girls saga, which would better have been a genre of fiction.

The State is the custodian and provider of security, but given the inability of the Nigerian State to effectively perform its core functions of providing or guaranteeing security for the people, Kwaja (2009) regretted that the incapacitation on the part of the State has led to the weakening of its bargaining strength and capacity, thereby aggravating the challenges already posed to national security.

The result is that the continuing insurgency witnessed in the country in the past decade raises serious questions about the effectiveness and efficiency of the state and its institutions in managing armed conflicts. An insurgency can be fought via counter-insurgency
warfare, and may also be opposed by measures to protect the population, and by political and economic actions of various kinds aimed at undermining the insurgents’ claims against the incumbent regime (Peter, 1964).

Types and levels of criminality in Nigeria

The emergence and escalation of violent crimes in Nigeria may be attributed to several factors including; the proliferation of arms and ammunitions in the hands of private individuals during the early post civil war era, with its attendant upsurge in the use of dangerous weapons and killings in Nigeria, a condition facilitated by the thirty months Nigerian civil war, between 1967 and 1970 (Igbo, 2007). The ensuing austere economic and social conditions in the aftermath of the war predispose particularly the youth to take to crime. Again, the level of economic loss through wanton destruction of lives and property; and social decay attributed to the loss of traditional structures thrust the nation into chaos, such that many more persons became susceptible. Consequently, the nation was thrown into a repetitively convulsive social scenario of related vices, including armed robbery, murder, kidnapping, cultism and lately insurgencies. The political class is not exonerated as they mobilize political thugs with weaponry in order to gain advantage over opponents. Ikpang (2009) observed that the mobilization of political thugs with weapons during election process makes weapons available for further commission of other types of crime after the election, stressing that such weapons are usually not withdrawn from these political thugs after the election, and this creates more impediment for the control of violent crimes in the society.

The evolving social conditions, aggravated by the deteriorating standard of education and technical training for the youths, erratic political atmosphere, economic recession, high rate of corruption by particularly political leaders, unemployment amidst high population explosion, poor wages and poor living standards all constitute apparent indices of a weak and failing state and present grave danger for the nation and therefore undermines its integration. The above social terrain encouraged conditions of anomie and intense violence and insecurity and serves as a breeding ground for ethnic militia and militant groups to thrive (Ochonu, 2015).

WAY FORWARD

In cases where insurgents are unlikely to collapse quickly, governments need to consider deal-making as an alternative to protracted warfare, even if the groups pursue undesirable goals. But generally speaking, there is need to present a more serious discussion around the question of whether Nigerian groups and ethnic nationalities want to remain together as one country and if so under what type of structural arrangement. As reiterated in Ochonu (2015), the legitimacy burden of the colonial origin of the Nigerian state is both real and rhetorical — real because Nigeria was crafted without the consultative input of the groups that would constitute it; rhetorical because that foundational verity has become an overarching alibi for different projects seeking to undermine the state in favour of alternative parochial political imaginations. Evidence from Nigeria’s vibrant online and physical discursive spaces suggest that the overwhelming sentiment across the political and ethno-religious divides favour an arrangement that grants considerable economic and political autonomy to regions and states and preserves only a weakened common center charged with national defence, foreign policy, and international trade. Still, other sentiments and preferences cannot be ruled out without an honest, vigorous, and unrestricted deliberation on the possible trajectories of national coexistence. Only a resolution of this foundational question can arrest the crisis of illegitimacy analysed above.

Other options to the way forward

Provision of quality employment opportunities

Unemployment has been implicated as one of the strongest factor for youth restiveness and erratic violent behaviour. This is contained in a study conducted by Adegoke (2015), where unemployment was by a wide margin of 88% identified as the contributory factor for the youths engaging in kidnapping operations and other criminal acts. To solve this problem, job creation must be in the frontline of government policy thrust and budgetary allocations, as some of the unemployed youths are university graduates and able-bodied individuals who are virtually frustrated with lack of employment opportunities. There should be no alibi to infrastructural development through the provisions of basic amenities such as: good roads, hospitals, good schools, reliable Power supply, modern commercial trading centers and good drinking water system. Massive quality job creation, along with other economic incentives will create the needed ambience to engage the affected categories of persons for a crime free Nigerian society.

Measures to improve on the worsening political instability

Nigeria is trapped in a worsening political crisis exacerbated by inherent antagonistic, rivalrous, nepotistic and sentimental tendencies between the parts of the Nigerian social system. As noted in Ochonu (2015), one of the problems dividing the North and the South of the country is that of diverging orientations and aspirations. This problem turns on differential levels and provokes several asymmetrical relationships. The outcome of this asymmetry is a bifurcated political, cultural, and aspirational modernity that destroys national
solidarity. Symbolic and educational investments in bridging this divide has to be part of a long term strategy for saving the Nigerian state and building it up as a legitimate entity in the eyes of citizens and constituents.

Resolution of internal grievances

As observed in Ordu (2015), the Nigerian communities are blessed with the abundance of mineral resources and crude oil reserves, especially in the Niger Delta Regions. The contemporary crime of kidnapping the expatriates and the staff of the oil companies slowly began with the communities’ grievances against the Federal government and the oil companies for usurping their mineral resources without compensations. The oil companies such as the Exxon Mobile, Shell Exploration Company, Agip, and others, have tapped their resources, polluted their environments, and generally neglected the communities where those mineral reserves are located. The environmental degradation was quite obvious and offensive to the communities. This negligent behaviour ignited aggression against the oil companies and expatriates. The unemployed youths in the communities formed internal militant organisations as a means of drawing national and international attention to their demands for compensations. Other areas where internal grievances occur include; the majority-minority question, the issue of true federalism and liberal democracy, resource control and revenue allocation.

CONCLUSION

In spite of this seemingly successful effort to rehabilitate the militants of the Niger Delta, it is not difficult to see that the threat of a new oil revolt lurks, since the fundamental problems and contradictions of an extractive economy remains, and that the threat posed by the nexus of rapid oil exploration and poverty is merely in remission, waiting for an opportune moment of triggering events. The interplay between these intersecting realities portend more intense contestation over the terms of revenue distribution, over the compensatory and developmental trajectories of oil revenue allocation to the Niger Delta, and over the control of national political power and with it the allocative prerogative of governance. The tide seems to have turned against Boko Haram militarily and, although, like all insurgencies driven by extremist fervour, it may continue to launch terrorist attacks on soft targets. Although the immediate threat to Nigeria’s sovereignty and territorial integrity will dissipate over time, its retarding effect on the economy shall be felt for a long time. However, this short-term stability, shaky and fraught with sporadic violence, would conceal the deeper fissures of the Nigerian nation. A diminished Boko Haram may join the Niger Delta and its escalation. As long as those social conditions persist, they will remain serious impediments to the resolutions of the Nigeria crises. These recommendations have been presented so that measures should be taken to improve on the worsening political instability, massive and quality employment opportunities should be created, and resolution of internal grievances. Infrastructural development through the provisions of basic amenities such as: good roads, hospitals, good schools, modern commercial trading centers and good drinking water system are essential in the governance of the society.

REFERENCES


