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STATE LEGITIMACY AND THE MULTI-FACETED NATURE OF VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA: THE BOKO HARAM AND NIGER-DELTA INSURGENCIES IN FOCUS

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Abstract

The Boko Haram and Niger Delta insurgencies are among the main causes of violent death in Nigeria. In addition to being the chief purveyors of deaths, the two insurgencies have led to the displacement of thousands of people and wanton destruction of properties. Their onsets have been linked to such drivers as state dysfunction, governance crisis, border porosity, benighted educational sector, ethno-religious marginalization and a politics of exclusion. Accordingly, addressing these perceived drivers is often considered an important step towards degrading the insurgencies. This article which utilizes the qualitative method and relies on the assumptions of the frustration-aggression theory, disentangles from such emphasis by arguing that such perceived drivers are symptoms of state legitimacy crisis and not necessarily the direct precursors of insurgency in Nigeria. The article proceeds to link the two insurgencies to the festering state legitimacy crisis that was foisted by colonial rule and has been bolstered by post-colonial administrations. While not necessarily implying that insurgency is an inevitable outcome of state legitimacy crisis, this article argues that more than any other explanation, the BH and ND insurgencies can be located in the fault lines of the Nigerian state architecture within which is embedded conditions that predispose people toward violence. Finally, the article submits that to effectively resolve the BH and ND insurgencies, there is a need to re-visit the structural basis of the Nigerian federation with a view to smothering exclusion, ethno-religious marginalization, poverty and their likes.

Keywords: Insurgency, Boko Haram, Niger Delta, restructuring, state legitimacy. Nigeria

Introduction

Anthologies on the causes of violent insurgency worldwide are diverse just as the literature on insurgency in Nigeria is proliferating - which makes it less contentious that several authors have

portrayed Nigeria as a country hounded by large swathes of atrocious groups pursuing manifold ends (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). These supposedly deviant groups usually range from criminal gangs who engage in acts of brigandage to more methodical groups embroiled in self-determination agitation or outright rebellion against the state. Prominent amongst these are the militant groups in the silk-stocking Niger Delta (ND) region and the Boko Haram (BH) in the north eastern region of Nigeria which inter alia, have heralded a wave of complex emergencies and led to catholic apprehension across the length and breadth of the country, leading one writer to the conclusion that Nigeria is an unfinished state in dire need of rehabilitation (Magstadt, 2006).

Almost too often, many authors are adept at linking the BH and ND insurgencies to such drivers as governance failure, poverty, weak security infrastructure, benighted educational sector, ethno-religious egotism and a politics of exclusion (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005; Diamond, 1988). These vantage points, while undoubtedly insightful, are to this author's mind, narrow readings of the insurgencies. Instead, it is contended that the ND and BH insurgencies are more or less fallouts of the apparent colonially-bequeathed state legitimacy crisis that has plagued successive regimes in Nigeria and concocted the parturition of violent uprisings in the country. This goes some way toward explaining why the appellation 'polyglot' is often characterized as a fitting portrayal of Nigeria's identity diversity.

As a consequence, Nigeria's mammoth identities have over the decades, proven enigmatic to govern. Since its inception, craftsmen of Nigeria's statehood and successive political leaders have continued to grapple with multitudinous challenges in a bid to gain acceptance and allegiance. The key task has been on how to contrive governmental systems in such a manner as to allow the country's disputatious ethno-religious categories some measure of control over their own resources while preserving national unity. Successive governments' seeming abysmal failure to effectively accommodate these concerns has probably deepened the legitimacy polemic. Clearly then, this author argues that ethnicity, religion, poverty, exclusion and their likes should be viewed as symptoms of state legitimacy crisis and not necessarily the direct precursors of insurgency in Nigeria.

In order to effectively advance this proposition, the paper is organized into seven sections – Introduction; Legitimacy crisis: conceptual and analytical framework; Background to insurgency in Nigeria; Explaining the BH and ND insurgencies in Nigeria; Understanding the role of legitimacy in the insurgencies; Official responses to the BH and ND insurgencies; Towards intercepting violent insurgency in Nigeria and Conclusions.

Legitimacy crisis in Nigeria: conceptual and analytical framework

Legitimacy, in the context of this article refers to the manner a government or social system attempts to justify its existence and power (Giovanni, 2010). There is no gainsaying that every government seeks to legitimize its rule - to justify it and to consolidate its power position. Even in antiquity, traditional authorities employed the use of myth, magic or acclaimed links to deities to legitimize their rule. Today, modern governments hinge their legitimacy on popular elections and written constitutions. Thus, the extent of a state's legitimacy substantially determines how sustainable and peaceful its democratic progress will be. A state's legitimacy is considered to be in 'crisis' when the strains within that state have reached a point where the whole system cannot cope and is in imminent danger of collapse (Meyers, 2004). This crisis emerges when public attitudes suggest a sharp decline in the confidence levels in societal leadership and the perceived

failure of the state to respond to fundamental human needs (Ogundiya, 2009). It may also occur in the process of a society's transition from tradition to modernity, or when a political system no longer exhibits the capacity to allow for the upward social mobility of new social groups. It accordingly emanates from the frustration of the expectation of the governed.

In most democratic climes, legitimacy ultimately resides with the people because political power is purportedly acquired and exercised through the ballot. In this vein, the popular will of the people is considered the basis upon which democratic regimes legitimize themselves. Also, under democracies, political legitimization is garnered through the medium of political culture while legitimacy acts as the catalyst upon which such cultural norms are transported. As such, political legitimacy is pivotal especially for gauging political authority as a key corollary of political power - for when a regime is widely accepted by those subject to it - it is described as legitimate, when it is repudiated - it is dismissed as illegitimate (OECD, 2010). Thus, we can very easily speak of the authority of officials, but only of the legitimacy of a regime - legitimacy is therefore revealed as a much more eclectic concept; a government perceived as illegitimate by its own subjects would in addition to failing to stamp its authority find the task of earning their trust difficult.

Legitimacy reportedly results from three sets of reasons: it may be pragmatically based, that is persons or social groups perceive that the state will pursue their interests directly or indirectly; it can be morally based, that is people perceive the goals and modus operandi of the state to be morally tenable and it can be cognitively based, implying that the state form is accepted as necessary or inevitable (Hagmann & Hoehne, 2007). Hence, legitimacy is not so much a question of legal validity as attempts to identify the legitimacy of regimes via their legal validity have proven unproductive (Bradbury, 2008).

Asika (1994) sought to erase any doubts as to the primacy of 'legitimacy' in untangling Nigeria's challenges. He argues that the crisis of legitimacy is at the center of the national question in Nigeria and that all other questions plaguing the country are secondary and arise from the problem of legitimacy. Following Asika's sentiments, several explanations have been advanced to explain state legitimacy crisis in Nigeria. Olorunsola cited in Ogundiya (2009) identifies some of them to include differing impacts of colonialism on Nigeria's peoples, which has manifested in uneven educational attainment; the loss of idealism; the reckless pursuit of personal wealth by the elite; the politics of cultural sub-nationalism; the inability to make national institutions truly national; and the seeming preference for patchwork and panel-beating in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2009).

While the existence of Nigeria as one indissoluble sovereign federation continues to be threatened by non-state actors, the legitimacy of successive governance regimes has often been contested, perhaps given the ethnic, religious, or regional nature of their authority composition (OECD, 2010). The roots of state legitimacy crisis in Nigeria can be gleaned from the country's etymology. The arena now known as Nigeria was birthed in 1914 with the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates. The merger was deemed necessary allegedly because the British felt it made more sense to administer one big entity rather than two glaringly disparate protectorates. Moreover, since the southern colony was reportedly more buoyant, it is alleged that the main objective of the merger was to enable the richer south support the poorer north (Diamond, 1988).

This structural arrangement was done without any consultation with the Nigerian people. In the years leading up to independence, the disparity in ethnic, religious and cultural orientations amongst Nigerians began to manifest through acrimony, suspicion and distrust. The northern region which is obviously endowed with fewer resources compared to the south was allegedly favoured to assume political control of the new nation to the disenchantment of the southerners. It was this structural deficiency which was bequeathed to independent Nigeria that eventually laid the foundation for the country's state legitimacy crisis. Small wonder, successive Nigerian leaders since independence have always struggled to promote unity amongst the disparate ethnic and religious categories that comprise the federation. Despite their efforts, the legitimacy crisis remains acute, endemic and seemingly intractable (Rotberg, 2002). These inherent fault lines in the Nigerian state have reduced the prospects for its movement towards sustainable peace and democracy (Higazi, 2013). Against this backdrop, violent groups such as the BH and ND insurgents have emerged and taken advantage of this structural deficiency to pursue religious extremism or to advocate for resource control. As things stand, the Nigerian state and its institutions confront a legitimacy crisis which partly explains the rising trend of insurgency and also impacts on the handling of the BH and Niger Delta uprisings (Abdulhamid, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

This study is underpinned by the Frustration – aggression theory. The theory is associated with the writings of Leeds (1978) and Dollard (1939). The major tenet of this theory is that frustration always leads to some form of aggression (Leeds, 1978; Dollard, 1939). As theorized, frustration breeds hostility and produces anger (an emotional readiness to aggression). Hostile aggression springs from anger. The principle works everywhere. For instance, Ivo and Feierabend (1972; 1968) applied the frustration – aggression theory in a study of political instability in 84 nations. It was found that when people in rapidly modernizing nations become urbanized and literacy improves (as being experienced in Nigeria today) they become more aware of their material conditions which inevitably prompts them to seek improvements. However, since affluence usually diffuses slowly, the increasing gap between the rich and the poor intensifies frustration and unprovoked aggression ensues and escalates. These aggressions are sometimes manifested as crimes and violence in Nigeria as seen in the cases of the Boko Haram insurgency and militancy in the Niger Delta region.

Background to insurgency in Nigeria

In the 1950s, religiously inspired violence engulfed the northern city of Kano, previously touted as a city of harmony. That conflagration, also known as the Kano riots of 1953 was probably the first violent paroxysm between northerners and southerners in Nigeria. It was reportedly fanned by a deep-lying discord roused by the ethno-religious complexion of the then political parties in Nigeria (Adeniran, 1974). The history of post-independence Nigeria has also been a history of tempestuous revolts. In the 1960s, the onset of rancorous rivalry among the main political parties transformed the country into a violent arena. The Tiv riots of 1960 and 1964 left over a hundred people dead, signalling the birth of large scale politically impelled conflict in Nigeria. The Niger Delta Vigilantes, led by Adaka Boro allegedly staged a rebellion in 1966 against the Nigerian state to protest the marginalization of the people of the Niger Delta and the minorities of the Igbo dominated eastern region.

Also, the Igbo massacre of 1966 caused partly by the coup staged by Igbo officers that same year as well as pre-existing sectarian tensions between the Igbo and local Muslims sparked a wave of instability that culminated in the secession of Biafra and the resulting civil war of 1967. In the heat of the war in 1969, some peasants reportedly attacked the Agodi Federal Prison in Ibadan and freed inmates in what became known as the AgbekoyaParapo uprising. The revolt was reportedly triggered by obnoxious government policies that marginalized local farmers in the sale of agricultural produce (Reno, 2004). Series of successive coups and counter coups also served to create an atmosphere of insecurity and violence in the country.

The 1980s witnessed resurgence in violence, the most notable of which was the Maitatsine conflict which began in Kano in 1980 and spread to Bulumkutu in Maiduguri, Jemeta in Yola and Kaduna in reaction to the death of Mohammed Marwa, a radical Muslim cleric. Between 1991 and 2000 alone, over 30 violent upsurges were recorded in different parts of Nigeria, especially in the North central region. The *Shari* uprisings which began in Kaduna in 2000 resulted in deaths estimated at over 5000 and loss of property worth millions of dollars (OECD, 2010). The BH uprising that became fully-fledged in 2009 has reportedly left over 20,000 people dead and has hatched the most comprehensive refugee crisis yet in Nigeria's kaleidoscopic history.

Southern Nigeria has not been immune to uprisings. The advent of ND militia movements and the prodigious escalation of other syndicates in the region since the early 1990s have furthered the parlous state of the domestic security equation in the region. Notable amongst the groups includes, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Oodua People's Congress (OPC), the Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA), the Bakassi boys and the more recent Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) among many others. Since the 1990s, Niger Delta militia groups have been executing wanton attacks on oil installations and kidnapping of expatriate oil workers to bespeak their grievances toward the state (Aghedo&Osumah, 2012).

The Amnesty programme introduced during the Yar'Adua/Goodluck Jonathan's administrations (2007-2015) amortized the ND agitations and momentarily restored relative calm to the region. However, since Goodluck Jonathan, an Ijaw from the ND conceded defeat in the 2015 presidential elections leading to Buhari's emergence as president, hostilities have fully resumed in the region with emerging dynamics from daily reports (Nwankpa, 2015). And new militia groups are unfolding i.e. the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) and claiming responsibility for renewed attacks on oil installations.

Explaining the BH and ND insurgencies in Nigeria

The BH and ND phenomena have been linked to a legion of factors. One frequently identified factor is state dysfunction/fragility. The Nigerian state has been variously described as fragile, dysfunctional, weak, failing, moribund and pariah in the literature on politics and development (Magstadt, 2006; Rotberg, 2004; Fearon&Laiton, 2003). The state's inability to effectively manage diversity, corruption, rising inequality between the rich and poor, gross violation of human rights, environmental degradation, contestations over land and resource distribution are some of the underlining causes of violent insurgency in the country since the enthronement of democratic rule in 1999 (Kwaja, 2009:107). These have been worsened by the inability of the state to effectively deliver on core functions of providing security for the people which has left the state too weak to

checkmate insurgency. Dysfunctional or fragile states usually lack the capacity to monopolize the use of coercive force and to guarantee peace, stability, security, and economic prosperity for their populations (Oladesu, 2009). These existential challenges are seen as having contributed to the rise of insurgency in Nigeria (Ochonu, 2015).

Another such factor is Nigeria's alleged lopsided federal structure. Nigeria is a medley of identities, defined by an inter-ethnic power rivalry that has gravely blighted the political process (Afigbo, 1989). Under conditions of scarcity, inequalities and uneven access to economic and political resources, ethnicity and religion have provided convenient platforms for political mobilization (Melson & Wolpe, 1971). Despite the fact that the ethnic demography of Nigeria remains largely conjectural (Anita and Haruna, 1997; Otite, 1990) there is a common agreement, regardless, that the country's ethnic groups are at least 250, and broadly divided into 'majorities' and 'minorities'. The numerically, and more politically influential ones are the composite Hausa-Fulani of the north, the Yoruba of the southwest, and the Igbo of the southeast (Mustapha, 2005). All the other groups are usually accorded different degrees of minority status, justifying the colonial perceptions that Nigeria naturally falls into three regions – the north, the west and the east (Blench, 2003). Ordinarily, these complex political cleavages were not direct threats to state survival. However, it was the introduction of the tri-polar federal system upon which political parties of the First Republic were based that alienated the minority groups and encouraged them to either align with the ruling party in other regions to agitate for new states or to embark on self-determination struggles with demands for separate states through riots, revolts and threats of secession (Ekekwe, 1986; Jega, 2000). This unresolved problem of imbalance in the federal set up has whipped up primordial sentiments around which the rise of separatist agitations and violent insurgency can be discerned.

The mobilization of ethnic and religious identity to gain advantage in situations of conflict and competition is another case in point. Often, given the contentious nature of Nigeria's statehood that has foregrounded the legitimacy problem, members of ethnic and religious groups in the country are in a constant struggle for a larger share of the national 'cake'. This cake is normally considered accessible only through the instrumentality of state power. To be able to access it, ethno-regional and religious groups are often known to resort to primordial sentiments in the bid to capture state power. Because contestations for political power is a zero-sum game in Nigeria with the winner taking all and the loser losing all, groups who fail to win often express their disappointments through insurgency or other forms of violent agitations. Understandably then, religion and ethnicity are regarded as the most politically salient identities and the main triggers of insurgency in Africa (Brooks, 2005).

By the same token, when a state lacks the capacity to meet the yearnings and aspirations of its people, that state creates the conditions that allow its impoverished population to become easy instruments for mobilization and indoctrination. While it is true that man cannot leave by bread alone, it is a more fundamental truth that man cannot leave without bread. This averment underlines the importance of material conditions in discerning political and group action. Accordingly, poverty or deprivation has for long been considered a major cause of conflict and discord in human societies everywhere; it is a vicious cycle which lies at the root of insurgency, corruption, fraud and embezzlement in society (Imobighe (2006). Its effects are pervasive; a hungry person is always angry, never productive and finds succour in ethnicity and religion, which explains why the notion of violence is paramount to him. In the absence of food, shelter

good health, good education and employment, the next line of action is usually to destabilize the polity. There is no gainsaying that poverty is quite prevalent in northeastern part of Nigeria (BH's epicenter) as well as in the creeks of the Niger Delta region which perhaps explains the emergence of insurgency in these areas.

Moreover, a substantial number of Nigerians are known to be illiterate and unemployed, which makes them easy instruments of manipulation by the unpatriotic elite (Idahosa and Akov, 2013). This situation is, in spite of the fact that the Nigerian state is a richly endowed nation, being the fifth largest OPEC oil producer and a major oil exporter to the US and other western countries. However, despite the great oil opulence, at least 70 per cent of Nigerians live on less than \$1.25 per day (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). The socioeconomic development statistics for the North are the worst in Nigeria with 72 per cent of the people living in poverty compared with 25 per cent in the South and 35 per cent in the Niger Delta (Omotola, 2008). Consequently, it can be argued that unemployment, ignorance and marginalization exacerbate resource agitation struggles, cut-throat competition and insurgency. Despite efforts by government and well-meaning organizations, unemployment and illiteracy remain far from addressed, creating the ferment for insurgency.

Also, over the past three decades, increasing acts of impunity and their devastating consequences are defining the characteristics of contemporary conflict in Nigeria. Impunity implies a political and social context wherein laws against human rights violations are either ignored or perpetrators inadequately punished by the state (Hooper, 2006). It is the attitude encouraged by an unlawful liberty from retribution or recrimination among citizens and government of a country. This explains why people act in blatant disregard for the law and state institutions. Impunity has different manifestations. It breeds corruption, hooliganism, primordial sentiments, nepotism and even insurgencies. Rather than seek legal redress, those who feel excluded or marginalized in the polity usually resort to violence largely because those who contribute to exacerbate crises in the country in the past are hardly sanctioned. Moreover, there has been very limited progress in opening investigation into armed individuals/groups suspected of perpetrating killings, some of whom have been implicated in on-going killings in Nigeria. This shoddy attitude of government and its security agencies towards the purveyors of violence in the country has turned Nigeria into an 'impunity republic' and thereby encouraged disgruntled groups to perpetrate insurgency without fear of severe repercussions.

Furthermore, most Nigerian governments have created the conditions for the erosion of their own legitimacy by failing to fulfill the most rudimentary obligations of a modern democratic government which is welfare provision. Also, Nigerian regimes have often paid lip service to the fight against corruption which remains one of the country's prime governance challenges. Even the fight against insurgency has sadly been hampered by corruption as defense budgets reportedly end up in private pockets leaving ill-equipped and morale-dampened soldiers to their fate on the battlefield (Ochonu, 2015). This unfortunate trend feeds on the generally held notion that the state is illegitimate, undeserving of loyalty and that its resources are 'spoils' meant to be pillaged. This unpatriotic feeling about the Nigerian state has removed any moral constraints on individuals or groups who elect to plunder it. Accordingly, groups or individuals who feel sidelined from access to the commonwealth are quick to vent their frustrations through violent revolts or insurgency.

Understanding the role of legitimacy in the insurgencies

The BH and ND insurgencies are infamous byproducts of the deprivations in the Nigerian social fabric. Although separated by ideals, modus operandi and motivations, they both sprang from the growing disillusionment with the existing social structure which has been more or less designed to benefit a thieving minority, to the detriment of the country's long-suffering people. It is common knowledge that the BH, otherwise known as *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* or People committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and Jihad emerged from fragments of the *Yan Izala* and *Maitatsin* movements of the 1970s and 1980s respectively. The group is reportedly driven by a fanatical Islamic practice and has been executing mindless attacks in some parts of north Nigeria since 2009, and frequently threatened to extend their attacks to the south (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). The sect unequivocally rejects the notion of western education and shares a common ideology with all the Islamic sects before it which is to challenge conservative Muslim authority and advocate social reform prompting one write to state that virtually all the Islamic sects in Nigeria are rarely separated by goals but by means or method for achieving the goals (Schuck, 2013).

Findings have shown that BH membership is largely made up of illiterates, school drop-outs, jobless youths, political thugs and students from low socioeconomic rungs (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012) which largely resonate with the depth of feelings about socioeconomic injustice, marginalization and human insecurity in Nigeria. Similar conditions contributed in stoking insurgency and violence in the ND region of the country. For a country enmeshed in stupendous oil wealth, it is nothing short of tragic that an estimated 70% of the citizenry are poor, unemployed and living on less than \$1.25 per day (Omotola, 2008). Some studies have found that widespread poverty and unemployment inadvertently creates a large 'republic' of idle, hungry and angry brigades of persons who require little or no motivations to pick up arms against the state (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). Despite the mind-boggling wealth derived from oil, 'the goose that lays the golden egg' (ND region) allegedly remains largely impecunious, neglected and in dire straits. Peeved by the glaring protuberance of widespread destitution resulting from the plunder of the region's resources, ND youths felt compelled to take up arms against the state to protest what they assume to be brazen injustice meted on the region.

It is noteworthy that the discovery of oil in Nigeria dovetailed with growing optimism for development and better living, especially amongst the people in the oil-bearing ND region. Sadly, this optimism was short-lived because rather than help the region leapfrog underdevelopment, years of oil exploration have allegedly created socioeconomic, political and ecological conditions that generate abject poverty and misery in the ND region in particular and Nigeria in general (Nwogwuwu, et al, 2012). This has spurred ethno-regional categories in the ND to relentlessly cast aspersions on the Nigerian state's legitimacy; a development that has in turn created a fertile ground for the rise of several anti-state groups in the ND region.

Similar conditions in the northeastern region of Nigeria are known to have fuelled a very dangerous BH insurgency which continues to ravage the area. The BH insurgents frequently target both Muslims and Christians, destroying churches, and mosques in equal measure, a development which obfuscates their stance as a religious sect. The sect's dastardly attacks more or less reveals deeper societal problems of a much more structural nature that can be traced to socioeconomic and political alienation, spurred by declining state legitimacy. It is noteworthy that BH's first spiritual and charismatic leader, the late Mohammed Yusuf was initially against

any form of violence. In fact, the sect's core objective under his watch was to overthrow the Nigerian government which it perceived as corrupt and to replace it with an Islamic state based on Sharia law, in line with the tradition of Islamic schools of thought in northern Nigeria that set out to reform society namely, the moderate *Yan Izala* and the more radical *Maitatsine* movement (Barna, 2014).

Sadly, however, the violent manner with which the Nigerian federal government clamped down on the BH movement and the subsequent extra-judicial execution of the sect's leader transmogrified the group into a deadly terrorist organization. The death of the sect's leader led to the emergence of a new leader, Abubakar Shekau, a more vicious psychopath. As soon as Shekau took over, the BH became more deadly and reportedly masterminded several high profile attacks including those on the United Nations building, the Nigerian Police Headquarters and Nyanya Motor Park all in Abuja, the country's capital. It also claimed responsibility for the abduction of 276 girls from a secondary boarding school in Chibok, a rural town in Borno state on 14 April, 2014 (Iyekekpola, 2016). The group's mode of attack has evolved from the use of machetes to guns, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings, which have recently involved the use of female children.

The rise of the BH can be easily attributed to the gross underdevelopment in the northeastern zone of Nigeria. This unfortunate development is inadvertently encouraging the growth of radical extremist groups in the region (ICG, 2014). The situation is more appalling when it is considered that the northern elite have been in control of the national government for a much longer period since independence, yet the northern region exhibits the worst development statistics in the country. The parlous state of the region has allowed some unscrupulous Islamic teachers and politicians to deceive gullible northern youths into believing that the secular state is responsible for their plights. Following this, child beggars (locally called *almajirai*) and other disadvantaged and thereby gullible northern youths have been easily recruited by the unpatriotic elite to fight an imaginary Jihad targeted at both the secular state and moderate Muslims. Clearly, for a region already economically marginalized, Islamic militancy fuelled by entrenched poverty and illiteracy has had a deleterious effect on meaningful development.

Motivated by the state's inability to guarantee better life, and radicalized by government's militaristic approach to addressing their grievances, the BH and ND groups have been unleashing mayhems that have since left several thousands dead including security personnel, women and children; kidnapped scores; destroyed properties worth millions and rendered thousands of persons displaced (Nwankpa, 2015). Only recently, about 100 out of the 276 girls kidnapped by BH from Chibok were released allegedly in exchange for some high profile BH prisoners. In the ND, militants have extended their kidnappings from high profile persons (mostly expatriate oil workers) to anyone in society who can offer a price.

The amnesty deal for ND militants, initiated by Nigeria's late ex-president Umar Musa Yar'Adua on June 25, 2009, temporarily holed up the insurgency following massive payouts to former militant leaders, as well as patronage gestures such as allowances and scholarship schemes for their foot soldiers. However, although some people consider it marginally successful, the frequent resurgence of the conflict revealed fatal flaws with the amnesty deal which essentially was a 'cash for peace deal'. Moreover, the fact that the pre-deal conditions in the ND region (i.e. poverty, unemployment, infrastructural decay, land and water pollution etc.) still remains far from addressed effectively rendered the deal futile. As soon as the cash flow to the ND warlords is

interrupted, the militant leaders are usually quick to threaten to re-mobilize and renew hostilities. Consequently, tension remains high in the area, with occasional but economically dampening attacks on oil facilities often reported, pushing crude oil production at one point to a 30-year low of 1.4 million barrels a day. These frequent attacks from BH in the north and the militants in the ND on properties and hapless citizens, casts aspersions on the state's legitimacy, prompting questions about the logic of Nigeria's continual 'unity', against the backdrop of these fissiparous challenges.

Official responses to the BH and ND insurgencies

Similar to the colonial state's reliance prior to independence on employing violence to suppress revolts (Tonwe & Aghedo, 2013); state and society responses to the BH and ND uprisings have largely been repressive. From the beginning, and even presently, the strategy has been to deploy the use of force in which the full coercive apparatuses of state power are brought to bear on the 'insurgents'. But then, the approach of meeting 'violence with violence' has largely proven counter-productive. For instance, it was the alleged extra-judicial killing of Mohammed Yusuf that reportedly heightened the scale and magnitude of the BH conflict (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). Undoubtedly, violence often inadvertently radicalizes those to whom it is targeted, as the BH and ND experiences reveal.

This reality resonates with the late former United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan's admonition that 'we delude ourselves if we think that military force alone can defeat terrorism' (Annan, 2005). Evidence divulges clearly that force serves to exacerbate insurgency, in most cases. Yet, to arrest the tide of BH and ND militant attacks, the federal government brought its military strength to bear on the groups. In the north, a state of emergency was declared in three of the most affected states namely, Adamawa, Yobe and Borno states. President Jonathan also approved over 2 billion U.S Dollars for the purchase of arms to prosecute the BH war much of which were allegedly siphoned by the military elite and their civilian collaborators, and part of which was said to have been used to fund the People's Democratic Party's (PDP) candidates in the 2015 general elections. In a bid to arrest the BH insurgency, the federal government also stepped up its efforts to rid the country of migrants by ordering the deportation of thousands of suspected illegal migrants from Chad, Niger, Somalia and Benin Republics (Insa, 2007).

In Borno state, the former governor, Kashim Shettima promised to initiate dialogue with the insurgents while reportedly donating 10 armoured vehicles to the police to enable them arrest the insecurity in the state (Osumah, 2013). There have also been insinuations that the Nigerian government made peace gestures towards the BH insurgents with a view to granting them amnesty, on the strength of its relative success in the Niger Delta (Onuoha, 2010). However, the sect's current leader, Abubakar Shekau has released several videos on the social media avowing the groups determination to continue with their armed struggle against the Nigerian state (Vanguard, July 3, 2016).

In the Niger Delta, efforts at addressing insurgency have historically been largely institutional (Suleiman, 2011). The Willinks Commission of 1958 recommended the establishment of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDB) to fast-track development in the region (Ochonu, 2015). Furthermore, the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) was created in 1992 to foster the region's development. In 2000, the OMPADEC was replaced by the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) with largely the same mandate. The

derivation principle was also increased to 13% so as to make funds available for development projects in the oil-producing areas (Omotola, 2009). Also, in 2008, the ministry of Niger Delta affairs was created by the government of President Yar'Adua to add to on-going efforts at resolving the region's crisis (Egwemi, 2010).

In a subtle admission of the futility of a purely militaristic or institutional approach to ending the conflict (Osumah, 2013), President Yar'Adua amnestied the militants on June 25, 2009. Consequently, a large number of militant groups embraced the amnesty deal and relative calm soon returned to the troubled region. The emergence of Goodluck Jonathan, an Ijaw as president in 2010 further pacified the militants and soon oil production appreciated as peace returned to the area. Recently however, with the pre-amnesty conditions still rampant in the ND region, and with the emergence of Buhari, a northern Muslim as president, there has been a renewed escalation in militancy in the region with new groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) emerging and claiming responsibility for attacks on oil installations in the region, effectively plunging the Nigerian economy into recession.

The question that suffices is; why has the BH and Niger Delta insurgencies persisted despite the several civil and military measures employed to address them? The answer probably lies in Nigeria's state legitimacy crisis. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria is a country profoundly bifurcated along multiple fault lines, these... constitute the foundations upon which political rivalries are fought out, the platforms upon which claims and counterclaims on the nation and its destiny are articulated (Maass, 2009). These complexities confer a bewildering plurality in ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural affinities and thereby contrasting economic and political ambitions, which combine to make mutual intelligibility and regional harmony hard to achieve.

This state of affairs is even more prevalent in southern Nigeria where the region's largely Christian and animist population in the south-south/southeastern area and an almost evenly split Muslim/Christian population in the southwestern part, is well noted for its ethno-cultural plurality which occasionally breeds hostility. However, the chasms in the north are way more politically salient and conflict prone. These deep-lying revulsions amongst Nigeria's ethno-religious and regional categories have resulted in a segregated national project underlined by the bifurcated groups' determination to seek and pursue differentiated socio-economic and political agendas. These apparent existential challenges lie at the heart of the violent insurgency being engineered by non-state actors such as the BH and ND militants and their non-resolution seems to be the missing link in state and society responses so far.

Towards intercepting violent insurgency in Nigeria

This article links the pervasiveness of the BH and Niger Delta insurgencies in Nigeria to the profoundness of the state legitimacy crisis in the country. While not necessarily discountenancing previous researches which largely linked the uprisings to such drivers as the dysfunctional character of the state, ethno-religious egotism, governance failure, poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and the inefficiency of the security apparatuses, this article advanced the argument that these supposed drivers are fallouts of the more thoroughgoing problems associated with declining state legitimacy. Most of the legitimacy challenges in Nigeria especially the lopsided federal system, were created by colonialism and have been fanned by post-colonial regimes. Consequently, we took the position that state and society responses which are often built on resolving these supposed drivers of conflict would only temporarily 'hibernate' these

insurgencies and in the final analysis, prove insufficient in permanently addressing violent insurgency in Nigeria. In this regard, taking bold steps to resolve Nigeria's state legitimacy crisis becomes pertinent.

To begin with, the government must as a matter of urgent national importance, admit to the fact that there are fundamental flaws inherent in Nigeria's federal structure that was bequeathed to it by the colonial authorities. Since colonial crafters of Nigerian nationhood created the country without the consent and or input of its people, many Nigerians especially those from the south who believe the country is lopsided in favour of the northern area consider the state as illegitimate. Consequently, there remains a deep-lying hatred amongst the ethno-regional and religious groups in Nigeria especially with regards to contestations over control of political power and the modalities for the distribution of the proceeds of the country's enormously rich but unevenly located endowments. Often, disagreements over resource sharing have led to the emergence of insurgent groups whose activities have threatened the peace in Nigeria

To address this dangerous concern therefore the federal government must stop the procrastination and heed to calls for restructuring by convening a sovereign national conference which would provide the substance for a frank and unbridled discussion that would allow the ethnic, communal and regional groups in Nigeria decide whether they would prefer to remain together, and if so, upon what structural and political arrangements. The continuous insistence of successive Nigerian governments that the indivisibility of the country is not negotiable only serves to inflame the indignation of marginalized categories and create a revolutionary ferment, against the backdrop of the many unresolved problems confronting Nigeria's nationhood. Over the years, several committees of national dialogue or political conferences have been instituted by successive Nigerian administrations to address the concerns of marginalized groups, with a view to smothering violent agitations. Unfortunately, little or no gains have been made. Going by this a frontal engagement with the foundational problems that beset the Nigerian nation is compelling, in the desire for the restoration of the country's legitimacy

Also, government must proceed to stem the culture of impunity which has become widespread, if not cyclical in the country. The institutions of the state (i.e. the security forces, anti-graft agencies and government corporations) need to be purged of corrupt and nepotistic elements and strengthened through the introduction of effective governance mechanisms that would ensure that those found culpable of corruption and other offences against the state do not go unpunished. To regain the trust of the people, the federal government must demonstrate its commitment to unity in diversity by addressing some of the long standing grievances of marginalized groups and ensuring the ethno-federal spread of political appointments with a view to assuaging ethno-religious agitations. Furthermore, there is a need to curb the nepotistic tendencies of political leaders in Nigeria which has worsened ethno-regional acrimony in the country and created incentives for insurgency onsets. Also, citizens' confidence in the state would be bolstered if corrupt individuals are brought to justice, irrespective of how highly placed they are in society.

Finally, the Nigerian government must re-dedicate itself to the fight against poverty, unemployment, alienation, illiteracy and impunity which are some of the proximate conditions that ferment insurgency and violence in the country. If these conditions are effectively addressed, there will be no justification for insurgency since most of the demands of aggrieved persons or groups would have been resolved.

Conclusion

The BH and Niger Delta insurgencies are by and large, a microcosm of the larger Nigerian situation which is characterized by weak state legitimacy. Although state legitimacy crisis was identified as the major driver of insurgency onsets in Nigeria, other factors such as ethno-religious marginalization, poverty, state dysfunction, border porosity, weak state capability and a politics of exclusion are argued to have furthered the parlous state of the security situation in the country. Moreover, the perception that the security agencies in Nigeria are ill-prepared to intercept insurgency leaves much to be desired.

The general dissatisfaction with efforts from government and well-meaning organizations to address the proximate triggers of insurgency in Nigeria created opportunities that were exploited by insurgents to recruit socio-economically vulnerable persons to join their cause. While the BH insurgents' narratives of grievance are largely religiously driven and therefore, less pecuniary than those of the Niger Delta militants whose grievances are for a more equitable share of oil rents sourced from their homelands, one transversal factor fermenting insurgency is the question about the Nigerian state's legitimacy. There has been discontent from many sections of the country with regards to the current structure of the federation which was instituted by the British colonialists, and the notion that some regions/ethnic groups continue to benefit proportionally more than the others even though they contribute relatively less to the commonwealth has sparked intense revolts and violence. Disagreement over modalities for the distribution of Nigeria's enormous wealth which has more or less ended up in the private pockets of a few elites has also created conditions for the rise of insurgency. Thus, addressing grievances bothering on Nigeria's federal structure, engendering confidence in political leadership, promoting ethno-religious tolerance and inclusion and making a remarkable dent on poverty can help restore Nigeria's legitimacy and perhaps discourage insurgency onsets in the country.

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