Conflict Management Approaches to Forestalling Insurgency in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

The issues addressed in this paper are exploratory studies undertaking by authors who have explored and evaluate some conflict management approaches that have been successful in Nigeria.In an attempt to adopt these approaches towards forestalling the menace of insurgency in Northern Nigeria since the emergence of the dreadful Boko Haram sect, banditry and kidnapping. The northern part of Nigerian has severely injured with bruises that may take a lifetime to heal. While the habitants and indigenous people of northern Nigeria have been rendered helpless to the fate of these insurgents. Nevertheless, the battle between the armed forces and insurgency has been going on for several years in attempt to resolve the conflict which has severely affected the region and Nigeria as a whole. Various theoretical perspectives such as structural conflict theory, frustration and aggressive theory of conflict was proposed for the study. This theorist explains the various perspectives to why conflicts are inherent within our communities. A recommendation made on this study is that Nigeria government has for the better part failed in its attempt to monopolize the use of legitimate force, thus creating a vacuum and enabling an environment that breeds grievances, hate and intolerance across the diverse ethnicity, the subsequent inability to address these grievances and differences, may create an avenue for warring factions or groups to resort to the adoption of unconventional measures to resort preferences.

Background to the Study

Conflict is an integral facet of human socio-ecological existence and it is anomaly not to experience conflicts of any kind in a region. However, the frequency at which they occur are more likely to be higher in pluralistic and heterogeneous societies where freedom of expression is not suppressed, resulting from disputes and inability to arrive at concessions on germane issues which includes but not necessarily limited to; what language should be spoken, which ethnic group should produce the president, should religions be allowed in public places, what is the basis for revenue allocation, who should be appointed minister of what and from which region or ethnicity, what is the regional or ethnic quota for employment in civil service among other contradictions or disputes arising from differences to how the society should be structured (Yakubu, 2018).

The Nigerian state have failed to integrate the conglomerate whole of people, culture and systems, thus creating a vacuum and enabling an environment that breeds grievances, hate and intolerance across the diverse ethnicity. The subsequent inability to address these grievances and differences may create an avenue for warring factions or groups to resort to the adoption of unconventional measures to resort preferences (Dike, 1999). The Boko haram insurgency group arguably evolved through this perspective.

Yakubu (2018), noted that the fourth republic in Nigeria ushered in a resurgence of citizens' rights and privileges and consequently considerable milestones have been reached as regards to freedom of speech, individualism, liberty and freedom of association as enshrined in the core of liberal democracies. This has fuel most of the ethno-religious and resource-based conflict in Kaduna, Jos, Kano and oil producing Niger Delta. More so, there have been clashes between herdsman and farmers resulting in multiple loss of life and wanton destruction of properties in Benue and Taraba. Insurgency uprising within such dilemma included the advent of Boko Haram sect (BH) in the North-Eastern states (NE) of Borno, Adamawa, Yobe, Kebbi at some point Bauchi, Jos, Kano and across other states (Akinbi, 2015; Hoffman, 2012). The continuous rising of these vices has not only threatened the relative stability of Nigeria, but has also reaffirmed the absence of tolerance and inability of the diver's nations and ethnicity that make up contemporary Nigeria to live together harmoniously. The evolution and subsequent spread of boko Haram, has resulted in countless loss of lives and property and forced hundreds of thousands from their homes resulting in the displacement of persons and the establishment of make shift camps and displacement centers, amounting to the highest numbers of displaced persons in Nigeria since the civil war.

In attempt to manage the conflict brought about by the incessant attacks carried out by the dreaded Boko Haram sect, the Nigerian government made a decision to engage the sect militarily, constituteninig a Joint Task Force made up of Nigeria, Cameroon and Chadian forces and also the incorporation of a civilian task force, made up mainly of indigence of the north east. The nation Nigeria, has witnessed many insurgent uprisings such as Movement for Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the activities of the Izala sect with its strong hold in Zaria and the Neo-Biafran agitators led by Nnmadi Kanu. While these

groups have in different times reigned terror on their respective communities, vandalized civil and personal properties and loss of lives resulting from their engagement with various security outfits which are all considered to mitigate the stability of Nigerian political landscape, Boko Haram has been termed more dreadful (Kamta, Schilling and Scheffran, 2020). Between 2014 to sometime in successfully hoisted their flag in certain communities and established parallel structures within the defined borders of Nigeria as the trends of suicide bombing as a means of carrying out attacks and kidnapping of hundreds of school girls can be largely credited to sect respectively. Therefore, the paper evaluates, conflict management approaches that has been deployed to curtail these insurgencies.

Statement of the Problem
One of the problems confronting societies today including Nigeria is the rising implication of violent conflict. conflict has resulted into wanton destruction lives and property, due to anger or in the quest for people to vent their anger they indulge in violent conflict which has had its fare share of conflict, where communities living together are now divided along religious and ethnic lines, the continued hatred generated by such conflicts, always result into difficulties and lack of trust and peaceful coexistence among citizens have been threatened by such conflicts. Consequently, this study seeks to study the problems relating to managing conflict; Increasing attacks and counter attacks among communities within the Northern states, destruction of economic means of survivors and segregation of community interest and government.

Objective of the Study
The main objective of his study is to understand cconflictmmanagementaapproachesto fforestalling Boko Haram iinsurgency in North Central Nigeria, consequently, the specific objectives are as follows:

  i. To examine the causes of violence conflict among communities within central Nigeria.
  ii. To ascertain the socioeconomic effects of the conflicts within the study area,
  iii. To identify government and other agent's intervention strategies in their solution of such conflicts.

Conceptual Overview: Various concepts that relates to the study will be reviewed
Insurgency in Northern Nigeria
Islamic insurgency first emerged in northeast Nigeria around 2002. It was a self-styled group calling itself the *"Yusu_yya"* in apparent reference to its youthful leader Mohammed Yusuf. The group, Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad, also known as Boko Haram, in North-East Nigeria was non-violent between 2003 and 2009 and was based in the railway quarters in Maiduguri in Borno state, which subsequently became its operational headquarters (Kamta et al, 2020). However, the upheaval of the Boko haram in North-eastern part of Nigeria took a different dimension, when the members of the Nigerian Police Force brutally killed Mohammed Yusuf founder of the group in July, 2009. The aftermath made the group prominent and took up arms and maimed and killed some innocent people in Maiduguri.

Before 2010 the sect had no defined strategy as it occasionally employed guerrilla tactics of hit-and-run, and their weapons were largely rudimentary. This however began to change with the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) on strategic locations. The Boko haram sect after 2010 employed a variety of methods and modus operandi that put the sect on the world map, before resulting listing some of the deadliest attacks carried out on strategic persons and on innocent civilians it is paramount to narrow their mode of attack, with a view of conceptualizing it. Since 2009, the crisis caused by this conflict has forced more than two million people to flee for safety within Nigeria. Others crossed the border into countries neighbouring Nigeria in the Lake Chad region and became refugees (Kamata et al, 2020).

Ethno-religious Conflicts in Nigeria as a base for Insurgency
Ethno-religious conflicts are the most common forms of conflict experienced across Nigeria. For every conflict, the most common factions that people make are ethnic or religious. Although, the large number and high intensity of manifest or potential violent conflicts emanate from political, socioeconomic, ethno-religious, injustice and the people's everyday lives, ethnic and religious differences tend to take the stage to breed conflict grievances. More so, the narrative has escalated to more violent forms in recent years. Henrich (2008) observed that since the beginning of the democratization process in 1999, the number and intensity of violent conflicts has tended to increase rather than decrease.

The contemporary Nigerian society has experienced conflict emanating from trivial issues such as sit tight syndrome of political officers and taut competition for political power, Injustice and unequal treatment, socioeconomic deprivation, disputes over land-space and the resources available, boundary disputes, population growth and expansionist tendencies to sustain ethnic-bound occupations. Adewuyi, Salami and Dogara (2021) further observed that bad governance is the major driving force to conflict with its partisan politics, bringing about political oppression, physical violence perpetrated by the government using its agents, false promises and disinformation, economic crisis and poverty.

Managing Conflict at Infancy
Conflict management principles and method can be deployed to manage conflict most of which have been successful to curbing conflict at infancy. According to Rahmin (2011), conflict management styles can be persuasive, collaborative, compromising, avoiding, coercive and accommodating. Effective conflict management strategies can minimize the negative impacts of conflict on different parties and help create a trusting environment that builds healthy and improved interpersonal relationship, peaceful co-existence, economic growth and national development (Rahmin, 2011). A look at the contemporary Nigeria, in view of the various dimensions of conflicts (such as political, religious and ethnic) among various ethnic and religious groups in different parts of the country, one could wonder whether what extent has the various approach in managing conflict, yielded positive results. This question can be answered by looking at the present scenario

of the crises that has engulfed the political and socioeconomic system of the country. Awoniyi (2013), noted that the phenomenon of conflict and its attendant effects with our day-to-day struggles over inter-locking agitations on issues like primordial ties, national resources distribution, power sharing, ethnic tolerance, social justice and welfare should be critically examined in order to fashion a road map for peaceful co-existence and harmony in Nigeria. To this end, Government has made concerted efforts to address conflict situations, especially those that are religious and ethnic in nature. However, Nigerians are still experiencing conflict related problems in spite the fact Government is making efforts in conflict management and resolution. Chinwokwu (2015) observed that it is government passive approach to conflict situations that generates to great destruction of lives and property. In the study of Chinwokwu (2015), the concept of early warning was introduced as a measured to facilitate quick communication and strategic response to crisis at its infancy. Early warning system addresses the mandate to provide incident and trend analysis report on peace and security as well as real-time preventive response options. This will make policy makers to ensure predictability that will facilitate interventions towards averting, diffusing and indicatively transforming delicate situations of conflicts, insecurity, disruptions and disasters. More so, conflicts at infancy can be better resolved by amicably between grassroots conflict parties before it escalates. Measures such as negotiation and bargaining using a third party can alleviate grievances towards crisis that are endearing.

Forestalling Insurgency through ethno-religious conflict management
Nigeria is a country whose religious status has been bluntly described by the 1999 constitution as secular. However, the country is enmeshed in a confusion of secularism status such that the constitution gives to it a not-clear-enough theoretical status as a secular state, but in practice; religion seems to influence and feature prominently in the activities of the state and the people. In addition, ethnicity is a key factor in most decisions within the entity. More so, conflicting groups define themselves along ethno-religious lines, religious and ethnic identities can create sharp distinctions between parties, and increase group mobilization. More disturbing is the propensity of such ethno-religious realities to hinder the progress of conflict management mechanisms in the country.

In contemporary Nigeria, several mechanisms have been adopted to manage the various kinds of conflict which have occurred but it's very regrettable that none of the mechanisms absolutely minimized or put an end to the conflicts in Nigeria. What is seen mostly is the escalation of conflicts as a result of poor management system of the conflict and the insincerity of the government and its agents to properly manage the conflicts (Dike, 1999). Successive Nigerian governments have managed Nigerian crises and conflicts in different but coercive and unconstructive ways. For instance, Abacha's administration used police and military to resolve Ife Modakeke crises in 1997, but all to no avail until peaceful intervention of United States Agency for International Development/Office of International Initiatives (USAID/OTI). Soldiers were also drafted in 1999 to quell conflict in the Arogbo Ijaw-Ugbo Ilaje crises by Obasanjo's administration. The same administration, in its bids to settle and resolve Niger-Delta

crises sent Military Joint Task Force (JTF) to the area with ideological slogan 'Operation Restore Hope', in order to win legitimacy. Also, in most of the religious and tribal clashes, soldiers had been drifted to such areas in order to quench crises and restore 'peace', little or no attention was paid to restore permanent peace between and among the concerned groups after temporary peace was restored.

Nevertheless, a bit of success has been recorded in conflict resolution in Nigeria with the administration of late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar-Adua the former President of Nigeria. The administration looked the other way and employed alternative dispute resolution spectrum to resolve Niger-Delta crises, which have become phenomenal albatross round the neck of Nigeria (Afongu, 2019). He took determined and strategic steps to resolve the problem once and for all. He created Niger Delta Ministry and granted amnesty to the Niger Delta Militants. This has greatly yielded a lot of results, and peace is gradually returning into the region. According to Adewuyi et al (2021), since the era of Goodluck Jonathan up to the present administration, it is observed that conflicts have not been resolved in Nigeria because of the continuous fight among ethnic and religious groups for supremacy and domination e.g. the issue of Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram in mostly northern parts of the country. Despite the approaches of dialogue and negotiation to settle the problem, the tension of conflict in most parts of Nigeria is still perpetual. It is to this end that, that the study renders its analysis towards lasting conflict management. Since parties involved in every conflict often forms factions of either religious or ethnic group' affiliation, it is imperative to consider these groups and resolve differences they make within themselves. When the grass root stakeholders learn to see no difference between themselves existing conflict and tensions would be quieted. For instance, if a particular ethnic can have a communal life with another seeing no differences and eventually one of the parties, get recruited into the insurgents, the bond between both communities can serve as a deter against attacking the community.

Evaluation of Conflict Management Approach in Nigeria
The launch of the North East Conflict Management and Stabilisation (NECMS) programme has been effective to an extent to managing boko haram conflict in the north east. The NECMS applied an approach to conflict management worked across twenty-one (21) communities and five (5) Internally Displaced Persons' (IDP) camps in six LGAs of Borno state, namely Damboa, Dikwa, MMC, Jere, Gwoza and Konduga. The programme worked to improve security and reduce support for violence in Borno state and build the capacity of citizens to hold government accountable for effective service delivery, create safe spaces to manage social and political tensions, and promote the role of women and youth as an accepted local peace agent. Through these interventions, communities re-established relationships with the state and diverse local stakeholders and developed new structures and systems for addressing the root causes of conflict.

In terms of long-lasting conflict as with the Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian government have adopted several conflict management principles which have tend to prove abortive as a result of challenging factors within the polity. A close examination of

some of these strategies to manage conflict in Nigeria including the Boko Haram insurgency is done below.

Strategic Withdrawal: This response mechanism looks like avoidance/ denial on the surface; but it is not. It has to do with not taking any immediate action on the problem or taking a mild action but seizing the opportunity to buy quality time and space to plan and take a more decisive action. The Jonathan and Buhari administrations adopt this mechanism of conflict management. Both administrations failed to take a prompt and decisive action in addressing the insecurity problems in the country. Local Government Areas were taken over by the Boko Haram terrorists in the north-east during Jonathan administration, while his successor president Buhari has widely criticized for not being proactive in waging war against the violent herdsmen terrorizing the villagers across the country.

Third Party Decision Making: This has to do with having to refer the conflict to a higher body with decision-making power for settlement. In most cases, this approach involves judicial settlement: a legal mode of pacific dispute termination. This type of conflict mechanism is mostly slow to dispense justice and manage the conflict.

Confrontation/Force: This has to do with the use of the police or military to reverse a conflicting situation as we recently witnessed in Maiduguri during the Boko Haram crisis, Benue, South East, and in Jos. This could have been the best way of managing violent conflicts in the country if the security outfits of the government are promptly deployed to any violent areas in the country, but due to corruption and sentiment this method has not been effective to make the conflict in the country.

Negotiation/Dialogue: This is a method of resolving conflict whereby a conversation occurs between the settler of the conflict and the parties involved. Negotiation is a structured process of dialogue between conflicting parties about issues in which their opinions differ. To Best (2006), negotiation is a direct process of dialogue and discussion taking place between at least two parties who are faced with a conflict situation or dispute. The whole task of negotiation generally is to reach an agreement through joint decision between the conflicting parties. This method has been used by government to settle the Boko Haram conflict but did not yield any result, killings is still the order of the day in the north-east.

Mediation: This is a dynamic, structured, interactive process where a neutral third party assists disputing parties in resolving conflicts through the use of specialized communication and negotiation techniques. Attempts have been made to solve crises like that of Jos and Boko Haram in Nigeria, yet little has been achieved from this method.

Theorizing Social Conflict
There are various theoretical perspectives that could be used in explaining. Conflict is a rather complex phenomenon to comprehend as it involves human behaviour which is

fluid and largely relative. However, the task of theorification is to its least elucidate what can be understood as the essential dimensions of a certain phenomenon and directions and perspectives of their possible variations. The study does distinguish three major approaches namely; structural conflict theory propounded by Karl Mark (1894), a 19th century political philosopher, frustration and aggressive theory propounded by Miller, et al, (1941) and Sears (1941) respectively. According to Ademola (1997), structural conflict theory is built in such ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problem like political and economic exclusion, domination, exploitation, poverty among other socioeconomic challenges. While for Collier (2000) incompatible interest based on competition for resources, assumed to be scarce as being responsible for social conflicts, and for Ross (1993) he argued, in situations where economic and political discrimination and weak kinship ties are defining attributes, the chances of negative conflicts will result are higher than in situations where conditions are exact opposite. Conclusively Brown (1996) contends structural theory is remarkably strong on the immediate and underlying factors that lead to conflicts, as it presents an array of factors that make the emergence and escalation of internal conflicts.

While the structural theory, may account for the emergence and spread of the Boko Haram, in the sense that the mashing up of various ethnicity, nations and tribes to make up Nigeria by the colonialist, set the tone for conflicts in Nigeria as in most colonies in Africa. Secondly, the continuous domination of the political landscape by the more or less permanent political class is likely to breed a sense of exclusion, resulting possibly in unconventional means of resolving difference. This theory does not only account for the emergence of Boko Haram but also that of MEND a resource-based conflict. However, the emphasis on material needs as the drive behind conflicts, limits the reach of the theory, as it is possible that economic and political exclusion and deprivation may trigger a conflict, but may not necessarily sustain it, as group objectives are likely to be situational and relative. Second is frustration and aggression theory developed mainly by Dollard John in 1939 and modified by the likes of Aubery Yates 1962 and Leonard Berjowitz 1962 respectively. According to Anifowose (1982) theorist who rely on this account, use psychological theories of motivation and behaviour as well as frustration and aggression. As postulated by Gurr (1970) where expectations do not meet attainment, the tendency is for people to confront those they hold responsible for frustrating their goals. While for Best (2008) aggression is not just a natural reaction or instinct, but an outcome of frustration, and a feeling of disappointment may lead to the expression of anger or dissatisfaction through violence that will be directed at those responsible. Should an empirical study be carried out in Nigeria, the likelihood of a greater percentage of the citizens been frustrated will arguably be higher than those whom r not frustrated. The frustration and aggression theory may likely suffice in explaining the emergence of conflicts in modern societies, it largely fails to incorporate the geneses of the Boko Haram sect but explains satisfactorily the emergence of MEND whom peacefully agitated for the need to revise allocation formula before resorting to vandalization of oil facilities, oil bunkering, kidnapping of expatriate, by doing so they are creating problems for the government whom they hold responsible.

Not without the underscored theories of conflict applied in this study to account for the emergence and subsequent spread of Boko Haram, by offering diverse but useful insights in an attempt to comprehend the phenomenon under studies.

Conclusion

The inability of Nigeria to clearly define the nature of the conflict with Boko Haram ranging from insurgency, religious war and terrorism has highlighted the poor capacity of the state to gather intelligence and also communicate with the populace on actions taken. Several of its conflict management approaches to insurgency have been ineffective as a result. Whereas, either of the approaches aforementioned can be effective in dealing with Boko haram insurgency, its application has been plagued bad governance, corruption and most proficient the bizarre and unrevealed identity of the insurgents.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusions drawn from the study, the following recommendation will be put through as a contribution towards the study: -

1. Nigeria government has for the better part failed in its attempt to monopolize the use of legitimate force, thus creating a vacuum and enabling an environment that breeds grievances, hate and intolerance across the diverse ethnicity, the subsequent inability to address these grievances and differences, may create an avenue for warring factions or groups to resort to the adoption of unconventional measures to resort preferences. Government needs to address such issues that breeds intolerance so as to coattail such occurrences.

2. While conflict abstractly entails clash of interest that can manifest either in an armed or unarmed manner, it erupts peace and stability. While conflicts could be managed by a combination of various approaches, adopted means are however largely relative and contextual, thus is it imperative to study closely conflicts within the context in which they persist, should an effective and efficient means of management conflicts be attained. Some of the strategies includes; bringing in outsiders, accommodation, collaboration, compromise and dominance. The rise of BH brought to the lime-light the weak nature of Nigeria as a state, in terms of information and intelligence gathering, weaponry,

3. Conflict is not a static situation but a dynamic one whose intensity level changes over a conflict cycle. The understanding of the cycle is critical in the understanding of how, where and when to apply different strategies and methods of conflict prevention and management. Conflict is inevitable in every human society, it may not always result to violent clash, hence, the talk of conflict prevention. Which is the process of controlling and managing strained relationships early enough (timely and promptly) to avoid the threats of a conflict. This calls when effectively and timely use as early warning mechanisms or systems to contain and respond to early threats of violence, will thereby save the situation from escalating out of unmanageable proportion. This is premised on the notion that prevention is better than cure. However, in other words, it is not a win-win or loss affairs, conflict prevention as the medium and long term

proactive operational or structural strategy undertaken by a variety of actors, intended to identify and create the enabling conditions for a stable and more predictable environment.

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