

Oil and Conflict in Polarized State of South Sudan: Lessons for Biafra Agitators in Nigeria

Dr. Mutiullah A. Olasupo

Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Abuja P.M.B. 117, Abuja

Dr. Solomon Benjamin Adekunle

Department of Government and Public Administration, Baze University, Abuja

Abstract

Sudan has been at war for most of its modern history. Sudan is divided between an Arab, Muslim north and an African south which is largely Christian. Tension between these two polarized societies has caused Sudan to know only eleven years of peace since independence in 1956. This culminated into the declaration of independence by South Sudan from Sudan on 9 July 2011 and become Africa's first new country since Eritrea split from Ethiopia in 1993. Recently, there has been a renewed struggle for the Republic of Biafra by members of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in Nigeria and outside the country. Nearly Fifty years after the Biafran War which almost destroyed the unity of Nigeria, its agitators have refused to give up the struggle. This paper opines that while ethnicity and religion have played a significant role, the conflict has mainly been fought over oil. The Marxist theory was employed to explain the politico-economic framework through which oil is being exploited and distributed as mostly responsible for triggering and fueling numerous conflicts within African societies, including agitation for the Republic of Biafra. The paper carefully examines the destruction of the past civil war, or rather of the social mechanisms that brought about the current turbulent experience in the quintessential case of Biafra Agitators in relation to South Sudan. Though the author is aware that it is rather hazardous at this point in time to predict a peaceful and sustainable future for South Sudan, the paper upholds that the initiators of current struggle for Biafra are terrorists and have not learnt from the Sudan catastrophic war before and after its independence. Therefore, the paper recommends systematic Joint-Problem-Solving process of dialogue to be employed by the President Buhari government in engaging these disenchanted Nigerians and that sustainable solution can only come through amicable and harmonious society in which every individual regardless of his religion and ethnicity is treated equally to benefit from the commonwealth.

Keywords: Oil, Conflict, Marxist Theory, Polarization and Sustainable Peace

INTRODUCTION

South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011 did not resolve internal conflicts in either country. Sudan's war in Darfur never stopped, and in the months surrounding South Sudan's independence, war broke out in Sudan's disputed Abyei, as well as South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), the international community has disregarded democratization in both, settling for a peaceful split. After independence, the ruling parties in Khartoum and Juba were more reluctant than ever to make concessions to political foes or marginalized communities (Deng, 2014). Armed groups on both sides of the border remained interconnected. At independence, South Sudan's army still had divisions in Sudan, and Khartoum retained links with southern armed groups. Many southern militias are now part of the armed opposition in South Sudan, while others made deals with Juba before the outbreak of war, and most Sudanese rebels are allied to the Juba government. According to International Crisis Group (2014), a history of tangled relationships, polarized society and competing individual and group interests explain how the conflicts in South Sudan have been marked by oil.

In Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, oil-producing countries have civil wars at a significantly higher rate than countries without oil. In recent times, there has been a renewed agitation for the Republic of Biafra by members of the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB). It should be noted that nearly fifty years after the Biafran War (July 6, 1967 – January 15, 1970) which almost destroyed the unity of Nigeria, its agitators have refused to give up the struggle. As long as Africans cultivate ethnic champions within our communities, no African country will live up to actualize its aspirations through the God given natural endowment (oil). This has been the same empirical evidence Africans demonstrated since Independence yet want different results. The case of Eritrea and Ethiopia is still fresh in our memory and South Sudan was the latest state to secede from Sudan on the basis of oil, ethnic and racial exclusivity in July, 2011.

However, South Sudan hard-won celebration was short-lived. The Sudan People's Liberation Movement, the ruling political party that originally led the way for independence, is now divided and fighting for power. The newest country in the world is too divided internally, insecure, and essentially incompetent to engage in a successful negotiation of outstanding issues. Thus, the separation took place while a host of major problems

remained unresolved. The fundamental objective of this paper is to carefully examine the social mechanisms that brought about the current turbulent experience in the quintessential case of Biafra Agitators in relation to South Sudan crisis. The paper upholds that the initiators of current struggle for Biafra are terrorists and have not learnt from past civil war in the country and the South Sudan catastrophic war before and after its independence. Thus, rather than deploying military and police to fight the Biafra agitators, the Federal government of Nigeria needs to address accusation of marginalization, deprivation and even humiliation of the South South and South Eastern parts of the country to achieve harmonious society.

THEORETICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT AND POLARIZED STATE

Every issue on social construct usually begins with the clarification of germane concepts and theoretical framework. These concepts are discussed below;

Conflict

Conflict is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. Conflict is ubiquitous and a necessary process of life (Mutiullah, 2012). Within the individual, there is always conflict of thoughts, choice and interest, to mention but a few. Conflict comes in many forms and involves vastly different kinds of parties, ranging from individual, persons to large macro units such as nation-states. There are several definitions for the term conflict. It originally has a physical rather than moral connotation which means two or more different things moving to occupy the same space at the same time. Through a review by various literatures, Ali (2004), provides a comprehensive illustration of what the term conflict means, he describes conflict as “a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other”. In the same vein, Esteban and Debraj (2008) opine that conflict implies some types of hostility and some desires to do harm which may be considered an extreme case of competition. Conflict is different from competition, although competition may result in conflict. This suggests that conflicts may occur without any specific reference to competition, as it could occur as a result of breakdown in the mechanism of decision-making. On this view DeCenzo (2007), described conflict as whenever two individuals come together, there are bound to be disagreements at time. That’s natural. However, sometimes these differences can grow to enormous proportions where they become detrimental to the involved parties and the environment. When that occurs conflict is present. To Fearon (2004) defines conflict as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence a process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced “protection,” blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination.

Conflicts can also be either constructive or destructive. If conflict is properly managed or resolved, there will be peace. If on the other hand, resolution and reconciliation fail, the conflict will degenerate to chaos, crisis or war (Garba, 2006). Moreover for Gardiner and Simmons (1992) conflict is defined as “any divergence of interests, objectives or priorities between individual, groups, or organizations or nonconformity to requirements of a task; activity or process”. All over the world, conflicts, crisis and violence are inordinate desires for political and economic advantages, greed, ego-related problems and plain mischief. Injustice and inequitable distribution of resources cause resentments, which invariably give rise to conflict situations (Asiyanbola 2010). These factors are much at play in contemporary African societies, including South Sudan and Nigeria.

State

The state is the most universal and most powerful of all social institutions. The state is a natural institution. The state is the highest form of human association. It is necessary because it comes into existence out of the basic needs of life. It continues to remain for the sake of good life. The aims, desires and aspirations of human beings are translated into action through the state. Though the state is a necessary institution, no two writers agree on its definition. To Woodrow Wilson, “State is a people organized for law within a definite territory.” Aristotle defined the state as a “union of families and villages having for its end a perfect and self – sufficing life by which it meant a happy and honorable life”. Holland (1997), views state as “a numerous assemblage of human beings generally occupying a certain territory amongst whom the will of the majority or class is made to prevail against any of their member who oppose it.” According to Marx, “the state is but a committee for the managing the affairs of whole bourgeoisie..., the form in which the individuals of a ruling class asserts their common interest” (Engels, 1919). The state is used by the dominant class as an instrument to dominate the other class. This dominance is expressed through laws and policies that are made by the state which represent the interest of the dominant group. The dominant class uses instruments of power like executive instruments, legislature and the judiciary to maintain this setup. This dominance by capital (bourgeoisie) does not necessarily mean that the bourgeois exercise direct power via the state apparatus. Domination is secure at the level of the social organization of production which defines basic rules governing also what the state can do or not do. Governments in capitalist state may in fact be in the hands of other classes or group, including workers,

bureaucrats and petty accumulation of the system. Such groups can be seen as only allowed to participate in government, as long as they “respect” the rules of the games as laid down by the dominant class, as relations of power at the level of production. This exploitation of one class by another as Marx argued arises as a result of the emergence of the state. Political power is therefore the organized power of one class for oppressing another. Within the Marxian paradigm, the state is essentially a class issue, to continue strengthening the state as a powerful apparatus isolated and apparently existing above people under the guise of it being the state of the ‘whole people’ is really to gloss over some real contradictions, even class contradictions, existing in the society.

It is pertinent to note that the state in Africa ever since its existence has played an active role in the distribution and redistribution of resources. This pivotal role has stripped it of its necessary democratic principles in some cases. It was so because, the productive forces had not matured before it was integrated into the World Capitalist economy. It was therefore difficult for it to perform the functions of distribution of resources through the market mechanism. Therefore, the intended forces of production and the social relations of production are weak, which has hampered the development of a class conscious proletariat that would have ushered in the form of social change Marxist professes, because the totality of the consciousness of the people determines the direction of the state and its attendant structures.

Polarized State

Polarized State is associated with the segregation within a state that may emerge from income inequality, economic displacements etc. and result in such differentiation that would consist of various social groups, from high-income to low-income (Esteban and Debraj). Political polarization is not restricted to the developing economy; it is also one of the most widely discussed transformations within developed economy. Recent developments around the world have shown that ideological, economic or religious polarization between contending groups is a major source of conflict and hence one of the key impediments to social and political progress.

Theoretical Paradigm

Marxist theory has continued to be a source of hypothesis to many theorists in the world, and which has created a “theorizing puzzle” in the realm of social reality. Marx propounded an economic theory based on capitalist society. That every society, whatever its stage of historical development rest on economic foundation; the mode of production, this in turn has two elements, the forces of production and the social relations of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of the society. That at a certain stage of its development, the material forces of production in the society comes into conflict with the property relations. That this antagonism and conflict is inevitable between these two classes, and would result as class consciousness and militant class action develop in the overthrow of the existing system. In The Communist Manifesto of 1848, Marx posits, “*the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle...without conflict, no progress, this is the law which civilization has followed to the present day*”. Marx also contend that the source of power in the society lays in the economic infrastructure, that the forces of production are owned and controlled by a minority, the ruling class. That the relationship to the forces of production, produces the bases of its domination and exploitation in the society, and the state plays an historic important role in maintaining this social structure. That is while he asserts, “*the state is but a committee for the managing of the common affairs of whole bourgeoisie...*” (Engels, 1919).

The African state is a rentier state without a production base where the forces of production and social relations of production are embedded (Omeje, 2006). Hence the objective conditions to create social mechanisms for a productive economy that will usher a class struggle between the two class professed by Marx is lacking. Class consciousness is weak in the African society, particularly in South Sudan and Nigeria, because of the relative nature of the economy that is mostly peasantry in nature and it depends on rents from mainly oil exploit to run the state. As such, the totality of the consciousness of the people in South Sudan and Nigeria is determined and geared towards the state for survival hence the emergence of a rentier economy without a production base to create class consciousness which is a basic within the Marxian paradigm for societal transformation. Alan-Gelb, et al (2002) in their analysis of the state and rentier economy strongly emphasized how oil rents are collected, allocated and used, including often to sustain a policy regime like that of Nigeria and newest state of South Sudan.

This scenario has shown the need for an adequate understanding of the state and its relations to the process of capitalist production and accumulation. Based on this, Claude Ake (1996) argued, “*therefore politics is warfare and governance spoils of war...*” The state becomes the private resources of the dominant faction of the political class, which defend its power by every means against other faction also seeking state power by all means. Marx and Engels were explicit on the views of Ake when they posits, “*circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances*”.

SOUTH SUDAN: FROM CONFLICT TO CONFLICT

Since the days of the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, Sudan had been officially divided into two areas: the North and the South (Abdel Atti, 2002). The North, predominantly Arab and Muslim, where whatever resources were available and whatever development took place were concentrated. And the South, African and “heathen,” appeared to be a remote region without resources best left to its own devices and those of missionaries, but also to be protected from slave raiders (Douglas, 2012).

Under the condominium, an official internal boundary existed that put the South out of northern reach. Unfortunately for the present conflicts, this internal boundary was never clearly delineated, let alone demarcated—it crossed, after all, territory considered to have no value. Not surprisingly, when Sudan became independent in 1956 and the barrier between the two areas was lifted, the South found itself in an extremely disadvantaged position. It was not long before it started agitating for a new status.

Conflict in Sudan was never a simple bilateral affair between North and South. The split between the two regions intersected fundamental problems that existed within both. The North, which ruled the entire country, was extremely unstable politically. Power switched back and forth between military and civilian governments, ranging from those dominated by the left to those with an Islamic orientation. The South was generally resentful of the dominant North but also deeply divided, particularly along tribal lines; these divisions were systematically exploited by northern governments to weaken the southern rebel movements: the Anya-Nya in the early years and, after 1983, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement and its army. It is pertinent to understand that active fighting between North and South took place mostly in the center of the country, around the old North-South internal boundary. To complicate matters, the area crossed by this poorly defined border turned out to be rich in oil, making it a vital resource for both sides. Oil in commercial quantity was discovered in 1978 by Chevron near the towns of Bentiu and Heglig, close to the North-South boundary. The discovery made it all the more important for the North to maintain control, while providing added incentives to the southern rebels to fight for control of the territory. The Heglig find created an especially dangerous situation, because it was located in an area where the boundary was particularly ill-defined and was thus claimed, then and now, by both North and South (Junger, 2007).

Sudan conflict is incomplete without Darfur crisis. The first conflict in Darfur began in 1985, the same period when Sudan was suffering from a severe drought which brought untold suffering in the form of devastating famine. The feeling of neglect by the government in Khartoum, compound with the denial by sedentary communities to allow migration on their land of the pastoralists towards the South created an explosive cocktail which pushed some in the Darfur region to pick up arms. The situation was further exacerbated by the massive movement of Chadian refugees fleeing the civil war that had begun in Chad, bringing with them more hardship. The civil conflict lasted for four years until a peace agreement was signed in 1989 by the warring faction. This initial conflict created the mechanisms for future conflict. The 1989 Peace Accord lasted just for a decade and another conflict erupted in 2003 and is still going on (Flint and De Waal, 2005). The developments in Sudan over the years have led the present crisis to be at a glance an ethnic conflict fuelled by oil, which sees mainly two sides: the Arab, government-sponsored militia, the *Janjaweed*, and the African ethnic groups - the Masalit, Fur and Zaghawa - of two rebel movements, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA). The problem of Sudan, like many of the conflicts in Sub-Saharan (Black) Africa are inextricably intertwined with the vast and rich natural resources contained in Africa. Sudan is no exception.

On May 5, 2006, the so-called Abuja Agreements were signed in Nigeria. The SLM and the Government signed the peace agreement brokered by the African Union and the US. The JEM did not sign the peace accord, because it did not meet JEM demands for a higher share of power in the Sudanese government. The agreement called for the disarmament of the Janjaweed and the incorporation of the rebels in the army, an annual \$200-million investment in the region, compensation to IDPs (internally displaced persons), and “affirmative action in favor of the Darfurians to enhance inclusivity in public services. Despite the agreement, attacks by all parties involved continue and crisis became escalated.

Having gone through untold hardship, South Sudan gained its independence on July 9 2011 after voters resoundingly decided to break away from Sudan in a referendum held earlier that year. Despite optimism that autonomy would lead to greater peace and prosperity for the new citizens of South Sudan after years of neglect, corruption, and human rights abuses under the government of Sudan, the new nation is suffering from persistent inter-ethnic conflict and unbridled arms proliferation. Deadly clashes between Government forces (also known as the Sudan People’s Liberation Army, or SPLA) and armed rebel groups, particularly the Yau-Yau, have led to horrific human rights abuses committed by both sides and the displacement of tens of thousands of people. In December 2013, political divisions between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar exacerbated deeply-rooted ethnic tensions, sparking armed clashes, a humanitarian emergency, and the risk of civil war. Despite six rounds of peace talks mediated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and four ceasefire agreements, violence continues with fresh fighting between government troops and

rebel fighters reported only 48 hours after the latest peace agreement from 9 November 2014. The level of violence has led Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations Mission to South Sudan (UNMISS) to conclude that war crimes and crimes against humanity may have taken place in the country.

Neither the peace agreement that ended Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005) nor South Sudan's 2011 independence brought stability. A difficult divorce that included a border conflict, an oil shutdown, then brief cooperation, has been followed since December 2013 by a new phase of civil war in South Sudan in which the now two countries' wars are increasingly merged. The regional organizations that seek to mediate have been unsuccessful, in part because members have competing interests, while outside powers do not invest sufficiently in conflict resolution.

BIAFRA AGITATION IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's old Biafra problem has reared its head again and with it, the specter of disintegration. For a thirty-month period between 1967 and 1970, Nigeria was embroiled in a bloody civil war as its eastern region unsuccessfully tried to secede from the country under the banner of the Republic of Biafra. The latest episode in the Biafra crisis revolves around the arrest on October 19, of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of a secession movement called the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Kanu is presently facing trial for sedition and treason. Since his arrest, protesters demanding both his release and an independent Biafra have repeatedly clashed violently with security forces with resulting deaths. To be sure, though the wider Ibo communities do not support secession, the grievances about ethnic Ibo marginalization touted by the Pro-Biafra activists resonate highly with them. In context, Nigeria by character is fundamentally a tribal society with longstanding distrust among the various ethnic groups in addition to deep seated primordial loyalties. Incidentally, separatist impulses and/or cries of marginalization in Nigeria are not limited to the Ibos in the Southeast. For example, after the mysterious death of Moshood Abiola as a political prisoner in 1998, separatist sentiments were heard among his Yoruba kinsmen in the Southwest around that period. Also, there was deep frustration and deadly violence in northern Nigeria after Jonathan defeated Buhari in 2011 amidst claims that the presidency should have been rotated to the north as allegedly promised – a dispute that terribly aggravated the Boko Haram problem and deeply divided the north and the south.

However, the surprising success of the National Conference of 2014 offers Nigeria a silver lining, namely, that Nigeria's diverse constituent groups seemingly want to continue coexisting with one another if fair terms of coexistence can be arranged. Nigeria today has become so integrated that it is virtually indivisible. A candid appeal is that Nigerians should not be coaxed into believing on the segregation of any part of the country. In the end, nothing short of proactive measures by Nigeria is needed. And there is genuine opportunity in this crisis for the Nigerian government to profoundly strengthen the country. Moreso, the Igbos should learn from the present predicament of the world's youngest country, South Sudan. South Sudan believed it will prosper if it secedes from Sudan because of its crude oil reserves. After so much appeal to world leaders, it was allowed to gain independence from Sudan. However, what became the country's lot? There was nothing but chaos, as there are so many discordant tunes coming from various interest groups in South Sudan. This shows that the crises that proposed independent state of Biafra will bring to the Igbos might be unprecedented.



Source: International Crisis Group (2014).

South Sudan and Biafra Agitators: *Implication for National Security*

Since its independence in 1956, Sudan was a country of diverse ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, just like Nigeria. The cultural, ethnic and political diversity of the country was not managed for the benefit of all and the failure to do so led to outbreaks of civil wars twice. There is no doubt that cultural and ethnic diversities, which existed in Sudan, are also found in many African countries like Nigeria, which also experienced civil war. Everywhere in Africa, one can find Muslims, Christians and Animists living side by side without having to break up the country. Although the case of Biafra in Nigeria is an example of secessionism, it could be argued that Biafra war was fueled more by political grievances and oil exploitative tendency than ethnic and cultural differences. If ethnicity and religion were the reasons, the non-Muslim groups like Yoruba and others could have joined the war against the Nigerian state that was dominated by the Muslims at the time of independence.

The case of Sudan is not different from that of Nigeria and the root causes of the breakup of Sudan in 2011 could be attributed to mismanagement of diversity and the attempt of the North Sudanese state to marginalize, humiliate exploit oil at the expense of South Sudan. Thus, ethnic and cultural diversities are not the real causes of separatism as we were made to understand. The real cause of civil war has been oil exploration. The mismanagement of diversity by the state is what determines the fate of a diverse country. The failure to manage diversity is what led to breakup of Sudan, the Africa's largest country. The failure of managing diversity is not a curse of the old Sudan alone. The newly independent South Sudan experience instability as the government of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) failed to manage diversity and practice equality, democracy and the rule of law. The newly independent state of South Sudan is not homogenous country as some people may think. It is a country with sixty three tribes with various cultures and religions.

Assuming the quest for a Biafran state is achieved, what is the likelihood of attracting the allegiance of non-Igbo states? The same complaint about marginalization leveled against the current Nigerian State by Ndi Igbos will resurface between the dominant Igbo elite and non-Igbo elite. The intense competition for power among the political class that would ensue as demonstrated in the South Sudan experience will unleash catastrophic consequences for ordinary citizens and this will have adverse effect on national security.

The same oxymoron is found in the Niger Delta where amidst the rich and influential elite/oil and gas, there is no commensurate development in terms of infrastructure and human capacity. Here is a place where the nation has depended on for a long time for its economic sustenance, and a place where a large chunk of its people is poor and in need. This is a place that has a full-fledged commission – Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), and a Federal Ministry – Niger Delta Ministry – both of which were established to specifically develop the area. Alas, the situation has remained same – poverty and squalor amidst wealth.

We must bring to mind that two states of the South East, i.e. the supposedly Biafra territory belong to the Niger Delta region. In the whole Niger Delta, the roads, schools, hospitals, markets, recreational centers and social amenities are nothing to write home about. Aba internal roads, East West road and Obigbo road in Rivers, to mention few, are death snares. With the new leadership in Nigeria today, many people and groups have called on the Igbo to prove their worth in the new Nigeria and work with the federal government rather than resort to agitation for secession that could compromise national security.

Moreover, caution is advised in the handling of this conflict, considering its historical antecedents and likely multiplier effects on the country as a whole if allowed to escalate further. Nigeria already has searing security issues to contend with and can ill-afford another conflict on a new front. Nigeria has always been in critical ferment: it has fought one bloody civil war and has had to contend with several other low and high intensity insurgencies. That is why it is quite shocking that successive governments have consistently failed to learn from the country's sordid, gory and horrid history by carving out a more constructive and sustainable stratagem for handling domestic conflicts, especially separatist agitations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, many African conflicts, including conflict between North and South Sudan, the South Sudanese civil conflicts and intractable Biafra agitation in Nigeria has a long and varied history. Oil has become a powerful element exacerbating conflict as a major factor in polarizing relations in many African states. The truth is that every segment of Nigeria is claiming marginalization. The northern Nigeria is being accused by the Southern parts of having presided over the leadership of the country for a longer period. There are reports that over 80% of the nation's oil and gas businesses is owned or controlled by the northern political elite (Soludo, 2005). There are also insinuations that the richest political and business personalities are found in the north. But the reality on ground in Nigeria of today is that the northern part of Nigeria harbours the largest population of the poor and unread/half-read Nigerians.

The deed of the collapse of Biafra and its reintegration into Nigeria was considered a done deal, until around the last decade of the last century that its restoration was first muted amidst the heightened national question related to self-determination in Nigeria that turned many ethnic nationality groups restive. Some elements of the mostly Ijaw dominated Niger-Delta took up arms, just as some from the Yoruba ethnic

nationality engaged the Nigerian state in a cat-and-mouse street fight to drum up the quest for regional autonomy or an outright sovereign state of Oduduwa that has never existed in the modern sense. The sense of outrage of the Yoruba ethnic nationality was stoked further with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election that its kinsman, the multi-billionaire businessman, Chief MKO Abiola was poised to win. It is crystal clear that no country breaks out from its origin and stabilizes or finds peace and development. South Sudan, Eretria, Nepal, the Russian secessionist territories, parts of the Middle East, amongst others are living examples. Countries are getting stronger by integrating other possible neighbourhoods and not by disintegrating. Nigeria should remain one but Nigerians should be granted open and level ground to strive for equal rights and opportunities in their motherland. No Nigerian should be relegated to a second class citizen or denied on any socio-political, ethnic and religious background.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the non-sustainability of the Nigerian system, it has led to the production of militant youth agitations across the nation that is serving as latent functions in shaping social life. The individual as an agent of change in the society, if incapacitated by any means he cannot perform its function of producing and transforming society. The State needs an institutional frame work of policies to tackle this dysfunctional economic system it operates if it does not want to be among the list of failed Nations of the world. Whether a country continues to subsist in its original form depends on how it handles dissent. The adversarial posture being assumed by the authorities could worsen matters the same manner the confrontational conflict handling styles of previous governments ultimately resulted in the escalation of conflicts that would have been peacefully settled without resorting to fisticuffs; conflicts that simple symbolic actions, structural and institutional reforms, in conjunction with other non-combative confidence building measures would have easily checked. Most of the conflicts that have reared their heads in Nigeria over the years started off in form of muted protests. They escalated when the state adopted force as its conflict handling style. From the Civil war, the Niger Delta crisis, and even the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, the same forceful approach, with its concomitant negative outcomes was the preferred rule of engagement.

This paper is calling for a systematic joint-problem-solving process of dialogue to be employed by the President Mohammadu Buhari government in engaging these disenchanting Nigerians in serious deliberations aimed at deactivating this ticking time bomb. The Federal government should not wait until conditions worsen before reacting, as has become the tradition in these parts. If the Nigerian government can extend the olive branch – amnesty proposal – to Boko Haram, a known terrorist group that has murdered thousands of hapless Nigerian citizens in a bloody insurgency that shows no signs of abating, it should extend the same arm of fellowship to fellow Nigerian citizens peacefully making their own legitimate demands. If the Nigerian government can grant amnesty to Niger Delta militants who for so many years sabotaged the production of oil, it should listen to the pro-Biafrans.

The Federal government should, as a matter of urgency, look into the white paper of the just concluded National Conference and work assiduously to make sure he implements true Federalism. And also should be more constructive in its handling of this impending crisis of Biafra agitation. The government must firmly resist the temptation to adopt a confrontational approach to this issue. Rather than being adversarial, it should embrace dialogue as the most reasonable option that can result in a more positive outcome that would be acceptable to all stakeholders concerned. Clamping down on them will only embolden them, possibly resulting in worst-case scenarios, than would have been envisaged. According to the popular maxim, “Prevention is better than cure”. The time to act is now. The mistakes of the past must be avoided. Rather than war-war, it is better to jaw-jaw. As succinctly stated by the mystically minded Albert Einstein, as cited by Mutiullah (2012), “Peace cannot be kept by force; it can only be achieved by understanding”.

REFERENCES

- Abdel Atti, H. A. (ed) 2002. Sustainable Development in Sudan: Ten Years after Rio summit. Proceedings of the National Civil Society Preparatory Conference 2-4 October 2001, Khartoum
- Ake, C. (1996). *Social Science As Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development*. Ibadan: University Press Ibadan.
- Ali, O. M. (2004). *Natural Resource Based Conflicts Resolution: The Case of Greater Darfur*. Workshop on Natural resources and Land Tenure Systems, 1 – 2 November 2004, Khartoum.
- Alubo, U. S. (1990). *Human Rights and Militarism in Nigeria: The African Political Economy context*. West Port: Greenwood.
- Brooks, D. (2004). Age of Political Segregation. *New York Times*, 29 June.
- Collier, P. and Anke, H. (2004). Greed and Grievance in Civil War. *Oxford Economic Papers*, 56(4), 563-595.
- Deng, F. (2014). *New Sudan in The Making: a Nation in Painful Search of itself*. Asmara: Red Sea Press.
- Douglas, J. (2012). *The Root Causes of Sudan's Civil Wars: Peace or Truce*. African Issues. Cape Town

Publishers.

- Esteban, J. and Debraj, R. (2008). Polarization, Fractionalization, and Conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 45(2).
- Fearon, J. D. (2004). Why Do Some Civil Wars Last so Much Longer Than Others? *Journal of Peace Research*, 41(3), 275–301.
- Flint, J. and De Waal, A. (2005). *Darfur: A Short History of a Long War*. London: Zed Books
- Garba, J. (2006). *Fractured History: Elite Shifts and Policy Changes in Nigeria*. Princeton: Sungai Books.
- International Crisis Group (2014). *God, Oil and Country, Changing the Logic of War in South Sudan*. Africa Report No. 39, Brussels
- Junger, S. (2007). *Blood oil: Vanity Fair*. Retrieved from <http://www.vanityfair.com/politics/features/2007/02/junger200702>
- Karl, M. (1848). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. Beijing: Foreign Language Press.
- Karl, M. and Engels, F. (1976). *The German Ideology*. Moscow: Progress.
- Lyman, N. (2014). *Crisis and Opportunity in South Sudan*. USA: Institute of Peace Press.
- Mutiullah A. O. (2012). *Peace and Conflict Resolution in Democratic Society*. Abuja: Prince Publishers.
- Omeje, K. (2006). The Rentier State, Oil-Related Legislation and Conflict in Nigeria.” *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6(2), 211-230.
- Soludo, C. (2005). *The Political Economy of Sustainable Democracy in Nigeria*. The 5th Nigeria Democracy Day Lecture Delivered on May 29th, in Abuja.