TEST Engineering & Management

*July – August 2020*
***ISSN: 0193-4120 Page No. 6633 - 6653***

# A Nation under Siege: A Cursory Look at the State of Insecurity in Nigeria with Special Emphasis on Boko Haram and the Niger Delta Avengers Phenomena

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***Article Info***
***Volume 83***
***Page Number: 6633 - 6653***
***Publication Issue:***
***July – August 2020***

***Article History***
***Article Received**: 25 April 2020*
***Revised**: 29 May 2020*
***Accepted**: 20 June 2020*
***Publication**: 10 August 2020*

## Abstract
Violent conflict within multiethnic and multi-religious countries is almost as given, although not all multiethnic or multi-religious societies are violent. The gamut of those riddled with violent conflict ranges from Yugoslavia and USSR to Northern Ireland and the Basque country, from Rwanda to Darfur, and Indonesia to Fiji. Numerous bitter and deadly conflicts have been fought along ethnic and religious lines. However, apart from Nigeria, there is hardly any one country today that has been faced with conflicts all due to the conflation of so many factors at a time. Nigeria appears to be the only of such country today. The raging conflicts in Nigeria today are engendered by a combination of religious, ethnic and political factors. This has heightened the state and nature of insecurity in the country. Using social movements and protracted social conflict as theoretical frameworks, this paper seeks to argue along the trajectory that Nigeria is presently experiencing two types of terrorist insurgency – the political (perpetuated by the Niger Delta Avengers) and religious (perpetuated by the

Boko Haram Sect). The paper argues that the conflicts in Nigeria are products of existential and identity crisis; a product of how people see themselves in different ways that constitute fluid, short-lived and insignificant identity on one hand and a more permanent and more significant identity on the other hand.Violent conflicts erupt when a group of people ascribe a special identity to themselves in relation to other groups within the society. Where violent conflicts are hinged on the identity of a people, such identity is considered sufficient enough to motivate and prepare a people to deploy violence to propagate and defend their cause. People now find themselves taking armsbased on their identity. The paper x-rays the activities of two groups in Nigeria – The Niger Delta Avengers and the Boko Haram sect, and explores how the phenomenon of group identity has resulted in permanent state of insecurity in Nigeria.

**Key Words:** Boko Haram; Niger Delta Avengers; Insecurity; Identity; Violent Conflict

## Introduction

Going by the experience of the happenings and events in the world today, one may aptly conclude that conflict and violence have become endemic to human societies. In this regard therefore, Zartman (1991:370) has associated conflict with interactions among people; "an unavoidable concomitant of choices and decisions and an expression of the basic fact of human interdependence." Much earlier, Coser (1956:121) hadstated that conflict occurs when two or more people engage in a struggle over values and claims to status, power and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure or eliminate their rivals. Coser (1956:8) further explained that conflict emerges whenever one party perceives that one or more valued goals or means of achieving these valued goals is being threatened or hindered by another party or parties or by their activities. These perceived threats occur especially if both parties are seeking to expand into the same field or physical sphere or the same field of influence or behaviours. The failure of one party to achieve his end may lead to frustration which as Stagner (1995:53) has observed may further lead to the occurrence of aggressive behaviour and which in turn leads to some form of conflict. Thus, violence as an instrument of political power also lends itself to private use for private gains by individuals. In a bid to proffer understanding of this phenomenon, many scholarly and seminal works have been carried out concerning it thereby leading to classifying conflicts according to; (1) the parties involved in the conflict (Chazan et al, 1992:189-210), (2) the issues that generate the conflict (Holsti, 1991:306-34), and (3) the factors that cause the conflict (Furley, 1995:3-4).

The recurring phenomenon of conflicts and violence has also challenged orthodox assumptions about national security by deepening it 'upwards' (from national to global security) and 'downwards' (from territorial security focused to states and governments to people security, that is, individuals and communities), and 'widening' it by arguing that non-military dimensions, such as social wellbeing and environmental integrity, are important prerequisites for ensuring security (Renner, 2006:3). Given these facts therefore, Fucks (2006:12-13) has warned that security should not be defined as exclusively the security of the wealthy world basically because such definition divides the peoples instead of looking for a common denominator and "in the age of globalisation, there cannot be security only for the prosperous minority of the world's population." Secondly, Fucks had equally warned that security cannot be defined primarily in military terms because

"peace cannot be waged with war." Rather, he opined that;

> A visionary security policy (or definition) must pay attention to education and work for the billions of young people in the Third World who are threatening to drift into a life devoid of perspectives and dominated by ideological extremism. It must at least take up the fight against epidemics such as malaria and AIDS. It must address the human right to clean water and act against desertification of fertile soil. It must do everything possible to keep climate change and its effect within tolerable limits. It must serve to lessen the pressure of the rich countries to acquire finite raw materials and must overcome their dependency on oil in order to prevent a struggle of all against all over ever scarcer resources. And it must work sincerely for democracy and human rights – in the end, democracy is the best insurance against war and violence, both internal and external.

The concept of insecurity is best understood by understanding what security is. Following Wolfers (1952 [1962]), scholars and analysts are agreed that security is a highly contested concept (Dalby 1997). However, Makinda (2006:30) is of the opinion that the concept of security should be seen as a political construction and hence its understanding will eventually depend on the theoretical framework or persuasion from which it is being viewed from. In this regard, therefore, security can be viewed from many paradigms such as realism, liberalism, neo-realism, neo-liberalism, constructivism, feminism, social critical theory, Marxism, English School, post-structuralism and post-modernism among others. A common thread that runs through these different paradigms is that they are generated in the West and hence will predominantly reflect Western thinking. In this wise, Makinda (2006:31) has cautioned that we must be aware that the contexts and inter-paradigm debates that take place in security studies stem largely from the desire for intellectual hegemony by various groups in the West. He submitted that "inter-paradigm exchanges have become platforms on which social group in the West compete with a view to dominating global thinking and none of the adherents to these paradigms has been concerned with the need to incorporate African or non-Western epistemological perspectives into theorising about security."

The realists' conception of security, for instance, is concerned with state survival in an international system that is characterised by anarchy and self-help (Mearsheimer, 1994/95; Walt, 1991; Mastanduno 1997). While realist analyses may differ in emphasis, their views of security are not contested within their own circles. For instance, Walt's (1991:212) sees security studies as "the study of the threat, use, and control of military force." Similarly, Lynn-Jones (1992:74) has argued that the "questions that form the central focus of [security studies] are concerned with international violence and external threats to the security of the state." While these views of security are generally uncontested by

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realists, a major weakness is they regard the use of military force and state survival rather than protection of people, as ends in themselves.

The liberalist perspective view security in terms of the enforcement of international law, the triumph of diplomacy and the promotion of global norms. They prescribe and favour international cooperation, multilateralism and diplomatic negotiations as antidotes against international anarchy, war, the balance of power and self-help (Doyle 1997:210). Although there are differences of emphasis, just as within the realist school, the liberals are, however, agreed that people should be at the centre of security policies. In the respect therefore, the Commission on Global Governance (Report 1995:81) has it that “the security of people must be regarded as a goal as important as security of states.” Most liberals agree that human security should be on the global security agenda (Nef, 1999; Suhrke, 1999; McRae and Hubert, 2001). Like the realists and liberals, constructivists acknowledge the dangers of war, the existence of anarchy and self-help and the significance of military force, but unlike these two, constructivists regard these institutions as primarily ideas and only secondarily as material forces (Wendt 1999, Reus-Smit 1999, Ruggie 1998). Constructivists generally define security in terms of ideas, culture and social institutions. They argued that security is essentially dependent on the meanings we attach to social phenomena.

Makinda (2006:33) has pointed out that the founding President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, was one of the earliest people in Africa to define security in terms of people’s freedom. Nkrumah’s attempt to globalise peace, freedom and security was premised on the fact that Africans freedom can only be possible if the whole world enjoy peace and security. He asserted that “indivisibility of peace is staked on the indivisibility of freedom” in the global arena (Nkrumah 1972:106). Makinda (2006:33) is of the opinion that based on Nkrumah’s political thought, as well as writings of other African thinkers such as Edward Blyden, Leopold Senghor, Albert Luthuli, Nelson Mandela, Jomo Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere, Tom Mboya, SekouToure, Franz Fanon and Gamal Abdel Nasser (Mutiso and Rohio 1975), African perspective or definition of security should include welfare, emancipation, dignity and protection of the people. As Makinda (2005:285) has stated, “security implies the protection of the people and the preservation of their norms, rules and institutions, in the face of military and non-military threats.”

What then is human security? The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been credited for inventing this term and has argued that “for most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.” Similarly, the Commission on Human Security defines it as the protection of “the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment (Commission 2003:4). It further states that “human security means protecting fundamental freedoms – freedoms that are the essence of life” (2003:4). Thomas (1999:3) has posited that human security “has both qualitative and quantitative aspects” and that it is “pursued for the majority of human-kind as part of a collective, most commonly the household, sometimes the village or the community

defined along other criteria such as religion or caste." Thus, she argues that "at one level, human security is about the fulfilment of basic material needs, and at another, it is about the achievement of human dignity, which incorporates personal autonomy, control over one's life, and unhindered participation in the life of the community" (Thomas 1999:3). Thomas, however, located human security within the purvey of democracy and requires emancipation from oppressive structures. MacFarlane (2004:368), on the other hand, has argued that "state sovereignty and the primacy of the state are justified only to the extent that the state's claim to protect the people within its boundaries is credible, since the only irreducible locus of sovereignty is the individual human being."

However, critics of the human agenda of security have argued that it generates false hopes and priorities and proceeds from false causal assumptions. On one hand, Khong (2001:233) has argued that "in making all individuals a priority, none actually benefits," while Bull (1977 [1995]:79) has opined that "states and nations were originally thought to have rights and duties because individual persons had rights and duties." The logic of this is that the security of persons is prior to that of states or political communities. This further echoed Nkrumah's assertion that the conscience of humankind was progressively moving towards a new horizon of knowledge where due respect for human dignity and the idea of international peace were intertwined (Nkrumah 1973:216). Ullman (1983:130-31) has defined security in terms of people, has postulated that "a threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that ..threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state." In consonance with Ullman's view, Prins (1984:xiii) also argued that "security is produced by general social well-being" and went on to define social well-being as the "sum of individual fulfilment, which depends upon the civilised arbitration of conflicts of interest in society, which in turn depends upon a just provision of goods, services and opportunities for all." Further echoing Nkrumah, Prins claimed that security was intimately bound up with … freedom. Freedom from want, freedom of thought and freedom from fear: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

This paper is divided into six main sections. Its main argument flows from the fact that people see themselves in many different ways that constitute a form of identity which can be fluid, short-lived and insignificant or more permanent and more significant personally and socially. However, the importance which people ascribe to different aspects of their identity varies according to context and over time, but where violent conflicts are mobilised and organised by identity, such identities must be sufficiently important enough to make people prepared to fight, kill and even die in the name of their identity. The escalation of the politics of identity leading to a somewhat permanent state of insecurity makes the paper to wonder whether the Nigerian state may survive these bombardments and assault on its security and political stability.

**Types of Insurgency**

Contemporary forms and types of violence and conflict can take many or a combination of forms generally known as irregular or unconventional wars such as revolution, coup d'etat, guerrilla war, terrorism, strikes, riots and "intifada"; a term that has gained recent publicity in reference to the Palestinian uprising in the Israeli-controlled

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territories. As Kaldor (1999:107) had explained, the terms "irregular" or "unconventional" as against "regular" or "conventional" wars, are often used to described conflicts that do not take the form of mass armies engaging one another on the battlefield, or the traditional air and sea based military operations that support them. Another term for this type of insurgency embarked upon by both the Boko Haram and the Avengers against the Nigerian state is also known as Asymmetric War. We shall now turn to a discussion of three of the most popular of this insurgency, especially as presently employed by both the Boko Haram and the Avengers to destabilise the Nigerian state.

***Guerrilla Wars***

"Guerrilla" in Spanish means "small war", a form of insurgency and violence that is older than conventional war itself. In numerous instances, guerrilla war has been used as the main form of struggle whereas in other instances, it has been used as an auxiliary form of fighting especially behind enemies lines while the main confrontation between armies in a conventional war is taking place. In both instances, guerrilla war is a diffuse type of war, fought by a relatively inferior combatant force against a qualitatively superior and stronger enemy force. Thus, as a strategy, guerrilla warfare avoids direct, decisive battles and instead, opt for a series of protracted but small clashes and skirmishes where the insurgents' inferiority in terms of manpower, arms and equipment can be turn to an advantage by adopting flexible hit-and-run tactics and style of warfare. The purpose and the effect of this are not only to wear down the conventional enemy's force through attrition, but to also prevent it from employing its full qualitative advantage of armaments, number and equipment in the contest. Thus, guerrilla warfare employ raids, ambushes and sabotage from remote and inaccessible bases in mountains, forests, jungles or territory of neighbouring states. Tacticians and theoreticians have however argued that guerrilla warfare should only be adopted as an interim phase of the struggle. The main aim is that it should enable the insurgents the time to build up a necessary support base and recruitment of manpower for its cause and hence, build a regular army that will eventually win through conventional war (Mao, 1968, Lacquer, 1976). Be that as it may, insurgent groups usually resort to this mode of combat out of necessity borne out of the need to adopt the most cost-effective methods of military combat and political disruption.

***Revolution***

More than any other term, revolution has been associated with violence to achieve political means and ends. However, there are two dimensions to its usage. The first connotes it as a strategy of insurgency (means) and the second connotation is as a social or political outcome (ends), the outcome being an Islamic state (Boko Haram) and resource nationalism and a separate state of Biafra (Avengers). Conceptually precise definition of revolution is impossible but nevertheless, its understanding embodies "a deep-seated change, reflected invariably by alterations in the political fabric of society, often consummated through violence and ultimately accompanied by the production of ideology" (Leiden and Schmitt, 1968:3). The term 'revolution' as Griewank (1971) has muted entered into the political science lexicon from astronomy where it is used to mean the oscillation of a planetary body around another and returning later to the initial starting point. Predictably, the reactionary and conservative usage of the

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term became popular amongst early political scientists who were the first to adopt the term (Leiden and Schmitt, 1968:4). Later conception of revolution as renovation and transformation in the "basic principles of good government" by Machiavelli became popular (Griewank, 1971:20). Marx however, adopted the term and gave it its current meaning as a strategy for effecting violent change in a political system when he asserted that "the next French Revolution will no longer attempt to transfer the bureaucratic-military apparatus from one hand to another, but to **smash it,**… (emphasis his) (Marx/Lenin, 1975:247)

***Terrorism***

According to Lenin, the purpose of terrorism is to terrorise. It is the only way a small country or people can hope to take on a great nation and have any chance of winning. Terror therefore, becomes a "symbolic act designed to influence political behaviour by extra-normal means, entailing the use or threat of violence" (Thornton, 1964:73). The general contention about terrorism as a weapon of the weak (Crozier 1960:159) has now become contentious with the emergence of the phenomena of state terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. Russett et al (2006:224) have attempted to make a distinction amongst the traditional (what they refer to as "dissident") form of terrorism, state (what they refer to as "establishment") terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism. According to them, state terrorism is the use of terror by the state; "against their own populations to gain or increase control through fear. Tactics (used in this case) include expulsion or exile, failure to protect some citizens from the crimes of others (as in state-tolerated vigilante groups), arbitrary arrest, beatings, kidnappings (disappearances), torture and murder", while state-sponsored terrorism means; "...international terrorist activity conducted by states or, more often, the support of terrorist groups through the provision of arms, training, safe haven, or financial backing."

Given the various tactics which are available for the insurgents to choose from, the final choice is dependent on a number of factors such as the anticipated goal of the insurgents, opportunity available to them and the level of their fear of retribution. However, contemporary events have shown that insurgency can be of any of these types;

***States against States***

Violence initiated by a state against another state usually takes the form of a conventional war, two opposing regular armies confronting each other. Strategists have differentiated between regular and irregular wars (Gray, 2007:245). The history of the world societies is replete of violence of this type. In violence of this type between states a plethora of means have been used to prosecute such wars and this had led to more and more mechanisation of war, what Gray (2007:115) had called "the technical development of armies, air forces and navies." Wars between states have led to the manufacturing and hence proliferation of not only small arms but also weapons of mass destruction. However, violence between states have not always been through regular conventional wars, other lower levels of violence such as limited air strikes, command raids, or even assassination of enemy agents have been employed. However, in all instances of violence between states, these acts are characterised by being organised and planned and they reflect the capability of large bureaucracies.

Holsti (1991) has identified 177 wars and major armed interventions between states between 1648 and 1989. Eriksson and

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Wallensteen (2004) have added to the list from 1989. Among the issues identified as causing the spates of violence that the world has witnessed from 1648 to 2003 was violence as a result of territorial disputes which had become the single most common reason since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Second are the wars of decolonisation following the aftermath of the Second World War. Prominent examples are Netherlands in Indonesia (1945-1949), France in Vietnam (1946-1954), Tunisia (1952-1956), Morocco (1953-1956), and Algeria (1954-1962) and by Britain in Palestine (1946-1948), the Malay Archipelago (1948-1960) and Cyprus (1955-1960) and by Portugal in Guinea (1962-1974), Mozambique (1965-1975) and Angola (1968-1974). The number of wars fought showed that decolonisation had not been a peaceful transition. Third are wars related to economic issues, involving commercial navigation, access to resources, colonial competition and protection of commercial interests. The first instance of this type was the Anglo-Dutch war (1665-1667). Finally are those wars fought as a result of differences in ideas and ideology. This type of conflict and violence became prominent after the Second World War. Other forms of conflict which are not discussed here are the diplomatic ones such as blockades, economic sanctions, trade embargoes and freezing of a nation's and its' nationals' foreign accounts

***States against Citizens***

The manifestation of violence by the state against its citizens can be at two levels. The first is through the overt legal process by which the state enforces its laws and ensures its citizens' compliance with its laws, rules and regulations. By this the state is merely asserting its internal sovereignty and power over its citizens. The power of the state in this regard includes statutory processes for sanctioning and punishing erring citizens who may infringe on any of the laws. The second means of exercising violence against the citizen is through the clandestine use of illegal violence designed to intimidate and terrorise citizens with the intention of preventing them from opposing the government and disobeying or contravening the state's laws. Two ways have been used by states to perpetrate this kind of violence. The first is by enacting draconian laws aimed at subjecting and conditioning the citizens psychologically and physically to succumb and cajole them. The second way is by physically annihilating or assassinating opposition through the use of special security forces. For instance, "death squads" were created and manned by members of the security forces. In Nigeria, under Babaginda's rule and later under Abacha, citizens' assassination through bomb parcels and other means were not uncommon.

***Citizens against Citizens***

Apart from petty crimes, the major manifestation of this type of violence is vigilante violence and ethnic or tribal conflicts. Although over 80% of conflicts experienced in the world today are located within Asia and Africa, the violence has always been that of ethnic conflict. The vigilante type emerged primarily because of the inability of the police to control crime and these vigilante groups, at least in Nigeria, later metamorphosed into armed vanguards of their different ethnic groups. However, the most popular form of citizens' violence against citizens takes the form of ethnic violence. In Nigeria, for instance, this ethnic conflict has been further complicated by religious motivated violence thereby making the divide between ethnic conflict and religious violence difficult to delineate. Many reasons can be adduced for the eruption of ethnic conflicts. Prominent

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among these reasons are group loyalty and identity, feelings of marginalisation and alienation, struggle for access to state power and hence political accommodation, control of group's destiny and resource control. The Minorities at Risk Project reports that from 1998-2000, 117 countries (about 2/3) were home to substantial ethnic groups that were politically active. In almost half of these states, ethnic groups constituted more than one-quarter of the total population. A total of about 284 groups are actively engaged in one form of violent struggle or the other while 103 groups are participating in sporadic violence against other groups (Russett et al 2006:219). The Rwandan genocide is history's current tragic illustration of the extreme brutality of unchecked ethnic conflict. Many instances of Nigeria's religious riots have also acquired the characteristics of this type of insurgency (Albert, 2004, Ukanah, 2011).

***Citizens against States***

This is a form of citizens' expression of discontent against state's policies or its leadership and may be organised or spontaneous having neither clear political goals nor organised leadership. In its organised form, this type of violence falls under the category of insurgency aimed at overthrowing the government. Conflicts of this nature occur within states but also contain within it the possibility of provoking conflicts between states. For instance, the success of the French Revolution brought fear to other monarchs in Europe and their resentment eventually led to France declaring war against Austria in 1792. In Nigeria, the citizens' resentment of the state of the nation led to the Biafra War from May 1967 to January 1970. The focus of this paper is located within this type of insurgency.

**Theoretical Basis/Framework**

This paper is anchored on two theoretical groundings – Social Movement and Protracted Social Conflicts (PSC). Tarrow (1999:2) has defined the term "social movement" as "those sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents". As Tarrow (1999:3) has argued, collective action can take many forms, from brief to sustained struggle or revolt, from institutionalized to disruptive and from humdrum to dramatic, it however become contentious when it is used by people who lack regular access to official means of airing their grievances, who act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and who behave in ways that fundamentally challenge the state's authority or elites. Contentious collective action therefore forms the basis of social movements basically because it is the only means by which the oppressed can draw an unresponsive state's elites' attention to their plight, or better articulate their grievances and confront the better-equipped opponents or the state. Contentious collective action brings ordinary people together under the same umbrella, for the same purpose and to confront opponents, elites or authorities.

Social movement therefore mounts contentious challenges through disruptive actions aimed and directed at the state. Disruption is always public in nature and can take the form of resistance, collective affirmation of new values or outright violence leading to a revolution (Melucci, 1996). Collective challenges are aimed at disrupting, interrupting, obstructing or rendering uncertain the activities of others; maybe states. However, collective

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contentious behaviour is linked to a functional view of society in which societal dysfunctions have produced different form of collective challenge and movements some of which can take the form of political or interest groups (Smelser, 1962, Turner and Killian, 1972). These societal dysfunctions can be likened to Durkheim's "anomie" in which individuals come together to form collective identities and be identify as belonging to specific group or movement (Durkheim, 1951; Hoffer, 1951). Scholars have been interested in identifying how such societal dysfunctions assume such a dimension that they become transform into concrete grievances and emotional-laden "packages" (Gamson, 1992a) or put in 'frames' that are capable of convincing ordinary citizens that their cause is just and important that they are willing to risk everything for (Snow et al, 1986). Shared or common grievance therefore provides collective incentive to mobilization and a challenge to opponents. The form which the struggle takes is a function of history. As Tarrow (1999:21) puts it, "particular groups have a particular history – and memory – of contentious forms. Workers know how to strike because generations of workers struck before them". Hill and Rothchild (1992:192) have earlier expressed this opinion also that "based on past periods of conflict with a particular group(s) or the government, individuals construct a prototype of a protest or riot that describes what to do in particular circumstances as well as explaining a rationale for this action".

The greatest weapon available for all social movements with collective contentious behaviour is disruption. Social movements employ the power of disruption basically because this draws attention more quickly to them; enable the social movement to spread uncertainty while giving them the necessary leverage they need against powerful opponents such as the state. Thus, the power of disruption becomes the strongest weapon of contentious social movements. However, as Tarrow (1999:98) has noted, the sustenance of disruption depends on a "high level of commitment, on keeping authorities off balance, and on resisting the attraction of both violence and conventionalization." When faced with high level of disruptive activities by social movements, the state coercive apparatus; the police and the military are brought in to subdue the social movement. Thus, faced by a determined police and an unyielding government, the less committed members of the social movement tend to withdraw tacitly thereby leaving the social movement and the continuation of the struggle in the hands of the more militant members who will eventually resort to violence. Disruption thus serves to split the movement between the moderate majority and the militant minority, driving the latter into acts of violence.

Violence therefore becomes the most visible and the ultimate weapon of collective contentious action. History is replete of violence perpetrated by various contentious social movements against those perceived as opponents or enemies. Violence in this respect serves two purposes; first as "the easiest form of collective action for isolated, illiterate and enraged people to initiate" and second, as used by larger movements, it serves as a means of welding "supporters together, dehumanize opponents and demonstrate a movement's prowess." Violence is interactive at least to the extent that "repressive forces do the largest part of the killing and wounding; while the groups (social movement) they are seeking to control do most of the damage to objects" (Tilly, 1978:177). The use of violence as a method of expression has a polarizing effect. It transforms contentions from a confused,

many-sided game of allies, enemies and bystanders into a bipolar one by creating a clear cut division among groups, forcing people to choose sides and dividing them into supporters/activists and repressive apparatus. The adoption of violence as a method of articulating and convening grievance to the state is a major power source of social movements but at the same time it can turn into a liability especially when potential allies become frightened after adoption of violence as a medium of expression and abandoned the cause.

However it is very instructive to note that the adoption of repressive actions by the state actors to contain all contention is a function of the fact that political elites who have been successful in employing violence to quell revolts and defend their claims to power eventually become habituated to the political uses of violence. Their acceptance of violence as a means of resolving disputes or repressing people becomes part of the elite political culture. In this respect this culture has been borrowed from the period of military dictatorship which had spawned President Obasanjo. Gurr (1988:49) had equally noted that "…elites who have secured state power and maintained their position by violent means are disposed to respond violently to future challenges". Thus violent activism in democracies requires a climate of acceptance of unconventional means of political action among groups and the state (Gurr, 1990:87). State violence will lead to employing similar repertoire by contending social movements. Violence will always beget violence and hence conflicts become protracted, drawn-out and unending.

This situation is what Edward Azar (1991:93), has referred to as protracted social conflict (PSC). It results from "the prolonged and often violent struggle by communal groups for such basic needs as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation." PSC deals with relationship between intra-state actors such as communities, tribes and ethnics. The traditional preoccupation with inter-states relations is seen as obscuring the more realistic domestic relations among ethnic groups. Thus, the distinction between domestic and international politics is rejected as being rather "artificial" because "there is really only one social environment and its domestic face is the more compelling" (Azar& Burton, 1986:33). Thus, the role of the state in the domestic relationship among intra-state ethnic actors is to satisfy or frustrate basic communal needs and by so doing prevent or promote conflict (Azar, 1990:10-12).

The term "Protracted Social Conflict" (PSC) emphasized that the sources of conflicts lay predominantly within (and across) rather than between states. To explain this, PSC identifies four clusters of variables. The first is the "communal content" of a conflict which as Azar has argued is the most useful unit of analysis in protracted social conflict situations because it identifies the groups involved in terms such as racial, religious, ethnic, cultural and others (Azar, 1986:31). In its analysis of the communal content of any conflict, Azar (1990:7) insists that it is the relationship between the identity group and states which is at the core of the conflict (that is, the "disarticulation between the state and society as a whole," and how individual interests and needs (such as security, identity, recognition and others (Azar, 1986:31) are mediated through membership of social groups. This disjunction and disarticulation between state and society Azar (1990:8) has linked to the colonial legacy which artificially created states made up of "multitude of communal

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groups" on the principle of "divide and rule" thereby resulting in many postcolonial multi-communal societies whose state machinery is either "dominated by a single communal group (the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy) or a coalition of a few communal groups that are unresponsive to the needs of other groups (the minorities) in the society."

The second is that Azar identified deprivation of human needs as the underlying source of PSC. He argues that "grievances resulting from need deprivation are usually expressed collectively. The failure to redress these grievances by the authority cultivates a niche for a protracted social conflict" (Azar, 1990:9).Azar further affirms that needs are unlike interests because they are ontological and non-negotiable and so if they result in conflict, such conflict is likely to be intense, vicious, and from a traditional Clausewitzeanperspective, irrational. Azar identified these needs as security needs, development needs, political access needs, and identity needs. Arguing that security is at the root of development and political access, Azar (1990:155) opined that, reducing overt conflict requires reduction in levels of underdevelopment.

> Groups which seek to satisfy their identity and security needs through conflict are in effect seeking change in the structure of their society. Conflictresolution can only occur and last if satisfactory amelioration of under-development occurs as well. Studying protracted conflict leads one to concludethat peace is development in the broadest sense of the term.

Third is that Azar (1990:10) cited "governance and the state's role" as critical factor in the satisfaction or frustration of individual and identity group needs. Simply put, he agrees that the state has the authority to govern and use force where necessary to regulate society, to protect citizens, and to provide collective goods; therefore, most states that experience protracted social conflict tend to be characterized by incompetent, parochial, fragile, and authoritarian governments that fail to satisfy basic human needs. The notion of a liberal democratic government is that the state is an aggregate of individuals who are entrusted to govern effectively and to act as an impartial arbiter of conflicts among the constituent parts. However, this is not the case particularly in states of Africa, Asia and Latin America origins where political authority and power "tends to be monopolized by the dominant identity group or a coalition of hegemonic groups" which use the state to maximize their interests at the expense of others (Azar, 1990:10). The monopolization of power and authority by individuals and dominant ethnic groups limit the access to power by others and precipitates a crisis of legitimacy so that "regime type and the level of legitimacy come to be seen as important linkage variables between needs and protracted social conflict (Azar, 1990:11). As Azar has pointed out, PSCs tend to be a developing countries phenomenon, especially those countries that are characterized by rapid population growth and limited resource base, especially those whose "political capacity is limited by a rigid or fragile authority structure which prevents the state from responding to, and meeting the needs of various constituents."

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Finally, Azar identified the "international linkages" dimension of PSC; in particular the political-economic relations of economic dependency within the international economic system and the network of political-military linkages constituting regional and global patterns of clientage and cross-border interests. He submits that the "formation of domestic social and political institutions and their impact on the role of the state are greatly influenced by the patterns of linkages within the international system" (Azar, 1990:11). Drawing heavily from the works of Sumner (1906), Gurr (1971), and Mitchell (1981) among others, Azar attempted to trace the process by which one group's experiences, fears and belief systems generate a reciprocal negative image which perpetuate communal antagonisms and solidify protracted social conflict. In particular, this negative image of another group's intentions and history serve to justify discriminatory policies and legitimize atrocities. Actions from antagonistic groups are mutually interpreted as threatening, with the worst motivations attributed to the other side and this shrinks the space for compromise and accommodation and so "proposals for political solutions become rare and tend to be perceived on all sides as mechanism for gaining relative power and control" (Azar, 1990:15). Thus, Azar (1991:95) perceives PSC as a model or framework that "synthesize the realist and structuralist paradigms into a pluralist framework" more suitable for explaining protracted and prevalent patterns of conflict than the more limited alternatives.

**Analysing Nigeria's State of Insecurity**

The Nigerian state has been under siege since the colonial amalgamation of 1914 which led to the forceful inclusion of hitherto different ethnic and tribal units into the colonial project later renamed Nigeria. From that time till now, the siege against the Nigerian state has taken various forms, from religious 'riots' to ethnic uprisings, to civil war and the various struggles for ethnic dominance spearheaded by the various ethnic militias that have championed their ethnic roots. Formal siege have also been mounted against the Nigerian state starting from the promulgation of various constitutions ranging from unitary to federal government, the various constitutional meetings and amendments that attempted to offer political accommodation to the various ethnic agitations for inclusion and recognition by the Nigerian state. This includes the many states creation projects, attempts at arriving at a credible and acceptable fiscal relationship between central, state and local governments, and the many military incursions into politics. In one way or the other, all these have laid siege against the Nigerian state. Today, the most prominent are the Boko Haram whose desire is to declare an Islamic state of Nigeria and the Niger-Delta Avengers with its many unnamed affiliates whose grouse against the Nigerian state has progressed from agitations for political inclusion to resource nationalism and now separatist call for exclusion from the Nigerian state.

The crux of this paper is to assess the nature of the insecurity in Nigeria by looking at these two from the lenses of social movements. There are at least three overlapping dimensions to describe differences among social movements. The first is between reform (moderate) and revolutionary (radical) movements. Reform movements seek for modest change within the existing system while revolutionary movements seek fundamental changes of the system, rather than within the system (Harper, 1993:142). The Niger-Delta Avengers does not qualify as a revolutionary

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social movement basically because secessionist movements do not want to overthrow the existing system or impose any change on it other than they want to withdraw from its jurisdiction (Smith, 2003:194). Although history has recorded few successes among separatist movements such as East Pakistan separation to form Bangladesh, Somaliland from Somalia (1991), Eritrea from Ethiopia (1993), East Timor from Indonesia (2002), and the separation of Sudan, few secessionist movement have been successful in achieving independence for the people they represent, but it is unlikely that they will give up the struggle and disband as we are witnessing in Nigeria today. Among religious movements, the millenarian movements seeking the second coming of the kingdom of God are viewed as more radical than others. Boko Haram is an Islamic fundamentalist movement and like all such movements, fundamentalists considered themselves as engaging in an apocalypse war but on the side of good, true, and the saved. The deliberate use of such terms not only justify the acts of violence since the victims are not seen or regarded as human beings, but also justifies and erodes away very form of constraints on violence and emboldens the perpetrators.

The second distinction is between instrumental and expressive movements. Instrumental movements seek to change the structure of society whereas expressive movements address problems and needs of individuals or seek to change the character of individuals and individual behaviour. Certainly, both Boko Haram and Avengers qualify as expressive movements but for different reasons. Boko Haram as a religious movement seeks to effect a change in the behaviour of the people albeit through their belief systems. This result in the activist attribute of proselytising associated with Islam and which is reinforced by the commandment to convert infidels everywhere and at any time. The injunction to convert does not discriminate whether it be through peaceful or violent means. According to Islamic laws, it is lawful and legitimate for Muslim faithful to wage war anywhere and everywhere against four types of enemies; infidels, apostates, rebels and bandits. Of these four only the first two counts as a religious obligation for all Muslims, hence a jihad. An infidel is an unbeliever in the Islamic faith which can be converted either through peaceful means or through war and conquest. Thus, a fundamental of Islamic faith is that proselytising is accompanied by or could be achieved through wars. However, in reality, fundamentalist groups cannot really be said to be practitioners of the religion they espoused to defend or uphold because they selectively adopt and adapt certain teachings, texts and practices of their religion that are deemed as useful and necessary in their fight against modernity and the modern state system (Almond et al, 2003:94-95).

The Avengers will also qualify as an expressive social movement, but this is to the extent that members (or the leadership) think that they are addressing the problems and the need of the people. This raises certain fundamental issues as to how the group affirm that they are giving expression to the will of the people. Every political movements fighting for separation often do so in the name of nationalism, in this case, a particular ethnic nationalism. The idea of nationalism, however, presupposes some form of cultural distinctiveness on the part of the inhabitants of a particular region. This, the movement cannot claim as the south-eastern region of Nigeria is made up of many ethnic groups; many of which may become minorities even if granted the

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permission to secede. For instance, the AkwaIbom, Calabar and Ogoni are already denying their inclusion in the call for secession. Among the ethnic militias social movement group that is clamouring for resource nationalism is dissents as some are already showing their willingness to negotiate with the government while the spokesperson for the people of the region are already disassociating themselves from the group bent on vandalising oil pipelines and disrupting oil exploration.

Of equal importance in this regard is that nationalism in the context of colonialism may be a relatively straight forward concept, but among minorities, it indicates a form of homogeneity that is often strengthened by cultural identity and uniqueness, and linguistic distinctiveness. Crucial to this also is a sense of identity and the demand for autonomy to which it can be inferred that the group once enjoyed self-government. Although a sense of nationhood may be based on any or combinations of any of the factors above, it should not be assumed that each type of identity will have the same effect on political behaviour (Connor, 1978:396; 1988:201-2; Clay, 1989:224-6; Kellas, 1991:2-3). As Smith (1971:181-6) had equally averred, none is sufficient in itself to define a nation, not even language. Smith (1971) has gone further to give a list of 7 features of a nation in the following order – cultural differentiae, territorial contiguity with internal mobility, a relatively large population, external political relations, considerable group sentiment and loyalty, direct membership with equal citizenship rights, and vertical economic integration around a common system of labour. Of these, Smith (1971:186-90; 2001) has argued that tribes have only the first two features, ethnic the first five, whereas nations have all the seven characteristics. It is worthy to bring to notice here that most post-colonial states which are, in essence, collections of tribes and/or ethnic lack at least two of these seven features - cultural differentiae and group sentiment – due to the arbitrary nature of colonial boundaries. If this is likely of Nigeria, it is doubtful whether the so-called state of Biafra can even boast of one of these features. As Emerson (1960:102) and Eriksen (1993:11-12) have further stated, the simplest statement that can be made about a nation is that it is a body who feel that they are a nation. That feeling is not equally shared by all within the region that would make up the Biafran state.

The third distinction is between progressive (or left wing) movements and conservative (or right wing) movements. Progressive movements have been described as future-oriented or utopian, seeking to bring about historically unprecedented conditions and often seek to improve the conditions of submerged groups. Of course, by any stint of imagination, the Boko Haram religious fundamentalist movement cannot be deemed to be a progressive one. terHaar (2004:6) has summarised the basic content of what constitutes fundamentalism as including; (1) a return to traditional values and an accompanying sense of restoration which may stimulate and contribute to the building of alternative structures; (2) the search for a new identity, often at the expense of minority groups; (3) a preoccupation with moral concerns that tends to have an adverse effect on the position of women; and (4) a spirit of militancy with which these objectives are pursued. Armstrong (2007:4) had equally noted that;

> Fundamentalism represents a rebellion against the secularist ethos of modernity. Wherever a Western-style society has established itself, a

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> fundamentalist movement has developed alongside it. Fundamentalism is, therefore, a part of the modern scene. Although fundamentalists often claim that they are returning to a golden age of the past, these movements could have taken root in no time other than our own. Fundamentalists believe that they are under threat. Every fundamentalist movement – in Judaism, Christianity and Islam – is convinced that modern, secular society is trying to wipe out the true faith and religious values. Fundamentalists believe that they are fighting for survival and when people feel their backs are to the wall, they often lash out violently.

As it concerns the Niger-Delta Avengers, it cannot be said to be progressive also as secessionism is a throwback to primordial sentiment which is basically anti-modernist. It is interesting to wonder what particular agenda this group is moving, what conditions have changed between the time of the former president, Jonathan Goodluck and the present one, MohammudBuhari, other than the former one came from that region while the present one came from the north. Of equal importance is the fact that this call for secession is not a novel idea. The Nigerian state had had to engage in a civil war in order to preserve its sovereignty. The present vandalisation and disruption of economic activities in the region was equally not new. The region had been a bed of ethnic militias, boasting of more ethnic formations than any other part of the country. However, in order to ensure security and peace in the region, former president Goodluck had had to negotiate with the leaders. Such negotiation include award of oil blocs and contracts to secure and guard oil pipelines, a lucrative contract arrangement that made the leaders – Tompolo and DokuboAsari and others billionaires. It is no wonder therefore that a change of president presented another opportunity for others to emerge from the woodwork to imitate and follow the footsteps of the former militants. It would seem therefore that the easiest way to become a millionaire is to form, lead or be a member of a militant social movement.

Conservative movements, by contrast, seek to prevent further change or perhaps resurrect the past. So, if progressive movements are utopian (to the extent to which both Boko Haram and Avengers could be termed progressive), conservative movements are usually oriented around vision of some partly mythical golden age of the past. Conservative social movements (or expressive) always almost appeal to people with lower social and economic statuses. To this extent, both Boko Haram and Avengers aptly qualified as conservative social movements. Scholars have even questioned the extent to which social movements should be described as “a collective.” To this extent, Diani (1992) has argued that rather than think of social movements as a unified entity, it may be better to characterised them as constituted by a loose connections between “a plurality of groups, individuals and organisation.” This is basically because there are private incentives that might induce an individual to participate in a movement, incentives that cannot be obtained more cheaply by other means

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(Olson, 1965, Barnes, 1995). Therefore, to the extent that prominent participants may use the utility of social movements to rise to positions of power, influence and high remuneration should the movement eventually come to enjoy a measure of success, notoriety and recognition, it is conservative and there is nothing collective about it.

## Conclusion

The paper is a theoretical construct. It has used the concept of social movement to explain the nature of siege – political and religious – that Nigeria has been placed. The paper has just barely restrained itself from placing a value judgement on whether the siege is justified or not, but what had interest us was the utility of social movement concept to assess and analyse the two militant groups that have put untold pressure on the Nigerian state. The paper has seen these two as terrorist groups but has attempted to bring out the differences between these two terrorist organisations that has placed Nigeria under siege.

The way out? I agree totally with the tenets of the countries involved in the global war against terrorism that you cannot negotiate. With the religious terrorist groups like the Boko Haram, the battle line and divide is drawn between good and bad, evil and good and religious obligations of adherents which they hold as sacrosanct. The sharp demarcation and the value placed on both sides of the divide automatically rule out a basis for discussion and negotiation. The Islamic religious terrorist group is guided by the fact that the entire world is divided into two houses – *dar al harb* (the house of war) and *dar al Islam* (the house of peace). The injunction to either convert or destroy members of the house of war with any menas available has added a cosmic dimension to the struggle and hence, negates any basis for negotiation except they are ready to convert.

A great error has been done by the former administration in negotiating with the Niger-Delta militants. In every federal arrangement, there are bound to be groups who believe that the socio-political and economic system or arrangement has not been fair to them. This is just human and natural. However, negotiating with leaders of such groups as a collectivity is one of the ways of enhancing and ensuring that peace reigns. However, where the path of war has been trodden, and where it is not a collective but some few identifiable individuals, negotiating with such will only pave way for more shadow militant groups to emerge from the woodwork, all claiming to represent a marginalised group whose consents have not been sought or given. Negotiation implies some form of compromise and concession that grant the leaders some form of incentives which they may not have been able to access any other way. This is the situation with the many ethnic militant groups emerging almost daily from the Niger-Delta. The more the government is willing to negotiate, the more groups the government will have to negotiate with, an unending circle of opportunists. This only leave one way out – force and greater force until the motivation and inducements to join such groups is made unviable and unattractive to future would-be members. This has played off tremendously with the Boko Haram insurgents and will play off with others be they political or religious insurgent groups.

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