Strategies of Boko Haram and IPOB in Nigeria's Postcolonial Context: *A Critique*

AfriHeritage

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Working Paper

Series

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African Heritage Institution, promoting evidence-based decision making

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to examine how the post-colonial character of the Nigerian state engendered the emergence and strategies of IPOB and Boko Haram in the state. The study is anchored on the postcolonial state theory. Qualitative (documentary) method was employed for data collection, while qualitative-descriptive method of analysis was adopted. The paper contends that both Boko Haram and IPOB are manifestations of the dissatisfactions arising from the inadequacies of the Westphalian state system imposed on the kingdoms, empires and principalities which hitherto existed in the area today known as Nigeria. Both Boko Haram and IPOB extensively adopted anti-state propaganda targeted at disparaging the postcolonial Nigerian state. Hence, while Boko Haram's propaganda launch onslaught against the colonial education system, the IPOB proselytize secession as a panacea to lopsided federal structure tilting in favour of the North and responsible for economic and political 'marginalization' of the Igbo ethnic group. The central thesis of this study is that contradictions like insurgency and separatist movements are recurring features of postcolonial African states such as Nigeria. The study recommends *inter alia* that peace-building in Nigeria should address economic and political marginalization which engenders dissatisfaction among the masses, while access to education by youths should be enhanced.

Keywords: IPOB, Boko Haram, insurgency, separatist movements, postcolonial state.

Introduction

Since the return to civil rule in 1999, Nigeria has experienced increased agitations from various groups that place one demand or the other on the State. Some of these agitations have taken violent and non-violent forms such as insurgency and separatist movements which serve as centrifugal forces threatening the continued existence of Nigeria as a state.

Insurgency has been described as "an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constitutional government through the use of subversion and armed conflict" (Rabasa, cited in Howard, 2010, p. 64). The fundamental goal of insurgents is to conduct military operations via guerrilla tactics with the aim of seizing and acquiring territory where they can create a "liberated zone" or "counter-state" (Howard, 2010). Accordingly, since 2009, The *Jama'atu Ahlissunnah Lidda'awati wal Jihad* (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad), popularly known as Boko Haram, which means "Western education is a sin", has continued to orchestrate acts of insurgency at the North-east region of Nigeria. The major objective of the group is to replace the secular Nigerian State with an Islamic caliphate under strict Islamic Sharia law (Azom & Okoli, 2016).

Similarly, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) operates as a separatist movement from the South-east region, agitating for the secession of the Igbo nation from Nigeria. The movement

gained popularity and international attention following the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB and Director of Radio Biafra, on 19th October 2015 by officials of the Department of State Security (DSS) (Amnesty International, 2016).

Recent studies tend to analyse contemporary insurgency and separatism in Nigeria from the lens of the failed state theory as popularised by Helman and Ratner (1992). Consequently, such researchers have given a summary dismissal of Nigeria as a failed, fragile or failing state characterized by vices such as corruption, ethnic clashes, marginalization of the minority, inability to secure its borders, failure to provide basic social services or inability to maintain monopoly over the instrumentalities of force (Akude, 2007; Howard, 2010).

Some other studies have argued that economic and political marginalization orchestrated by the Nigerian state against some groups account for the emergence of separatist movements (Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi, 2016). For instance, Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016) argued persuasively that the emergence of the IPOB is linked to the feeling of collective victimization of the Igbo ethnic group by the Nigerian state before, during and after the Biafran war (1967 to 1970).

Similarly, in analysing factors responsible for the emergence of Boko Haram, Abdullahi, Adekeye and Balogun (2014) argue that insurgency is a post-independence phenomenon arising from Nigeria's structural problems such as frustrations, poverty and youth unemployment which coalesced with the prevailing socio-political environment characterized by the use of force by the state to suppress emerging social movements in the country. While these explanations are not wrong, this study contends that they merely present a descriptive analysis of insurgency and separatist movements which manifest in Nigeria thereby obscuring how such phenomena were engendered by the post-colonial character of the Nigerian state. The inadequacies of existing scholarship make it difficult to identify what insurgency and separatism share in common and what strategies can be adopted to address the root causes.

This study therefore intervenes to examine the similarities of both Boko Haram and IPOB within the context of Nigeria's postcolonial character. The central thesis of the study is that the contemporary insurgency and separatism afflicting the Nigerian state are recurring features of its postcolonial character and cannot be appreciated within the lenses of the failed state theory which has influenced the analyses of most writers and *ipso facto* impacted negatively on counter-insurgency and counter separatist-strategies of the Nigerian state.

Data and Methods

This study employed case study research design which enables us to firstly carry out an in-depth study of a small number of cases in their real-life context, and secondly understand how the cases influence and are influenced by their contexts. Thus, to examine insurgency and separatist movement in Nigeria, we selected Boko Haram and IPOB respectively as our case studies. Qualitative method, particularly the documentary method, was adopted for data generation. Documentary method refers to the analysis of documents containing information about the phenomenon of interest in the study (Bailey as cited in Mogalakwe, 2006). Furthermore, Payne and Payne (cited in Mogalakwe, 2006) remark that the documentary method is a data collection method used for identification, categorization, investigation and interpretation of physical sources, mainly written documents existing in both private and public domains. Accordingly,

data on the activities of Boko Haram and IPOB were obtained from secondary data such as journal articles, newspapers, magazines, as well as published reports of agencies like Amnesty International and Mercy Corps. Qualitative-descriptive analysis was adopted for the analysis and discussion of the data obtained from documentary sources.

Failed State Theory: A Critique

The failed state theory is traced to the seminal work of Gerald B. Helman and Steven R. Ratner titled *Saving Failed States,* published in 1992. The article which emerged following the fall of Siad Barre's government in Somalia was a response to the governance crisis in the Horn of Africa. The scholars argue, persuasively, that failed states are disturbing emerging phenomena which are incapable of sustaining themselves as members of the international community. The failed state theory has been further popularized by the works of Rotberg (2002), Howard (2010) and others.

It is analytically germane to note that one central objective of the failed state theory is to justify United States' (US) policy towards non-Western countries (Thiessen, 2015). In fact, as far back as 1994, the US established the State Failure Task Force which developed a global forecasting model of state failure that distinguishes between states likely to fail or experience failure and states likely to remain stable. The Task Force then itemized the basic features of state failure to include: (1) revolutionary wars, (2) ethnic wars, (3) adverse or disruptive regime transitions, and (4) genocides (Howard, 2010).

In line with the above, Rotberg (2002) defines a failed state as "one characterized by enduring violence directed against the state". Such violence which manifests in form of civil wars usually stems from or has roots in ethnic, religious, linguistic, or other inter-communal enmity. Contributing to this, Howard (2010) has remarked that a failed state represents the polity that lacks the ability to perform the fundamental tasks of a nation-state in the modern world. Such fundamental tasks include securing its borders and ensuring that its citizens are not engaged in internal conflict. Failed states are in contradistinction to Westphalian states which exercise full sovereign powers over a territory and population, possess a functioning government that monopolizes legitimate violence and provides public goods, and can make and keep international obligations (Yoo, 2010).

For Rotberg (2004), state failure occurs in stages and can be identified based on a continuum that ranges from weak state, failing state, failed state, and finally collapsed state. Weak states are characterized by internal conflict, management weakness, corruption, despotism, or external threats (Rotberg, 2003). Failing states exhibit ethnic, religious, linguistic, or some other type of inter-communal tensions yet to erupt into uncontrollable violence. Further, in a failing state, criminality tends to be high or on the rise and the ability of the government to provide the essential public good of security has deteriorated or is deteriorating. In addition, in a failing state, per capita GDP and other indicators of economic prosperity have all declined, usually at a very dramatic rate; greed and corruption are rampant, especially among government officials. The failed state is characterized by complete absence of security and order. Failed states abdicate the functions of providing basic social services to warlords and other non-state actors. The ruling class in a failed state oppresses, extorts, and harasses the majority of citizens, while a few favoured elite appropriate state resources through various shady deals (Rotberg, 2002).

Failed states contain weak or flawed institutions such that the legislatures exist as rubber-stamp machines. The judiciary lacks independence, and citizens know that they cannot rely on the court system for significant redress or remedy, especially against the state. Worse still, the bureaucracy lacks professionalism and exists only to carry out the orders of the executive in ways that entrench oppression of the citizens. Corruption is also endemic especially among the ruling class who plunder state resources, invest the proceeds of corruption overseas and in some cases build luxurious mansions with such proceeds of corruption. The failed state lacks legitimacy and is characterized by state oppression of the citizenry. As a result, the citizens align with ethnic or clannish warlords in order to get protection.

In articulating the causes of state failure, Rotberg (2002) opines that state failure is man-made and cannot be caused externally. It is the oppression of the citizenry by the state and concomitant reaction by the oppressed that plunges the weak state into failure. Furthermore, the avarice (especially among the ruling class) engenders antagonism. Such avarice worsens especially with discoveries of new sources of wealth, such as petroleum deposits or diamond fields, loss of legitimacy arising from citizens' lack of trust in the ruling class and consequent transfer of their allegiance to ethnic or clannish warlords.

Emphasizing the causes of failed state, Howard (2010) identifies the following as the four factors that give rise to state failure:

i) **Polity Features:** strong autocratic regimes, the presence of a corrupt state authority, and a difficult history of state development;

ii) **Protest and Dissident Behaviour:** This involves the occurrence of strikes, demonstrations, and riots.

iii) **Situational Barriers:** This has to do with the influence proximity to a state experiencing any type of conflict has on the nature of the state. If a protracted conflict develops, it can destabilize an entire region. Protracted conflicts have led to the collapse of entire regions, such as the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes Region (Africa), and parts of the Middle East.

iv) **Economic Decline:** This involves the influence that deteriorating economic conditions have on the nature of the state. Poor macroeconomic policies can lead to the failure of the state until the state ceases to provide virtually any public goods, and state agents become entirely predatory through rent seeking and corruption (Rotberg, 2004).

Much as the basic propositions of the failed state theory are not in dispute, it is the contention of this study that the theory obscures history by focusing mainly on the symptoms of a malaise. It failed to account for the root causes as to why the so called failed states exhibit the features that characterize them, how they emerged and what inherent character of such states sustains their 'failure'. Thus, by attempting to ignore the peculiar history of African states, the theory is grossly inadequate for understanding when and why African states 'failed'? What sustains the 'failure' or why the 'failure' appears as a recurring phenomenon?

In fact, the failed state theory is imperialistic, a conscious attempt to absolve the colonial state of the consequences of its action. It is a reformulation of the Modernization theory as popularized by W. W. Rostow which proselytizes Western states as models to be copied by African states. The failed state theory tries to conceal the fact that the 'Westphalian state' imposed on African nations became a failure from inception. The post-colonial African states failed from their very conception during the Otto Von Bismark led Berlin Conference of 1884/85. As noted by Bilgin and Morton cited in Thiessen:

> There is a tendency to abstract the post-colonial state from its socio-historical context, leading to an inability to account for historically specific ideologies and practices or the social bases of state power that may constitute or sustain social order…. [There is] no account of how a post-colonial state comes into being in the first place, how it is constituted or reproduced. There is also a further tendency to reify the post-colonial state by abstracting it from the international sphere. (2015, p. 133)

Arising from the above, and in trying to explain contemporary insurgency and separatist movements, proponents of failed state theory tend to argue that such crises manifested following the failure of Nigerian state after independence due to poor leadership and emergence of ethnic and religious divisions (Abdullahi, Adekeye & Balogun, 2014; Akude, 2007). They assume that a stable state was handed over to Nigerian leaders at independence, but degenerated to a failed state due to internal factors; unfortunately, this position is misleading. It is pertinent to note that much of the crises (such as insurgency and violent separatism) identified in the entities referred to as failed states are fruits of seeds sown by colonialism. Such crises are neither new, nor did they begin only with independence but should be understood as recurring crises of postcolonial states.

Insurgency and Separatist Movements within Nigeria's Postcolonial Context: Evidence from Two Case Studies

What is the character of the Nigerian state? What interstice do contemporary insurgents and separatist movements exploit to proliferate in Nigeria? To answer these questions, we turn to the post-colonial state theory as the more abiding explanatory framework. The emergence of IPOB and Boko Haram and their recurring activities can better be appreciated within the context of the post-colonial state theory which elucidates how the post-colonial character of the Nigerian state provides and sustains the interstices exploited by insurgents and separatist movements to emerge and proliferate.

The theory of post-colonial state is traced to the work of Hamza Alavi published in 1972' other major proponents of the theory include Ekekwe (1985) and Ake (1985). The theory of post-colonial state emerged mainly from political and ideological resistance and intellectual critique of post-nineteenth century imperialism and colonialism, including the legacies of Western exploits in the global South and the contemporary power relations between the global South and the global North (Omeje, 2015).

In trying to conceptualise the post-colonial state, Omeje (2015, p. 20) remarks that the post-colonial states "were in part conceived and constituted in the loins of pre-colonialism, mutated,

incubated and produced in colonialism, and ultimately proliferated and aggravated through the incontinency of the postcolonial". Buttressing this point, Abubakar (2015) contends that the emergence of the postcolonial state in Africa did not fundamentally alter the structures and hierarchies of ideological and political domination resulting from the insertion of the continent into the global economy.

The basic propositions of the postcolonial state theory relevant to this study are:

i) The absence of mutually-legitimated Westphalian-type states in the pre-colonial Africa was characterized by the propensity for rivalry and wars of aggression and domination of weak communities by more powerful ones. Hence, the welding of these rival and unequal communities under a Westphalian state system for the purpose of flag independence engendered recurring crises such as insurgency, separatism and irredentism in the postcolonial state.

ii) Corollary to the above, the postcolonial state, being an organic composition of pre-colonialism, colonialism and post-colonialism, remains a theatre of war resulting from its internal contradiction and external influence of World powers.

iii) The arbitrary and absolute power of the colonial state inherited by the postcolonial state led to vices like zero-sum politics, intense struggle for state power, crisis of legitimacy, economic and political marginalization of the minority, the opposition and the poor. Such vices propel the proliferation of insurgency and separatism.

As a postcolonial state, Nigeria emerged following the merger of hitherto existing kingdoms, empires and principalities into Colonies and Protectorates, and the final amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates by the British colonial masters in 1914. The colonial state sowed the seed of separatism by ensuring the economic marginalization of the South for fear that they may dominate the North whose centralized political structure sustained the economic interest of the colonial masters. To illustrate this, the British introduced the Native Authority system which led to the classification of resident non-members of the local tribe in an area as 'settlers'. The British further ensured that colonial subjects from the South referred to as 'native foreigners' who had arrived in the north to serve in administrative posts were separated into officially established *sabon gari* (Kendhammer, 2014).

The above measure was to ensure that the existing political elite in the North on which the British depended for taxation remained in control of the economic and political opportunities in the North (Kendhammer, 2014). By doing so, the colonial state created in the southerners a feeling of discrimination and marginalization in their own country. This feeling was expressed by Nnamdi Azikiwe in his address to the Igbo State Assembly in 1949 when he lamented:

> Politically, you have seen with your own eyes how four million people were disenfranchised by the British, for decades, because of our alleged backwardness….On the economic plan I cannot sufficiently impress you because you are too familiar with the victimization which is our fate. Look at our roads; how many of them are tarred, compared, for example, with the roads in other parts of the country? How many of our towns, for example, have complete postal, telegraph, telephone and wireless services, compared to towns and other areas of

Nigeria? How many have pipe-borne water supplies? How many have electricity undertakings? (Azikwe cited in Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi, 2016, pp. 11-12).

In essence, the preservation of the centralized political structures in the North which sustained efficient tax administration for the benefit of the British colonial administrators allowed for the exploitation of the masses by the Northern aristocrats. This contributed to the entrenchment of poverty and illiteracy among the masses in the North. This gave rise to the emergence of the poor and illiterate masses that would become foot soldiers in the insurgency against the Westphalian state system in Nigeria after independence.

Nigeria's independence in 1960 immediately accentuated the mutual suspicion among the various nationalities that make up the state due to the inability to evolve any political structure acceptable to all. For instance, while the North feared that the more educated South would dominate them, the South was uncomfortable with the size of the North in terms of their large population and geographical size which placed them in vantage position, politically. These fears could be seen in the stands of the political elite at the eve of independence.

Even Obafemi Awolowo argued that the ethnic diversity of Nigeria including different levels of economic achievements of the different ethnic groups could only be accommodated in a near-confederal system built around homogenous ethnic 'nations'. Similarly, the northern elite expressed their preference for a loose confederal system that preserved the large regional system, which ensured the North's numerical dominance in any federal bodies (Kendhammer, 2014).

Case Study 1: Nigeria's Postcolonial Character and Emergence of IPOB

After independence, just like the colonial state, the power of the postcolonial state remained arbitrary and provided opportunity for political office holders to enrich themselves and their cronies through corrupt means. Hence, since there was no institutionalized formal freedom, equality and open competition in the postcolonial state, the struggle for state power was intense and characterized by repression of political opponents and exacerbation of ethnic difference among the people by politicians who struggle for state power. These also engendered legitimacy crisis and crisis of nation-building which would later manifest in acts of insurgency and violent separatism.

The intense struggle for power and legitimacy crisis in postcolonial Nigerian state led to the collapse of the first republic following the 15th January 1966 military coup and counter coup of 29th July 1966. The military coup of January 1966 was perceived as an ethnic military coup orchestrated by the Igbo. This triggered counter coup on 29th July 1966 spearheaded by Northern military officers (Achebe, 2012). One unfortunate outcome of the coup and counter coup of 1966 was the massacre of the Igbo (both military officers and civilians) with over 50,000 Igbo killed between September 29th and November 1966 (Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi, 2016).

The ethnic cleansing experienced by the Igbo following the coup and counter coup of 1966 triggered separatist movement by the Igbo who felt not just marginalized but insecure in the postcolonial Nigerian state. This separatist movement first took the form of a declaration of the sovereign state of Biafra by the Igbo in 1967. This declaration plunged the country into a civil war which last for 30 months. Unfortunately, the end of the Civil War in 1970 saw increased

marginalization and victimization of the Igbo in Nigeria both economically and politically. Ibeanu, Orji and Iwuamadi (2016) identified some of the immediate post-war victimization and marginalization of the Igbo to include: failure to address the humanitarian disaster caused by the War in the Igbo area, the auction of foreign owned enterprises to Nigerians in 1972 – a period unfavourable to the Igbo who were just coming out of the devastation of the Civil War and lacked resources to acquire shares in the auctioned companies, the takeover of Igbo-owned real estate by minority groups in Port Harcourt after the War, with little or no compensation to mention no more.

From the political angle, the Igbo continued to feel poorly represented in the Nigerian state. For example, successive military regimes created more states without much consideration for the plight of the Igbo, or with the intention of deepening the perceived political and economic marginalization of the Igbo. For instance, as a result of the federal imbalance arising from state creation by the military, while every other geopolitical zone has a minimum of 18 Senators, the South-east has only 15 Senators in the Senate. In the House of Representatives, the South-east also has the least number of representatives with 43 members. Again, of the 36 States in Nigeria, the South-east has only 5 States while other geopolitical zones have at least 6 States each (see Table 1). This political marginalization reinforces the economic marginalization, because being a postcolonial state, access to political position means access to economic resources. Thus, poor representation of the Igbo in political positions and poor share of government resources translate to high level of unemployment of the Igbo, especially in government establishments.

Table 1: Representation in National Assembly According Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria

Geopolitical Zone	No. of Senators	No. of House of Reps. Members	No. of States including FCT	Total Representation in National Assembly
South-East	15	43	5	58
South-West	18	71	6	89
South-South	18	55	6	73
North-West	21	92	7	113
North-East	18	48	6	66
North-Central	18	49	6	67
FCT	1	2	1	3
Total	**109**	**360**	**37**	**469**

Source: Author's Compilation

The continued political and economic marginalization of the Igbo after the Civil War led to the formation Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo in 1976 by Igbo elite. The pan-Igbo Association sought greater inclusion of Igbo in the Nigerian polity by adopting peaceful strategy of dialogue and advocacy. The central objective of the Association was to salvage the Igbo from their marginalized position by ensuring they were included in sensitive political positions in Nigeria.

The "greater inclusion" goal pursued by Ohanaeze Ndi Igbo was not accepted by some Igbo of the South-east due to the fear that it may not yield desired result. Consequently, in 1999, Ralph Uwazuruike formed the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra

(MASSOB) with the objective of actualizing the secession of the Igbo from Nigeria. By September 2010, a faction of MASSOB formed the Biafra Zionist Movement (BZM) which later metamorphosed to Biafran Zionist Front (BZF). The activities of BZF were stalled following the arrest and detention of its leaders including Benjamin Igwe Onwuka in March 2014 (Ibeanu, Orji & Iwuamadi, 2016).

IPOB emerged in 2012 and adopted the strategy of reaching out to people through its London-based Radio Biafra station with a campaign for an independent state of Biafra (Amnesty International, 2016). The movement gained popularity and international attention following the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB and Director of Radio Biafra on 19th October 2015. Since the formation of IPOB, the success of the movement in attracting much supporters and adherents to its fold could be explained by the following strategies adopted by its leadership.

Strategies adopted by IPOB to increase membership and support

a. Provoking over-reaction by the government
One major strategy adopted by IPOB to increase its membership and supporters is to provoke over-reaction by the government. In this IPOB succeeded, because as a postcolonial state, Nigeria adopts the strategy of using the instrumentalities of force to silence any form of peaceful agitation. Since the formation of IPOB, Nnamdi Kanu has continued to make inciting statements especially through the Radio Biafra targeted at provoking reaction by the government. For example, in addition to referring to President Buhari as "Hitler of Nigeria", in one of his speeches in March 2014, Nnamdi Kanu threatened: "Our promise is very simple. If they fail to give us Biafra, Somalia will look like a paradise, compared to what happened there. It is a promise, it is a threat and also a pledge… we have had enough of this nonsense…" (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 12).

These incitements and provocative statements led to the arrest of Nnamdi Kanu by the DSS on 14th October 2015, when he arrived in Lagos Airport. The arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu by the Nigerian State has popularised him and wiped up further sentiments in favour of the IPOB movements. For instance, following his arrest and detention, pro-Biafra supporters have used the opportunity to hold various rallies in the South-east calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu whom they argue was being incarcerated for fighting for the freedom of the Igbo. These rallies and demonstrations for the release of Nnamdi Kanu have no doubt served as opportunities for more members to join the movement and more supporters to sympathize with the cause being championed by the IPOB. Some of the major protests held in response to the arrest and detention of Nnamdi Kanu include:

i) 19th October 2015: women protest at Government House, Aba demanding Nnamdi Kanu's release;
ii) 20th October 2015: women protest at Government House, Awka demanding Nnamdi Kanu's release; and
iii) 18th November 2015: pro-Biafra supporters protest in Aba, calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian state has responded to the protests with the use of force including extrajudicial. Some of the recorded incidents of extrajudicial killings of IPOB members by Nigerian security agencies include:

Table 2: Reported incidents of extrajudicial killings of IPOB members by Nigerian security agencies

S/No	Date	Incident	Number Killed	Number Injured
	30th August 2015	Protest in Onitsha	2	22
	2nd December 2015	Shooting at Head Bridge Onitsha	6	12
	17th December 2015	Shooting at Head Bridge Onitsha	5	30
	18th January 2016	Aba shooting	3	At least 5
	29th January 2016	Aba shootings	unknown	At least 5 shot
	9th February 2016	Aba National High School shooting	17	30
	30th May 2016	Remembrance Day	70	60
	September 2017	Operation Python Dance	unknown	Unknown

Source: Amnesty International (2016). *Nigeria: 'Bullets were raining everywhere', deadly repression of pro-Biafra activists*. Nigeria: Amnesty International.

The Amnesty International in a report confirmed the over-reaction of the Nigeria government and how this has increased the protest. According to the report:

> In the south-east, the security forces have responded with violence to peaceful gatherings, protests and prayer sessions of IPOB members and supporters... the military was deployed and in most cases they used lethal force to stop gatherings and protests. It is evident that the constant deployment of soldiers for what should be routine policing functions is contributing to the increased level of unlawful killings by state officials in Nigeria…it is clear from witness testimony and video evidence that they did not comply with their own rules of engagement. (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 16)

b. Disparaging legitimacy of the Westphalian state of Nigeria

Another strategy adopted by the IPOB is to draw attention of its members that the 1914 Amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Protectorates, and the subsequent independence granted to the Nigerian state in 1960 were mainly aimed to serve the interest of the British and favour the North by subjugating the Igbo to the Northern elite who benefit more from the Nigerian state. The IPOB leadership continue to argue that the Nigerian State does not exist in the interest of the Igbo and this explains the continuous marginalization of the Igbo by the ruling Northern elite. This, according to them, is also the reason why no Igbo had ruled Nigeria as the President since independence in 1960.

c. IPOB will provide solution to the sufferings of the Igbo masses

Promise of providing solution to the sufferings of the Igbo under Biafra is another strategy used by IPOB to attract members and increase its support base. They claim that without an independent Biafran State, the people of southeast Nigeria would not be able to realize their socio-economic and political aspirations. Many of the IPOB members are young and unemployed Igbo, and have vested their hopes and aspirations in an independent Biafran state. They view the group's leader as some kind of "redeemer" and follow him unquestioningly (Amnesty International, 2016).

   d. *Appeal for support from politicians and Diaspora sympathizers*
The IPOB has gained massive Diaspora support by appealing to Igbo scattered across the world, most of whom fled the country in search of better livelihood to cushion the economic marginalization back home. The support comes in form of funding, strategic advice etc. There are also allegations that the movement gets support from some Nigerian politicians who provide financial support to the leadership of the IPOB.

Case Study II: Nigeria's Postcolonial Character and Emergence of Boko Haram

Although, the northern elite tend to benefit more from the centralized Nigerian State which allows them to appropriate state resources, the majority of the masses in the North still wallow in abject poverty. More so, some of the northern religious extremists are of the view that the Nigerian state should be governed in accordance with Islamic religious principles irrespective of the fact that Nigeria is a conglomeration of various religious groups. They also proselytize that Nigeria should not be ruled by the 'infidels' as this is against the Islamic principles. Isichei observes, thus:

> Ever since the British conquest of northern Nigeria, in the opening years of this century, northern Muslim theologians had been faced with the dilemma – should they resist the British, flee from them, or accept their regime as the will of God? Each of these three courses of action was adopted by many individuals – those who accepted office in the new dispensation, the princes and peasants who died at Burmi, or the large band who settled permanently in what is now the Republic of Sudan. Throughout the colonial era, there was always an intransigent minority who rejected every manifestation of the western world. (1987, p. 196)

This Islamic extremism among some northern elements has continued to breed some form of insurgent activities since the colonial era. For example, the Jos riot of October 1945 could be linked to activities of some extremists who sought to ensure that Jos town was ruled and controlled by Muslims in accordance with Islamic laws. Kendhammer (2014) explained that the British initially assigned native authority of Jos to the Hausa settlement in that area, but by 1921, the British transferred the powers of District Head to the local Birom community. This singular act led to the constant struggle by the Islamic extremists to take back the city of Jos which they feel must be under the rule of Muslim political leaders. It is this struggle that resulted in the first riot in 1945 in Jos. After independence, various forms of violent extremism have proliferated in the North taking advantage of the teeming number of young unemployed, poor and illiterate youths. The Maitatsine uprising of the 1980s in the northern Nigeria was a continuation of the struggle by some extremist Islamic scholars to assault and overthrow the postcolonial Nigerian state. Essentially, Maitatsine, as a movement, gained prominence in 1962 following the teachings

of Mohammed Marwa. The name Maitatsine was derived directly from *Mai Tachine* which is traced to Mohammed Marwa's popular saying in Hausa *Wanda bat yarda ba Allah ta Tchine*, which means "May Allah curse the one who disagrees with his version." The central teaching of Maitatsine was the rejection of Western culture, affluence and technology including that anyone who read any book other than the Quaran was an infidel (Isichei, 1987). Although Mohammed Marwa was killed in 1980, the insurgent activities of extremist Muslims in Northern Nigeria have continued unabated.

Boko Haram also emerged in Nigeria in continuation of the struggle to overthrow the Westphalian state of Nigeria and establish an Islamic caliphate. The history of Boko Haram remains a subject of controversy; however, the sect gained notoriety in late 2009 following the uprising it orchestrated against the government which resulted in over 800 deaths and the subsequent arrest, detention and execution of Mohammed Yusuf while in the custody of Nigerian Police (Mercy Corps, 2016). After the death of Yusuf, Abubakar Shekau who was Yusuf's hard-line top deputy became the new spiritual leader of the group (Onuoha, 2014). The major objective of the group is to replace the secular Nigerian State with a strict Islamic Sharia law, to be applicable throughout the entire country. Boko Haram draws its members mainly from disaffected youths, unemployed graduates, and destitute children, mostly from but not limited to Northern Nigeria. The group has no clear and precise structure and this contributes to its ability to orchestrate its guerrilla warfare.

In trying to trace the history of Boko Haram, Onuoha (2012) demonstrates that the group has undergone various stages of metamorphosis which began with a "Latent incubation" stage (1995-2002) when it existed, as harmless Islamic group operating as *Ahlulsunna walijama'ah hijra.* Between 2003 and July 2009, the group entered its second stage in which it metamorphosed to a "militant mobilisation" state known as "the Nigerian Taliban". During this period, it targeted and attacked public buildings and state security forces. From August 2009 – May 2011, Boko Haram entered the third stage which is the "Islamic Insurgency" phase characterized by guerrilla warfare, suicide bombing attacks, kidnapping and assassination of targets. Finally, from June 2011 to 2012, Boko Haram metamorphosed into a "Domestic Terrorist" stage, in which the group sought to extend its influence and associations beyond Nigeria. The group is believed to have focused on more suicide bombing during this period, as a way to avoid the new military task forces designed to eliminate the group.

It is during this final stage of "domestic terrorism' which has continued till date, that Boko Haram unleashed unprecedented mayhem in Nigeria especially in the North-east region with states like Borno, Yobe and Adamawa being the worse affected. The high and increasing level of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram since then has made it gain infamy as the third most deadly terrorist organization in the world. As a result, Nigeria currently ranks as the 4th country worse hit by terrorism in the world due to Boko Haram activities (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014).

Strategies adopted by Boko Haram to increase membership and support
   a. *Provoking over-reaction by the government*
As noted by Evans cited in Stines and Gray (2012, pp. 57-58), one of the objectives of terrorist organizations is to spur over-reaction by the government they are opposed to so as to pitch the

masses or international community against such government for their over-reaction. In the case of Boko Haram, the Nigerian government over-reacted by embarking on mass arrest, arbitrary detention, torture and even extra-judicial executions in the North-east. In addition to the execution of the then leader of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf while in custody of the police, the Nigerian government through the military, police and Civilian Joint Taskforce (CJTF) carried out various other extrajudicial executions of boys and men in suspected to be Boko Haram members North-east, Nigeria. In fact, between 2013 and 2014 alone, Amnesty International reported that the Nigerian military carried out 27 incidents of extrajudicial executions in which at least 1,200 men and boys were killed. This is in addition to over 7,000 boys and men who have died in detention since 2011 (Amnesty International, 2015). Such extrajudicial killings pitched the masses and international community against the Nigerian government and served as an opportunity for Boko Haram to radicalize its members and gain more sympathizers into its fold. As a result, some individuals support the sect in order to avenge the killings of loved ones by the military.

b. *Disparaging legitimacy of the Westphalian state of Nigeria*
The major selling point of the sect is the promise to establish an Islamic Caliphate governed by the principles of Sharia and to destroy the Nigerian State currently governed by the Western culture. It therefore preaches to its members that Western education, including Western culture, is forbidden (i. e., Haram) and there is need to overthrow the Nigerian State which is responsible for the spread of forbidden Western culture and education. As noted by Mercy Corps (2016), from the pre-2009 period, many youths had joined the Sect because they believed in the movement, and many others joined after attending preaching led by Boko Haram members in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. For instance, according to one male youth in Yobe interviewed by Mercy Corps, the youth described he was drawn to the revolutionary aspect of Boko Haram. According to him: "I thought it was a revolution to sanitize the system of government...." (Mercy Corps, 2016, p. 12)

c. *Promise that Boko Haram will provide solution to the sufferings of the masses*
The Northern Nigeria is home to the highest number of poor and illiterate people despite the fact that the Northern elite dominate the political offices and top military positions in Nigeria. The poverty of the masses created the fertile ground for Boko Haram to easily recruit the masses to wage war against the Nigerian State. Thus, Boko Haram promises its members and supporters of better livelihood, assistance in business etc. For instance, Mercy Corps (2016) reported that many youths who joined Boko Haram, joined with the hope of getting business assistance as promised by the sect. Some of the youths, prior to their joining, accepted loans or joined with the hope of getting loans or other forms of business supports. According to the report:

> Boko Haram, therefore, is filling a critical gap in financial services, as most youths cannot provide collateral and lack the skills to provide a business plan required by formal institutions. These youth [sic] often already had businesses that they wanted to expand or improve. Some had regular employment but also wanted support for businesses they were running on the side, indicating that not only the unemployed or the abjectly poor pursue better economic opportunities through Boko Haram. (Mercy Corps, 2016, p. 13)

d. *Support from politicians and Diaspora sympathizers*

Boko Haram attracts support in the form of funding, personnel and training from Islamic extremists across the world. The sect also receives funding from ideologically-aligned supporters and foreign Islamic charities in places like UK and Saudi Arabia that want to spread Islamic religion in Nigeria (Fanusie & Entz, 2017). It also gets support from extremist/terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda. In 2002, Osama Bin Laden was reported to have sent an aide to Nigeria with $3 million; he instructed that the money should be disbursed among groups that believe in Al-Qaeda's cause. The International Crisis Group reports that Boko Haram received some of that money. Again, Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF), Brigadier General Donald Bolduc, states that ISIS and Boko Haram are increasingly sharing "tactics, techniques and procedures". The General highlighted that an ISIS weapons convoy detected departing Libya was believed to be heading to the Lake Chad region to provide support to Boko Haram (Rock, 2016). Furthermore, some politicians in Northern Nigeria have been accused of providing financial support to Boko Haram. This was confirmed by US government officials who alleged that a high-ranking Borno State politician supported Boko Haram financially until 2009 (Rock, 2016).

Lessons from the Two Case Studies

The study of the similarities of Boko Haram and IPOB reveal that Nigeria, being a patch work of the British colonial masters, is a boiling cauldron characterized by constant uprisings and revolts. These are being manifested in form of insurgency and separatist movements which were incubated in the colonial State; they are, however, carried forward and intensified in the postcolonial state following the attainment of independence. From the foregoing, there is no doubt that:

i) Boko Haram and IPOB are different sides of the same coin emerging as products of the contradictions inherent in the postcolonial Nigerian State.

ii) The proselytization of the Nigeria and most of African States as failed, failing, or fragile States within the context of the failed state theory has informed poor understanding of these phenomena (insurgency and separatism).

iii) The poor theoretical explication of Boko Haram and IPOB has informed the response of the postcolonial Nigerian state which has emphasised militarisation of the State in order to repress anti-State movements.

iv) The strategies of militarisation employed by the State undermine sustainable peace- building and only engender recurring incidents of insurgency and separatism. This recurrence of insurgency and separatism is a basic feature of postcolonial State that needs to be addressed.

Conclusion

Nigeria's return to civil rule since 1999 has been accompanied by proliferation of groups placing various demands on the State. The emergence of Boko Haram insurgent and IPOB separatist movement has shaped the political-economy landscape of the State. Meanwhile, much of the analyses of the contemporary insurgency and separatist movement have been anchored on the failed state theory. Similarly, government's peace-building initiative in response to the insurgency and separatist's movement have been coloured by the basic submissions of the failed

state narrative. This study argues that the failed state narrative is inadequate for understanding the wave of insurgency and separatist movement in Nigeria. It posits that the similarities which underline both Boko Haram and IPOB can be unveiled when both are examined within the lenses of the postcolonial state theory. Accordingly, it submits that insurgency and separatist movement are recurring features of the postcolonial character of the Nigerian State.

The postcolonial Nigerian State is characterized by zero-sum politics in which the political elite struggle to capture and retain State power by all means. State power is further used for primitive accumulation of wealth, while governance is neglected. Poor governance, exacerbation of ethnic/religious differences and repression of all forms of political oppositions create an environment populated with aggrieved and dissatisfied citizens that can be mobilized for acts of insurgency and separatism.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we put forward the following policy recommendations:

i) The State should provide counter-narratives to the propaganda of the insurgents and separatist groups. Efforts ought to be made to limit the use of force and consequent abuse of human rights by the State security agencies on counter-insurgency and counter-separatism operations across the country.

ii) Nigerian State's peace-building initiative targeted at addressing insurgency and separatist movements must address the issue of the Diaspora supporters/funders of both Boko Haram and IPOB. This can be done by strengthening the State machineries for curtailing illicit financial flows (IFFs).

iii) Government should give attention to the clamour for restructuring by initiating decentralisation powers to the existing States. This must include allowing States to exploit natural resources as they exist in their areas in order to bring about the much needed economic diversification. State police should also be created.

iv) There is also the need for equalisation of number of states in all the geopolitical regions. All the regions should also have equal representation at the National Assembly.

v) Finally, there is the need for humanitarian intervention programme to reduce the level of illiteracy and poverty across the country by ensuring access to quality education and employment for the teeming youths. Emphasis should be on supporting small and medium scale industries, especially in the informal economy.

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