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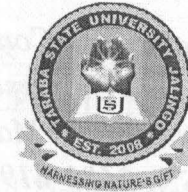## Volume 1, Number 2, March 2019

18. **Mohammed Zaiyanu, Hamisu Idris & Mansur Bello**. Department of Business Administration, Taraba State University Jalingo

19. **Gideon Y. Tambiyi**, PhD Department of Religion & Philosophy University of Jos, Nigeria and **Anuye, Steve Paul** Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Taraba State University, Jalingo

20. **Maunde Usman Muhammad** Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Taraba State University, Jalingo, **Adamu Alhaji Sa'idu** Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Taraba State University, Jalingo & **Lawan Abdullahi Muhammad** Department of Islamic Studies, Faculty of Arts, Taraba State University, Jalingo

21. **Larry, Steve Ibuomo** Department of History and Diplomacy, Niger Delta University, Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State, & **Abah Danladi** Department of History & International Studies Kogi State University Anyigba

22. **Isa Mohammed & Auwal Abubakar Chul** Department of Political Science and International Relations, Faculty Management & Social Sciences Taraba State University, Jalingo, **Andeley Laasutu Naomi** Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Salem University, Lokoja, & **Ibrahim Nu'aimu Dan-Bala** Department of Political Science Federal University, Wukari

Contents

Militias in Nigeria's Fourth-republic: Bargaining Withorexiting From the State?

Gbemisola Abdul-Jelil Animasawun, PhD
Centre for Peace & Strategic Studies
University of Ilorin, Ilorin
aganimasawun@gmail.com

Abstract

Despite the reduction of secessionist moves in post-Cold War Africa, the continued existence of ethnic and religious militias within many of these States, including Nigeria, underscores their fragility. The recent emergence of an Islamist militia (Boko-Haram) localized in core northern Nigeria perceived as fast-losing out in the distribution of power in the Fourth-Republic reflects the extent of ethnic and religious insecurity in Nigeria. This article argues that militias in Nigeria's Fourth-Republic have conferred bargaining power on ethnic nationalities in gaining state power (presidency) going by the contributions of the Odua People's Congress and the Niger-Delta militants in securing the concession of the presidency to their respective zones. Situating the activities of militias in Nigeria within the context of Albert Hirschman's model ofExit Voice Loyalty (EVL) and the bargaining theories of power, it can be posited that they represent voices of demand and not decisive moves to *exit* the State.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War sparked the start of deep-rooted and protracted intra-state wars in many African countries along-side the democratization process. These conflicts have characterized democratization with wars, guns and votes (Collier 2010) in the rabid contest for the control of state resources while replacing the politics of ideology and values with ethnic and religious sentiments. Hence, democratization has been without any normative order.

Mehler (2009) presents the antithetical realities arising from the relationship between democratization and peace-building in many post-conflict states in justifying the assertion that democratization seems to have (re)defined and (re)characterised old conflicts with unprecedented lethality in seeming confirmation of the prediction made by Kaplan in 1994 of the coming anarchy on the continent. From Senegal to Uganda, Sudan to Congo and Nigeria to Chad, insurgencies in different garbs, especially ethnic irredentism and religious extremism, have been the basis of agitations and claims by armed groups against existing regimes. Much as the phenomenon

of armed insurgencies are not entirely new on the continent cognizant of the nationalist struggles and the support provided to divergent ideological camps on the continent while the Cold War lasted, the current manifestation of insurgency on the continent differs in content and posture.

Boas and Dunn (2007) observe that the post-Cold War years on the continent have produced two new fully established regional conflict zones. These are located in Western Africa and Central Africa. The causes of the conflicts in Western Africa can be seen in the intertwined series of localized conflicts basically along the Mano River basin which pushed countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea to the brink. In Central Africa, the fall of the Mobutist State in defunct Zaire now Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), fed into an already tensed war region that included countries like Angola, Burundi, Rwanda, Namibia, Sudan, Uganda and Zimbabwe (Bihuzo 2012). A common feature in all of these conflicts has been the involvement of armed non-state actors.

Vinci (2009) delineates three types of non-state armed groups as; insurgencies, warlord organisations and terrorist groups. According to him, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army which fought a civil war against the government of Sudan from 1983-2005 typifies a type of insurgent group; Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) qualify as warlord organiations while groups like JemmahIslamiya based in South-east Asia using bombs and attacking civilians is an example of a terrorist group. Christopher Clapham delineates four types of guerrillas or insurgents with empirical examples as quoted in (Boas and Dunn 2007: 3):

> *Liberation Insurgencies* illustrated by the anti-colonial nationalist movements; *Separatist Insurgencies* like the Eritrean People's Liberation Front; *Reform Insurgencies* like YoweriMuseveni'sNational Resistance Army in Uganda and Ojukwu's Biafra in Nigeria and *Warlord Insurgencies* like Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia and Foday Sanko's Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone.

Since then, a number of peace processes have taken place on the continent and most of these have resulted in transitional governments of national unity with fragile peace and tenuous security. The transitions from conflict to peace and democratization continue to be plagued by the activities of militias sometimes armed by embattled regimes in protection of their territories and external actors in continuation of the greed-grievance thesis. This has placed militias, especially ethnic ones, at a critical juncture in the

peace, reconciliation and democratization processes of many countries of the continent (Alden et al 2011).

Despite the allure and celebration of democratic peace as basis for the propagation of democracy, especially from the West, democratisation in many post-Cold African countries has been characterized by the absence of order, peace and security. Albert (2011) laments the failure of the cliché-like mantra referred to as: *African Solution to Africa's Problem* as a tactical withdrawal from the chief promoters of liberal democracy from the crises arising there-from in Africa. Given their askance posture, the need to epistemologically (re)contextualisethe raison d'être of these insurgencies vis-à-vis the threats they constitute to peace, security, state-building and democratization cannot be wished away. Now involved in attacks against civilians and aid workers, vandalisation of strategic installations of the state, attacks against the media and telecommunication facilities going by the activities of Niger-Delta militants and the Boko-Haram Islamist sect, they present a peculiar challenge in terms of warfare that goes beyond the classic interstate and intra-state (government/guerrilla movement). In the words of Alden et al (2011: 1):

> what distinguishes them from more traditional combatants is their operational mode, especially their willingness to engage in violent tactics that defy international norms of conflict and their proclivity to embrace expediency in alliance-making . . . militias are notoriously difficult to manage in the context of transitions from war to peace . . . conventional approaches to conflict management and resolution promulgated by the international community are singularly inadequate in addressing the issue of militias as well as the enduring effect that they have on post-conflict situations.

Although, Boas and Dunn (2007) opine that militias are best understood as rational responses to the composition of African states and their polities, it is the opinion of this article that the incompatibility of post-Cold War African democratization process with security, peace and order caused by the activities of these militias speaks to their inchoate and fragile nature.This view is reinforced by the ethnic insecurity argument of Gleditsch (2001) and ethnic security-dilemma arguments of Kew (2010). Both provide the basis for the extant Balance of Terror (Adebanwi 2004) amongst the disparate ethnic-nationalities.

The realities arising from the activities of these militias in many democratising post-Cold War countries in Africa point to the fact that the threats facing them are more internal than external which have made peace and the states themselves fragile. The threats of insurgencies to peace and security have been significantly aided by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), improvement in transport technology, deregulation of international markets and increased migration which enable many armed groups to break boundaries in order to build transnational affinities (Vinci 2009).

In Nigeria, the phenomenon of militias became a topical issue that has continued to shape demands and discourse on the national question, peace and security since the demands and activities of the Oodua People's Congress (OPC) based in the Southwestern part in the 1990s sequel to the annulment of the June 12 Presidential elections. Sesay et al (2003) observe that others like the Bakkassi Boys sprang up in the Southeast;Egbesu Boys of Africa emerged in the South-south and the ArewaPeople's Congress (APC) in the northern part of the country. Other armed non-state actors that have been in confrontation with the Nigerian state include: the Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Ijaw Youth Congress (IYC), the hitherto existence of the Nigerian Army as the ethnic-militia of the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy until 1999 as opined by Agbaje (2003) and the opinion in some quarters that the Boko-Haram is an ethnic militia of northern Nigeria (Esinulo 2012).

This article therefore attempts to establish whether these militias have been bargaining for more or attempting to exit from the Nigerian state. Using the theory of *emergentism,* the article analyses the agential and structural interactions that precipitated major militias and interrogates their motivations in the contexts of greed, grievance and creed in order to predict whether they are exiting from or bargaining with the Nigerian State. Albert Hirschman's model Exit Voice Loyalty (EVL) and the bargaining theories of power and conflict were used.

The Phenomenon of Ethnic and Religious Militias in Post-Cold War Africa

The activities of militias since the end of the Cold in sub-Saharan Africa are some of the features that define contemporary Africa. However, despite their conspicuous presence and the consequences of their actions, there is a dearth of researches on them. Their mutating nature and not too successful processes of Demobilisation, Demilitarisation and Reintegration (DDR) processes in many transiting post-war countries on the continent make them problematic for peace, order, stability and national security in many nation-states. This has made diagnosing them as a socio-political problem in order to know the right response slippery. This situation is not entirely different in Nigeria going by the increasing and menacing activities and utterances of these militias, especially on issues that touch on the country's security and its continued corporate existence.

Historically, the word militia, especially in American and British contexts, was used to describe a reserve body of citizens enrolled for military duty and called upon only in times of emergency (Alden et al 2011). The contemporary usage of the term has been utilized in describing: "private armed groups of pro-regime strongmen and paramilitary formations that organize in defence of the political order in a given country. Second, the term has also been used in connection with states where the central authority has been considerably weakened" (Alden et al 2011: 4). In such places, the armed formations set up by warlords, tribal or regional strongmen, drug lords and the like are described as militias.

Since the end of the Second World War, many militias have emerged on the world stage. In recent years, the well-known ones are the Janjaweed (devils on horseback) of Darfur, Sudan, composed of Arabic-speaking nomadic men. Alden et al (2011) report that their notoriety derives from their principal role in attacking non-Arab Black Darfurians, especially the sedentary farmers leading to over 200,000 deaths and massive displacement. Also, militias played a dominant role in the Rwandan crises. The Rwandan national army, the *Forces Armees Rwandaises* (FAR) made use of the well-organised Hutu militia referred to as *Interahamwe*('those who work/fight together') and the *Impuzamugambi*('those who have the same goal) in the organized annihilation of the Tutsis and moderate Hutus (Alden et al 2011). The case of Lau's Resistance Army (LRA) presents the transnational implications of the actions of militias. Popularly known as a cultish-militia, its menacing presence has been felt across Central Africa for over 25 years (Borzello 2009). After the 2005 peace process in Sudan, the LRA was forced out of Sudan and prevented from entering Uganda by a strong army presence which culminated in its becoming a roaming militia.

The case of Movement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance (MFDC) which has started since 1982 offers a striking difference in its objective and challenges the popularly held notions about contemporary militias because it has a separatist agenda. Also, it has been involved in a sustained war with the Senegalese state and, despite its tattered war-economy, has sustained itself by little cannabis, charcoal and cashew nuts (Foucher 2007). The movement has refrained from rapes, amputations and the use of child soldiers.

Boas and Dunn (2007) have further classified militias into stationary and roaming militias. The stationary militias set up physical

enclaves, often setting up rudimentary structures of governance and control usually headed by a male. Roaming militias are however typically on the run. So, militias in Africa based on the categorization of Clapham 1998 and Boas and Dunn (2007) can be grouped into the following: *Liberation Insurgencies*, *Separatist Insurgencies*, *Reform Insurgencies* and *Warlord Insurgencies* which can be *stationary* or *roaming*.

Another factor that has fed into the activities of militias since the end of the Cold War is religion contrary to the secularization hypothesis that religion will fade away in the public space or public discourse with the dawn of modernization or democratization.Rather, there has been its revival in political and public discourses not only in the advanced democracies but also the tottering ones. This development renders as implausible the prediction of Sir Julian Huxley made in the 1960s that: "by the year 2000 two pernicious phenomena would have vanished into the "dustbin of history", the first was nationalism and the second was religion" (Elshtain 2009:6). This is because happenings since the end of the Cold War and the inception of democratization in many African countries show that there have been the religicisation and ethnicisation of politics which could pass for the nationalization of politics by ethnic nationalities (Obadare 2006, Adebanwi 2005 and Ukiwo 2003). The phenomenon has also instigated the establishment of religious militias, especially Islamism across the globe.

Most of the religious militias advocate for a prime place of religion in state affairs and have been grouped as; fundamentalists, *extremists* and *ethno-religious fundamentalists* (Appleby, 2001). The *extremists* operate like the religious militia (Albert 2005) because they make use of violence as an instrument of sanctifying the community and waging war against threatening outsiders. They hold that the suppression, conversion or elimination of the enemy as defined by them is a sacred right or obligation. When they want to pursue this through political means, they adopt *civic intolerance*. Appleby (2001) explains this as a situation whereby they rely on the use of *legitimate violence* or coercive forces of the state against their targets.

Appleby (2001) describes the *fundamentalists* as groups that react basically to halt the marginalization of religion. The *fundamentalists* believe that religion should determine the culture, politics and laws of the society. The perversion of a supposed pristinely religious community by secular or religions alien to the state or community precipitates reactions from *fundamentalists*. For example, presence of Western business people who behave contemptuously of Islamic codes and culture in Cairo by bringing in casinos and luxury hotels are some of the factors responsible for the increasing rise of *fundamentalists* groups in Egypt. Also, in Kano city,

the proliferation of beer–parlours or pubs operated by mostly southerners particularly from the south–east and south–south was considered as desecrating the city and this was one of the strongest arguments for the full implementation of Sharia in the state and the introduction of religious vigilante in the state (Olaniyi 2005). There are also *fundamentalist* groups such as the Taliban of Afghanistan, the Armed Islamic Group of Algeria and the terrorist cadre of Osama bin Laden, the Saudi exile, who wage wars overtly and covertly in order to extinguish all forms of religious and political oppositions.

The third category are the *ethno-religious nationalist* groups. These are people who equate their religious traditions with that of a nation and assume that a threat to either is a perfidious attack on what is sacred. They operate like the fundamentalists in some ways. For example, they demonize missionaries of other faiths, foreign business men, troops stationed on the country's sacred soil, educational and social service volunteers, relief workers and international peace–keepers (Appleby 2001). The *ethno-religious nationalists* also desire to make their religion the center of the society just like the fundamentalists. However, they are convinced that strengthening of the local or host religion cannot be done by strictly complying with its precepts but by employing political collective or political action to give their religion a privileged position over other religions in such communities.

Therefore, the Sharia struggle championed by twelve core northern states of Nigeria at the inception of the Fourth-Republic which cannot be fully delinked from the current rage of Boko-Haram can be described as a form of ethno-religious nationalism or fundamentalism. Mahmoud (2004) describes Islamism as the conduct of state affairs by Islamic laws as prescribed in the Sharia. He traces this back to the Jihad of Othman Dan Fodio, observing that it continued in post-colonial Nigeria because of the need to give Nigeria's northern region an Islamic identity. However, the resultant ethnic insecurity it has promoted continues to have severe implications for inter-ethnic relations and national security.

So, militias in Africa can be grouped into the following: *Liberation Insurgencies*, *Separatist Insurgencies*, *Reform Insurgencies* and *Warlord Insurgencies* which can be *stationary* or *roaming*. This article shares the views of Alden et al (2011) that define non-state armed actors as armed actors operating outside the formal spheres of the state with autonomy from the structure and machinery of the state. Besides their lack of ideology, they have been shaped and are also shaping the *global war on terror* especially through the use of information technology, especially the internet. As a phenomenon, they constitute an integral part of the crises of the post-colonial state and modernity whose manifestation is traceable to

regional and social marginalization, worsened by recycled elites and warriors in the rabid contests for autochthony, land and belonging.

Emergentist Analysis of Militias

Different from the common usage of emergence as the first appearance of a phenomenon, the emergentist theory provides deeper and intellectual explanations of a social phenomenon through its use. This has informed its choice in deepening the causal variables that gave birth to ethnic and religious militias in Nigeria's contemporary history. The term *emergent* was first known as a term in 1875 by G.H Lewes alongside the term *resultant* in further deepening of the distinction by John Stuart Mills's distinction between homeopathic and heteropathic laws which has become the widely accepted origin of the concept of emergence (Elder-Vass 2010). Sawyer (2005:100) quotes Emile Durkheim's opinion on *emergence*:

> Whenever certain elements combine and thereby produce by the fact of their combination new phenomena, it is plain that these new phenomena reside not in the original elements but in the totality formed by their union. . . . we assert not that social fact are material things but that they are things by the same right as material things, although they differ from them in type.

Emergence will be used in this context in synchronic sense focused on the relationship between the *properties* of a whole and its parts at any point in time (Elder-Vass 2010). Wholes and parts are taken as entities in this context. Therefore, I seek to explain the relationship between ethnic and religious militias as entities on one hand and the Nigerian state as an entity on the other hand. Nigeria, her ethnic nationalities and militias are defined as entity along the definition of entity given by Elder-Vass (2010: 17): "as a persistent whole formed from a set of parts that is structured by the relationship between these parts."

Based on the foregoing, I posit that religious and ethnic militias are products of the interaction between the whole that it, Nigeria and her entities that is, the ethnic nationalities. I further argue that the mutual suspicion between the whole and her entities has also generated *religious* and *ethnic insecurity* and *ethnic security dilemma* for the nationalities. The Nigerian State or center and her ethnic nationalities fit into this context because they have persisted over a period of time as whole and entities with *properties*. Elder-Vass (2010) describes *properties* or *powers* as intrinsic aspects of an entity that can have causal impact on its universe and that *emergence* occurs when a whole or entity has one or more emergent properties. Therefore, the existence of ethnic militias identified with ethnic nationalities in the country and the growing perception of the Boko-Haram as an ethno-religious fundamentalist reaction from an ethnic nationality

that lost out in the power struggle for the country's presidency underscore the argument that ethnic nationalities as entities of the whole have *emergent properties* brought about as result of the interaction between the whole and her entities.

The militias can also be linked to ethnic nationalities using the emergentist argument that emergence is inherently compositional (Buckley 1998). This means that an entity or whole such as an ethnic nationality is composed of emergent properties that constitute entities at lower levels that represent its parts. So, in the context of this article, ethnic and religious militias are taken as compositional parts of a whole, that is, their respective ethnic nationality. Hence, the OPC is considered a Yoruba ethnic militia representing the South-west geo-political zone, the MASSOB is taken as that of the Igbo ethnic-nationality functioning on behalf of the South-east, the Niger-Delta militants taken as representative of the South-south while a strong perception exists that the Boko-Haram is a Hausa-Fulani ethnic militia largely representative of northern Nigeria. This presents the picture of a Balance of Terror which is the outcome of the failure of democracy and elections to provide a valid social contract amongst the disparate ethnic nationalities at the take-off of the (post)colonial project called Nigeria (Kew 2010).

Albert (2007) posits that ethnic militias in Nigeria are products of a long period of traumatic events in the nation's political history and evidence of lack of nation-building processes. As a traumatized and transiting state, post-military Nigeria since 1999 has failed in fast-tracking nation-building. Going by the failure of the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission popularly known as the Justice Oputa Panel, series of Constitutional Amendment exercises, 2006 National Population and Building Census, successive elections rather than pull the ethnic-nationalities together continue to tear them apart. While agreeing with Adebanwi and Obadare (2010:382) that the failure of these processes speak to an avoidance of a fundamental and politically honest rigourous survey of the Nigerian state, I add that these are wasted opportunities that would have initiated the process of *forging* national unity described by Poulantza (1978 quoted in Adebanwi and Obadare 2010: 382) as ensuring that positive histories of inter-group relations overwhelm its negative histories. Consequently, Nigeria's constituent parts (ethnic nationalities) and their emergent properties (ethnic and religious militias) constitute evident threats to its corporate existence and one another.

The threat militias pose to one another speaks to the causal role of relations in creating emergence and the relational theory of emergence. This is based on the opinion of this article that social realities are outcomes of

8

9

human interactions. Therefore, when these interactions become adversarial like the case of ethnic nationalities in Nigeria, it is illustrative of the definition of social conflict given by Oberschall (1978) as characterized by an aggregate of individuals which may be groups, organisations, communities and crowds rather than single individuals. So, members ofMilitias as the *emergent power* of these adversarial relations pursue not personal interest but corporate goals as defined by these ethnic nationalities. Therefore, these militias can as well be seen as products of fragile ethnic relations in the country. This lends credence to the views of Elder-Vass (2010) that *emergent properties* arise out of specific relationships existing amongst entities in a kind of whole.

Unlike countries that experienced full blown internal conflicts since the end of the Cold War, post-military Nigeria has generated militias which successive regimes have hardly made conscious efforts to demobilize, demilitarize or reintegrate except the Niger-Delta militants. Therefore, in discussing militias in Nigeria, it must be treated not as an extinct phenomenon but an existing, perhaps, passive phenomenon to some extent.

In the classical Peace and Conflict text, the militias are recognized as likely spoilers of post-conflict peace and democratization and this informs their inclusion in the transition processes which changes their status from spoilers to militias in case they return to the Bush after the cessation of full scale hostilities. Stedman (1997 quoted in Alden et al 2011:21) defines spoilers as: "leaders and parties who believe that peace emerging from negotiations threatens their power, worldview, and interests and use violence to undermine attempts to achieve it." The term spoiler is descriptive of a selected group of actors within peace processes whose conduct can hinder its success (Alden et al 2011). However, going by their activities since the start of Nigeria's Fourth-Republic in 1999, they can be described as a group made up of largely subalterns acting (in) dependently and violently in order to have more of what the state has to offer economically and politically.

This explains why post-conflict regimes ensure that militias get (re)integrated into the government as part of the processes of many post-war transitions across Africa since the end of the Cold War. However, the Nigerian case is a peculiar one because militias who constitute spoilers continuously emerge after or towards elections since 1999 and have gradually become evenly spread and more rabid. Therefore, what obtains in Nigeria does not follow the common pattern of militias transforming to spoilers rather, it has been a case of simultaneity determined by which ethnic nationality controls the Presidency. For instance, the OPC after its

initial militant activities at the inception of the presidency of former president Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) gradually became less militant except for isolated skirmishes. During this period, militias from other parts of the country, especially the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) coordinated by its Joint Revolutionary Council (JRC) (Campbell 2010) remained daring and threatening to regime stability and national security.

Therefore, militias have persistently beenretaining their agency as spoilers and militias since 1999 in defence of sectional interests.As emergent properties of a whole brought into being by ethnic insecurity and ethnic security dilemma, their *relational emergence*becomes more lucid going by their conflation of resource and implicitly value-based demands and objectives. This peculiarity points to the limitations of the greed-grievance causal explanation of post-Cold War African militias.

Motivations of Militias in Nigeria's Fourth-Republic: Creed, Greed, or Grievance?

In terms of the history and factors responsible for the manifestation and sustenance of militias, there are a plethora of literature (Babawale et al 2003; Sesay et al 2003; Adebanwi 2005; Albert 2005; 2007 & 2010 and Ukiwo 2005). However, the need to (re)examine their motivations beckons on intellectual inquiry because of current threat posed by Boko-Haram which represents the latest phenomenon of militias in Nigeria. This will be done along the lines of *ideological,behavourist* and *systems* lenses on the comprehension of the motivations of militias. Alden et al (2011: 20-33) observe that each of these approaches has been influenced by its taxonomy in evaluating and classifying a given militia.

The *ideological* approach to the explanation of militias limits itself to the declared ideology and identity of the militia and their relationship with the dominant state actors such as the United States and the defunct Soviet Union while the Cold War lasted. Springing from the ideological polarization between the East and West, it experienced a lull and has since been reawakened by the ugly events of 9/11. Eisenstein (2007) argues that since then terrorism has become the new global communism because many of the same terror networks supported by the US to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran now constitute the newest ideological foes. Mamdani (2004) reflects that the bad Muslims of today were the good Muslims of the Cold War days. The clash of Civilizations predicted by Samuel Huntington seems to have redefined Christianity and Islam in a way that equates them to contemporary clashing ideologies within countries like Nigeria while serving as means of seeking transnational

support by militias.This configures religion as Janus-faced while querying its relevance in the promotion of peace and security.

For instance one of the motivations for the emergence of the OPC was the annulment of the June 12 Presidential elections widely known to have been won by a Yoruba man. The *ideological* conviction of the militia is expressed in its anthem titled Ileya (time to go home) contextually meaning that it was time to exit from the Nigerian state and create an Oduduwa Republic named after the progenitor of the Yoruba people (Albert 2007). This move can be said to have been precipitated by grievance although strengthened by what Adebanwi (2005: 352) describes as the reinvention of culture through rituals and violence.

The MASSOB, in its demands and cognizant of the history of Nigeria's civil war can be described as borne out of grievance rather than creed or greed. The MASSOB at different times has hoisted its own flag, written its anthem, map and produced its own currency which speak to the revival of the Biafran agenda. This was sequel to the statement credited to former President Olusegun Obasanjo as the reason for the exclusion of an Igbo (wo)man in the National Security Council (NSC) that: "a conquered people are not supposed to aspire to such a council for 200 years after their defeat" (Adeyemo 2004:18). This infuriated late Ojukwu, especially after he has contributed to the electoral victory of President Obasanjo.

The revival of the Biafran agenda came into the public domain in 2004 whenlate Chief Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu who led the first Biafran secessionist move that culminated into a civil war from 1967-1970 and Chief Uwazurike were declared wanted over the spate of activities pointing to the revival of the Biafran dream through the agency of the MASSOB (Adeyemo 2004). The refusal of Ojukwu to honour invitation from the State Security Service (SSS) which informed his being declared wanted received support from other ethnic nationalities under the banner of the defunct Ethnic Nationalities Forum (ENF) who paid him a courtesy call in Enugu as a symbolic endorsement of his refusal to honour the invitation of the SSS. The ENF comprised representatives of the *Afenifere,* the pan-Yoruba socio-political group, Ijaw National Congress (INC) and the Middle-Belt Progressives Movement (MBPM). The divergent interpretation of unity between Nigeria as a whole and her entities can be seen in the message delivered by Chief Reuben Fasoranti of the Afenifere that: "through your actions, comments and activities, you have shown that you believe in the unity of this country." Ojukwu savoured the message and replied thus: "your statements encouraged me, your appearance inspires me. I feel warm by the charity of your expression: I thank you for regarding

me as your son" (Adeyemo 2004: 18).Eight years after, Chief Ralph Uwazurike, the leader of MASSOB, in an interview reiterated that:

> I am fighting for the welfare of the *Ndigbo* and that is paramount. This is because no ethnic group in Nigeria has suffered what the Ndigbo have been going through . . . if what is happening to Ndigbo had happened to another ethnic group, I would have supported them (Ofiebor 2012:17).

However, unlike other ethnic and religious militias in the country, the scale of violence used by MASSOB puts it in the class of militias like the Movement des Forces Democratiques de Casamance (MFDC) of Senegal which has not take full arms against the State like other militias. This puts the MASSOB in the class of militias motivated by grievance. In contrasting its character with other militias in the country, Chief Uwazurike observed that:" . . . violence is the only language the Nigerian state listens to quickly. Talking about the Boko-Haram despite the callous killing of innocent people, especially the Ndigbo, federal government is on its knees begging them . . ." (Ofiebor2012:17).

The *behaviourists* led by scholars like Paul Collier and AnkeHoeffler opine that militias are basically motivated by economic gains which reinforce the *greed-grievance* argument. Rooted in economists thinking that sees organised rebellions such as posed militias as organised crimes and protest movements. Collier (2001: 145) sums up their views thus: "Rebellion is large-scale predation of productive economic activities." This school of thought posits that grievances arising from forms of relative deprivation such as oppression, poverty and marginalization are not sufficient as causes or motivations of conflicts but the feasibility of predation especially in countries with low income, slow growth and dependent on primary commodities is a stronger motivation (Collier 2001). On the contrary, this school argues that grievance, ethnic factionalism, and other supposed factors are not strong indicators of the likelihood of having a militia or civil wars (Alden et al 2011).

Unlike the *behaviourists*, the *systems* analysis of the motivations of militias argues that militias are social organisations that should be examined based on their internal dynamics of control (Alden et al 2011). The preceding leads to analysis of uprisings from the Niger-Delta prior to the emergence of one of their own as the president of the country.

Exiting from the State or Bargaining with it? :Militias in Nigeria's Fourth-Republic

One shared character of many post-colonial African States is that the state is Janus-faced because it is the source of conflicts borne out of the intense struggle for the control of its resources and at the same time has the responsibility to mediate these conflicts. From the rationalists' point of view, such inter-ethnic and inter-group conflicts are informed by the struggle for the control of State's resources (Lake and Rothchild 1996). Consequently, instead of the disparate ethnic nationalities cooperating as partners, they relate as rivals. This bred series of tensions and crises on the continent which made secession enticing, especially during the Cold War days. Although, there has been a noticeable decline in the attraction to secession since the end of the Cold War, tensions and crises persist in unprecedented bestiality perpetuated through the agency of militias that are connected to various interests in these States where they wear the garb of religion and ethnicity.This challenges the absoluteness of the assumption that secession or exiting from the state is a forgone option for marginalized groups especially with reference to the emergence of the Southern Sudan as a sovereign country.

Despite their challenges, some of these states have resisted total collapse which informs why some of them are described as weak or fragile which aptly describes the situation of many of the States on the continent. This is because of the acute and chronic crises of governance, security and poverty which have culminated in the worrisome level of lawlessness and insecurity. The fragility has also provided breeding grounds for militias, terrorists and warlords. Amongst other threats, the activities of militias pose stark threats to the generation of a collective identity and a social contract between the state and the society that could lead to nation-building out of the disparate ethnic nationalities.

Nigeria presents a curiouscase of a country standing still after fifty-years of independence and over a decade of democratization characterized and threatened by the demands and activities of ethnic and religious militias. The extant state of nation-building in Nigeria which is necessary for sustainable peace and security conforms to what Watts (2003) describes as*unimagining* or *denationalization* (Osaghae 1999: 94) in contradistinction to nation-building. This sums up the story of Nigeria since independence. In lending credence to rationalists' view, the struggle for control of state resources lies beneath the crises between the State and militias in Nigeria. This has been greeted by attempts to exit and voices of dissent from marginalized and oppressed groups in the entity.

As explained by Hirschman (1970), when businesses or

government fail to live up to the expectations of the customers or citizens as a result of the inadequacies of the service providers or those in government, there are three options open to those at the receiving end. These are *exit, voice* and *loyalty*. Habitually, citizens devise ways of coping when it is in the context of the relationship between the citizens and the state even in the face of suffering despite knowing the human agency responsible for the suffering. However, loyalty appears to be the option with the least dividend because its nature determines the dividends it yields. Hirschman (1970) explains further that when loyalty is attractive to members more than voice or exit, leaders concede less.

Hirschman (1970) explicates that the society is usually able to organize from within itself the forces that compel those responsible for the failure of the state to fulfill its mandate to behave in ways that will meet the expectations of the citizens. He expatiates further that the availability of the exit option sharply reduces the preference of the voice option. Exit and voice more than loyalty as presented by Albert Hirschman encapsulates the essence of the disappointment that serves as the pull and push factors of the phenomenon of militias in Nigeria's Fourth-Republic.This article considers the presence of ethnic and religious militias as forms of *voice* of dissent and seeks a clarification of the undeclared intent of these militias and their sponsors by exploring whether they are bargaining or exiting. Gelbach (2006) describes the exit-voice model as elucidating the clash of interest between the leaders of an organization and its members. In this context, leaders are taking as rulers, the state as an organisation and members as citizens of the state.

Within the context of State and citizens relations, Osaghae (1999) describes exit as a form of withdrawal from the State by dissatisfied, weak and marginalized members of the citizenry into alternative and parallel social, cultural, economic and political systems constructed outside the state and competing with it. Osaghae (1999) goes further by distinguishing exit from the State from exit from the polity. Given the domineering and ineffective character of States where such discontents are prevalent, citizens exit from the polity by avoiding its organised civil order without necessarily disconnecting from the state (Osaghae 1999). Such an option is often attractive to those fed up with the State but find it indispensable.

Exit from the State is more political, organised and elite-driven. It may take the form of migration; this option has been influenced by the notion of global citizenship (Osaghae 1999). In theoretically explaining the reasons for exit as choice by affected groups, Osaghae (1999) lists the indigenousness, marginalization and extraneousness theories. Out of these, the marginalization theory fits into the context of this article. This is

because, individuals and groups who are weak, oppressed, deprived, dominated, excluded alienated and systemically discriminated against and unable to influence the course of action usually opt for exit.

The common forms of exit are politico-religious, socio-economic, criminal networks and exile. The political exit takes the form of assertion of local political economy, separatist agitations or secessionist movements questioning the authority of the state and challenging its unity (Osaghae 1999). The AdakaBoro-led uprising and the Biafran war illustrate the political ones while the Maitatsine, Izala, Shi'ite and currently the Boko-Haram can be classified as the politico-religious ones. This list confirms the observation of Osaghae (1999) that groups attempting to exit the Nigerian state have existed since independence.

An observable trend in the pattern of militancy in Nigeria since 1999 is that ethnic nationalities that feel short-changed in terms of distribution of power or political offices usually have the most restive militia. With the exception of MASSOB that has been moderate in its engagement with the Nigerian State, the OPC and MEND can be described as militias of ethnic nationalities who at one time or the other felt short-changed in the power distribution arrangement of the country. It can be safely concluded that these militias were very restive prior to the ascension of someone from their ethnic nationality as the country's president. For instance, the MEND was unabashed in threatening to secede from the Nigerian state until one of their own became the Vice-President in 1999 to a President who initiated the amnesty as a form of Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) process for the ex-militants in the region. Sequel to the demise of President Umar Yar'adua, his Vice-President, Dr Goodluck Jonathan, rose from an acting President to an elected President in 2011. However, his election was greeted with unprecedented post-election violence that was localized in the northern parts of the country which has not really abated till now.

The plausible reasons adduced for the post 2011 election horrendous violence were the failure of the winner to abide by the zoning arrangement of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) which would have ensured that the north where the late president hailed from produced his successor after his Vice might have completed their tenure. Another argument is the appeal of the closest rival in the person of former Head of State, General Mohammadu Buhari to the subalterns in the northern part of the country and their perception that there was an elite conspiracy to rig the election against the retired General in favour of the incumbent. It was in the midst of these crises that the Boko-Haram peaked which reinforces the argument in some quarters that it is an ethnic platform for bargaining for the

country's presidency. This is not baseless because since 1999, out of the three regions that have produced the country's president, two of them were actually placated with the office in a seemingly predetermined electoral process. The first was former President Olusegun Obasanjo whose ascendancy cannot be totally separated from the fierce agitation from the Yoruba people with the OPC as its militia; also, the them President, Goodluck Jonathan, became a Vice-President as part of a deft move to placate the militants of the Niger-Delta. These two cases underscore the strength of threat or actual moves to exit the state as a bargaining chip for the country's presidency. This is because at different times before they had the presidency, the Yoruba and the Niger-Deltans had threatened to exit the Nigerian state.

Therefore, violence through the agency of militias is gradually emerging as the most potent strategy of bargaining for power in Nigeria's Fourth-Republic. This is because out of the major ethnic nationalities in the country, only the two that violently bargained for power through the agency of militias and threats of exiting the state got it. On the other hand, the Hausa-Fulani of the northern part of the country and the Igbo of the South-eastern part of the country that have not really threatened the authority of regimes and unity of the Nigerian State have not had a sustainable taste of power and perhaps this partly explains the assumption that the activities of the Boko-Haram is part of the bargaining process so that the country's presidency can be conceded to the northern part of the country come 2015.

Bargaining, Militias and the Nigerian State: Implications for Peace and Unity

Given the intrumentalisation of threats of *exit* from the state as *voice* expressing dissent and demand in the context of Hirschman's EVL and the persistence of ethnic and religious insecurity underpinning inter-group relations in Nigeria, this section examines the implication of this strategic behaviour for sustainable peace and unity of Nigeria. This is based on observed trend that violence through the agency of militias has become a strong bargaining power for the country's presidency by the country's ethnic nationalities and that a fraternal relationship exists between groups and militias domesticated in their geo-political zones because the local populations provide safe havens and logistic support to them after legitimizing their activities through ethnic and religious sentiments. Also, the relationship between the State and militias is taken as a dyadic one. This is so based on the assumption that civil wars are overtly known as violent attacks on the state (Wuchepfennig 2009). So, in our context the Nigerian State and the militias are actors.

However, because of the uncertainty of taking a decisive exit

option, bearing in mind the cost for both parties and the unsavory end of the Biafran war for the secessionists it, the future relationship between the two can be predicted through the application of the bargaining theories of power and conflict. In this context, power is defined in the context of state power which is power held by the government in power and sought by other contenders and bargaining power (Wuchepfenning 2009). Militias constitute a sort of bargaining power for ethnic nationalities and for themselves cognizant of their strategic contributions to the ascendancy of the country's presidency by the Yoruba and Niger-Delta peoples in the Fourth-Republic. Given that being in government practically means controlling state power and accruable benefits, it guarantees a pool of resources for ethnic favoritism. Therefore, it is predictable that those left out of these benefits will feel short-changed and this increases their dissatisfaction with the government of the day. This explains why the contest for the country's presidency is a zero or constant-sum game (Dixit and Skeath 2004) because the gain of one ethnic or religious group is loss for the others and in such situations, there will be instability and crisis especially when large ethnic nationalities of the country are excluded from power for a longtime.

However, given the uncertainty and risk involved in full-scale secessionist moves, bargaining becomes desirable because its models assume that coordination between two or more parties in conflict promotes higher dividends than when their actions are not coordinated (Wuchepfennig 2009). Also, the uncertainty associated with the outcome of war makes bargaining a considerable option because the victories from civil conflicts are often Pyrrhic to both parties. Therefore, rather than decisive exit, the voice option remains the most realistic for the ethnic nationalities.

Conclusion

This article posits that the existence of militias depicts voice in the context of Hirschman's EVL. While their present activities point to an exit from polity, it cannot be foreclosed that they may not eventually exit the state. This is why their existence and likely (un)predictable future actions have implications for the unity and existence of Nigeria as presently constituted because violence is fast becoming attractive as bargaining power by the ethnic nationalities especially in the quest for the coveted position of presidency.

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