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## Stoking or Resolving Conflict? Security Implications of State Responses to Social Conflicts in Post-Colonial Nigeria

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### Abstract

*This study engages in a discussion of the centrality of national security to the existence of nation-states and the manner in which state responses to social dissent can impacts on national security. Within this context, the study scrutinizes the means and ends of responses of the Nigerian state to social conflicts with emphasis on those sparked and stoked in reaction to harsh and inclement actions and policies of the state in specific case-studies. These forms of state responses are conceptualized as conflict handling styles of the state. The research attempts to situate whether these conflict handling styles have engendered acrimonious relations between the concerned segments of the society and the state or not. This is done by taking a retrospective look into state responses to selected cases of dissent within the Nigerian polity amidst options not taken at those critical and dire periods and the (in) advertent culpability of the state in precipitating such dissents. The instances of social dissents and conflicts use as case studies were the Agbekoya revolt in the old Western Region 1968-1969; the Maitatsine uprising in Northern Nigeria in the 1980s; and the incidence of armed youth uprising in the Niger Delta since the late 1990s. The study investigates whether the acts of dissent instigated were direct or indirect responses to the structural violence constituted by the actions and inactions of the Nigerian state? The research also examines whether there has been a change in state responses to dissent and social conflict after more than five decades of independence? The study examines the implications of the fore-going for national security and state-society relations in Nigeria.*



## Introduction

Security is an important concern in the life of a person, group, community or nation. For, as Brown (1982: 21) argued, the concern for the security of a nation is undoubtedly as old as the nation-state itself. When viewed from the prism of the nation-state, the central feature in the quest for national security is the concern for the survival, peace, stability and progress of the individuals, groups, communities and the larger society that the state governed. National security has often been construed in different ways, each of which emphasizes vital factors underlying the idea. However, it is imperative to note that each of these conceptualizations often highlight an aspect of what actually is a more embracing construct.

Indeed, one of the most important global yard-sticks for measuring the functionality of a state responsiveness is how well it can guarantee peace, order and security within its borders. Therefore, one of the fundamental criteria of determining a viable and functional state is the ability to ensure peace and security. However, one of the common causes of tension and insecurity in most states is the occurrence of violent conflicts which often pitch citizens against the government of the day or between groups such as identity groups within the state. The inevitability of conflicts in human relations underscores the need for states to ensure a shrewd management of conflict in order to enhance nation-building and national integration on one hand, and to ensure a cooperative relationship between the state and citizens. The way a state handles dissent determines the perception of the state that will be held by the citizens just as the way citizens express dissent determines how the state views the citizenry. In most situations when citizens embark on protests or social conflicts, the state usually responds brutally by clamping down on the protesters which is not without security implications for both parties. This is because while citizens may get involved in accidental violence by violating state installations in expressing collective frustration, governments rely on state violence through its coercive apparatus especially the police to repress such forms of dissent. The reliance on state violence in repressing all forms of dissent is often justified as efforts aimed at maintaining national security as expressed in the popular cliché: *for security reasons*.

This is why the pursuit of national security cannot be done in isolation of the consequences of the choices made by the state in responding to dissents; each choice made comes with a consequence. This connects to the implications and limitations of state violence. As defined by Osaghae (2006: 109): "state violence refers to policies and acts of government which threaten, intimidate or actually result in injury to, or destruction of, lives and property." Much as the use of force is an integral part of the features that define a state, its application comes under rejection when it is directed against the citizens that regimes have sworn to protect especially in a democracy. Diamond (1990) identifies this as one of the three paradoxes of the democratisation process in many of the Third Wave democracies

as the dichotomy between *governability* and *representativeness*. While *governability* implies the ability of the state to govern as deemed fit, *representativeness* connotes that decisions and actions of the state must reflect the wishes of the citizens. Deducible from this dichotomy is the fact that the state must be responsive to the conflicting demands of incongruent interests without losing its control in the process. This is why the state must have *energy* defined by Alexander Hamilton as quoted in Diamond (1990:49) as "being able to act, and at times must do so quickly and decisively." This suggests that the government must be able to respond to demands of interest groups; resist when necessary and mediate when required. However, when state energy or violence is used without restraint or discretion in responding to dissents from the citizens, the main essence of the existence of the state which is to protect the citizenry comes under scrutiny.

As argued by Hyden (2006), states emerge in response to challenges confronting groups in a society. Such challenges may be related to security, welfare or the resolution of clashing demands on the allocation of scarce resources. However, the state finds itself in an awkward position when faced with threatening demands or dissent from groups within its territory. Questions on how to respond to such dissents and demands especially when constructed in state-centric manner as threatening the existence or stability of the regime often lead to debates on the protection or violation of human rights and the limits of the use of force in the pursuit of peace and the security of lives and property. Such situations also precipitate debates on the appropriateness and limitations of *soft power* (non-coercive) compared to *hard power* (coercive) amongst other similar debates. Also, such responses and outcomes stimulate debates on the type of peace pursued and preferred by such states between *positive peace* (peaceful relations and tolerant of dissent) or *negative peace* (absence of physical violence and absolute conformity).

Since independence, Nigeria has had its fair share peaceful and violent expressions of dissent which we contextualize as social conflicts. These have sometimes manifested as forms of internal insurrections in forms of clear and veiled contexts of acrimonious ethnicity, religion, resource allocation, mismanagement of information and communication, and of late, radical Islamism. All of these have placed unprecedented strains on the capacity of the state in ensuring security within her borders. This has warranted the forceful response of the state to such situations in manners that often neglect the root-causes of such dissents and demands while excessive force is applied to quell such demands in manners that offer no clear distinction between military and democratic regimes. Consequently, rather than enhancing the security of the state and citizens, state responses often redefine the conflict without exploring options for its peaceful resolution that is needed to ensure security. This is akin to *working around conflicts* (Gorman 2011) by avoiding or getting brutal instead of exploring sustainable means of creatively managing such conflicts

Therefore, this piece scrutinizes the means and ends of responses by the Nigerian state to social conflicts with emphasis on those sparked and stoked in reaction to harsh and inclement actions and policies of the state in specific case-studies. These forms of state responses are conceptualized as conflict handling styles of the state. The research attempts to interrogate whether these conflict handling styles have engendered acrimonious relations between the concerned segments of the society and the state or not. This is done by taking a retrospective look into state responses to selected cases of dissent within the Nigerian polity amidst options not taken at those critical and dire periods and the (in)advertent culpability of the state in precipitating such dissents. In other words, were the acts of dissent instigated (in)direct responses to the structural violence constituted by the (in)actions of the state? Also, has there been a change in state responses to dissent after five decades of independence? We examine the implications of the fore-going for national security and state-society relations.

#### Conceptual Discourse: Social Conflicts, State's Handling Styles and Security

In attempting a treatise of social conflicts, understanding the concept of conflict as a first-step will not be a misstep. This is because of its dynamic nature and different interpretations given to it by different civilizations and professions. Conflict takes up meanings and interpretations depending on the contexts although it has certain features such as: disagreement, discord, fight, struggle, violence, maiming and death. Like similar concepts such as democracy and security, studying conflicts has always generated debates on the question of meaning. Also, its manifestation, prevention, management, resolution and transformation have through ages been subjects of dialectical discourses in academic and policy circles around the world. No doubt, there are diverse perspectives of conflict which go to a large extent in influencing the way individuals and corporate entities respond to them. However, we posit that conflict in itself cannot be wished away in human affairs and therefore, the most desirable thing is to ensure that it is not destructive and to achieve this, its interpretation by parties and the ways it is handled have far-reaching implications.

As held by the Chinese, any conflict contains potentials of *dangers* and *opportunities* (Barash and Webel 2003). While it is desirable that parties maximize the opportunities in the conflict, this sometimes sounds utopian because of certain human and structural factors that make it difficult. This is why some conflicts are described as functional and others described as dysfunctional (Albert 2001). A functional conflict brings about positive development and improvement

in the relationship of the parties involved while a dysfunctional conflict is characterized by violence and destruction that worsen the relationship of the parties involved irrespective of whether it is between communities or between citizens and the state. Although, conflicts occur from the personal level to the international levels, Reiman (N.D:7) enumerates the following as instructive in initiating a discussion on the concept of conflict: it is a problem of the prevalent political order or status-quo; a catalyst for social change and a (non)violent struggle for social justice. Discussing conflicts from the fore-mentioned perspectives sheds appreciable light on the understanding of social conflicts because they occur outside the individual. The interpretation of conflict from any of these perspectives determines the response that it will elicit. For instance, if a conflict is taken as a problem of the existing political order or the status-quo, the response from both sides may differ depending on the regime type.

As observed by Tidwell (2003:24), the earliest popular texts on the subject of conflict such as *Getting to Yes* by Roger Fisher, William Ury and Bruce Paton (1991); *Beyond Machiavelli* by Roger Fisher Elizabeth Kopleman and Andrea Kupfer Schneider (1994) and *Conflicts* by Edward De Bono (1985) contributed immensely to public understanding of conflict handling. However, he did not fail to point out their inadequacies such as that; they over-simplified conflicts; routinised the methods of handling conflicts and played down the impact that situation and context might have on the conflict handling options preferred by disputants. For instance De Bono underestimated the deep-seated effects of animosity in conflicts by over-emphasizing the role of perceptions in conflict handling. He places the resolution of conflict on the shoulder of one party by merely arguing that if there is a change in the way one thinks about conflict and its resolution then there will be a different outcome. Tidwell (2003) queries this by arguing that life is more complicated because changing thought patterns, styles, and method does not come easily as societies several failed attempts in changing such things as stigmatization of HIV careers and the campaigns against xenophobic behaviours.

Also described as trivial and contentious is the notion of *win-win* outcome in conflicts bargaining. Tidwell 2003 argues against the absolute premising of conflict bargaining on this principle in all conflict contexts. This is because certain conflicts will not just lend themselves to mutually satisfying outcomes. For instance, what mutual agreement could have retained apartheid in South Africa except for its ending? Another popular assumption queried by Tidwell (2003) is the idea of *principled negotiation* put forward by Fisher et al (1991) that prescribes certain qualities for the principled negotiator. These are



that: (s)he must separate the problems from the individuals; focus on *interests* rather than *positions*; design options for mutually satisfying pay-offs and underscore the adoption of verifiable criteria to measure the negotiation process. Tidwell (2003) counters this argument by contending that a focus on *interests* instead of *positions* may not ease matters because issues may become complicated by focusing on the underlying interests in the negotiation. Also, generating mutually satisfying pay-offs may be hampered by realities and objective materials for measuring the negotiation process might be difficult especially in emotive cases. These popular texts on conflict undervalue context and situation in conflicts by trivializing, routinising and underestimating conflicts. This calls for a more robust interrogation and explanation of conflict handling that takes the complexities and dynamic nature of man and situations into consideration. The main thrust of the work of Tidwell is to transcend simplistic and linear understanding of conflict because the way one defines conflict has a considerable influence on the way it is expressed and handled. This underscores why the conceptualization of conflict must flow from a critical and analytical point of view.

In the views of Gorman (2011), there are three main debates that have emerged in trying to give a robust explanation to the concept of conflict. One of this is to determine whether conflict is *inherent* or *contingent*. *Inherency* implies that the way we handle conflict especially its violent expressions are determined by biological and psychological composition and cultural orientation which shape the human condition and society. The *contingency* theory of conflict and its handling also resonate in the frustration-aggression and relative deprivation hypothesis. The focal point of these hypotheses is on the circumstances and not the human nature. This is based on the rationale that conflict can be surmounted with a better understanding of predisposing processes.

There also exists a debate between the *objectivists* and the *subjectivists*. Gorman (2011) describes the perspective of *objectivists* as directing attention to a scrutiny of institutions, systems and dynamics that constitute hidden or latent sources of conflict and how

1. What parties in a negotiation process actually wants
2. What parties in a negotiation process present as their demands often at the start of the negotiation process which masks what they actually want from the negotiation process.

they constitute what Galtung (1990:10) refers to as structural violence which: "increases the distance between the potential and the actual, and that which impedes the decrease of this distance." Gorman (2011) opines that from this

perspective, conflict may be observed or felt even when the parties are not experiencing it physically. For example, slavery, sexism, starvation, caste systems and all forms of unjust social structures that inhibit people from expressing themselves and achieving their set goals constitute forms of structural violence whether they are revolted against by victims or not. The *objectivists* consider their presence in societies as the presence of conflict. This *objectivist* perspective of conflict perhaps informed the views of erstwhile Secretary-General of the United Nations Boutros-Ghali in *Agenda for Peace* (1992) and *Agenda for Development* (1995: section 22) that interventions should address: "the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political repression" and that: "only sustained efforts to resolve underlying socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation" (Campbell et al 2011:15, 16).

The *subjectivists* argue that a conflict exists when there is an expression of incompatibility of goals by parties involved. Such conflicts are deemed resolved when such incompatibilities or grievances have been met. Gorman (2011) illustrates this with a case of increase in pay demands by workers stating that once such demands have been met, the conflict in that context can be considered resolved. However, Mitchell (1991: 221) exposes the paucity of the analytical value of the contributions from the two schools by arguing that: "The *objective* observer in labeling the structure of a system as conflictual or violent contrary to the perception of the parties involved is making a subjective interpretation. This is based on his or her own subjective value and criteria as to what constitutes a conflict in the first instance. Accordingly, the objectivist approach cannot be deemed value-free as it only reflects another subjective assessment of the situation ... by some third party rather than by the participants."

The third debate is in the political economy context popularly known as *greed versus grievance*. This is a situation in which conflicts especially armed conflict are rationalized based on relative deprivation and economic predation. According to Collier and Anke (1998:144-145) "greed in the form of revenue possibilities coupled with organizational capacity provides the most significant indicators of rebellion within a given context." The greed-grievance argument derives from earlier works of Ted Gurr (1998) that discrimination against ethnic minorities offers a fertile ground for the mobilization of affected groups against the state. The greed-grievance argument has also been used in explaining the motivations of ethnic and religious militias against the state (Boas & Dunn 2007, Collier 2010 and Alden et al 2011).



Much as there are diverse perspectives on what causes a conflict, it is apposite to identify certain specifics to actually describe a conflict. Miall (1992) quoted in Williams (2006:14) enumerates certain conditions that define the existence of a conflict thus:

“a conflict can only exist where the participants perceive it as such; a clear difference of opinion regarding values, interests, aims or relations must lie at the root of a conflict; the parties in a conflict may be either states or significant elements of the population “within” the state and the parties must consider the outcome of the conflict extremely important”.

However, Williams (2006) contends that the above criteria suffer from the problem of holistic sequential coherence. Rather he prefers the definition given by Deng (1996) that conflict is a situation of interaction involving two or more parties in which actions taken in the pursuit of incompatible objectives or goals produce varying degree of discord. Albert (2012) offers an illuminating description of conflict by describing it as a part of the process by which change occurs given that the only constant feature of human society is change. This implies that without conflict societies will not experience change which is central to progress. For the sake of lucidity and objectivity, Albert (2012) canvasses the need for a definition of conflict that is not value-laden and he finds this in the definition given by International Alert that: “Conflict is a multi-dimensional phenomenon which is an integral feature of human existence, essential to the ongoing process of history, to social change and transformation . . .” We posit that this explanation of conflict by Albert (2012) speaks to the essence and peculiarity of social conflicts and its interconnectedness to popular struggles. Also, it reveals that the notion of conflict as permanently negative is simplistic especially in the context of social conflicts.

Of all the different levels and types of conflicts, social conflicts present certain features that are peculiar. Tidwell (2003:40) identifies certain features that can be used to differentiate social conflicts from inter-personal conflicts. These are: broader scope; greater complexity and likelihood of institutional involvement. Institutional involvement could mean the actions of the institutions of justice and law enforcement such as the judiciary and the Police. While they may be involved in inter-personal conflicts, their involvement in social conflicts carries more implications for societal peace, order and security. Unlike intra-

personal and inter-personal conflicts that are limited to few individuals (Galtung 1996), social conflicts come with a socializing effect that enables the coalescing of sometimes divergent forces, interests and identities for the pursuit of common goals.

Oberschal's definition of conflict quoted in Albert (2012: 1) conceptualizes social conflict succinctly as: “conflict in which parties are an aggregate of individuals such as groups, organisations, communities, and crowds rather than single individuals.” Coser (1967) also quoted in Albert (2012: 1) defines conflict as: “a struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources, in which the aims of the conflict groups are not only to gain the desired values but also to neutralize, injure, or eliminate rivals.” This definition also focuses on groups more than individuals. These definitions also share certain degree of semblance with the notion of popular struggles. Defining popular struggles from a Nigerian perspective, Momoh (1996:156) puts it as; “struggles against the Nigerian state and its ruling class by social forces located in the lower levels of the country's social structure where the majority of its citizens subsist – workers, peasants, students, unemployed, small commodity producers and petty traders”.

Looking at the definitions of social conflicts given by Coser and Oberschal and that of popular struggles given by Momoh they both share basic similarities in some respects. For instance, they both involve the state and aggrieved segments of the society and this has informed the choices of the case studies in this article. Therefore, we conceptualize instances of popular struggles as social conflicts between the state and the affected members of the society at different periods in Nigeria's post-colonial history. Cognizant of the attendant security and public order challenges occasioned by such conflicts, exploring better ways of responding to them cannot be over-emphasized in the overall interest of the state and concerned segments of the society.

By conflict handling styles we refer to the styles of engagement used by the parties in conflict in finding a solution to the conflict. However, the focus in this context is on how states respond to conflicts especially internal dissents. Schellernberg (1996) enumerates five basic practices of handling conflicts commonly used by parties in conflict. These are coercion, negotiation and bargaining, adjudication, mediation and arbitration. The preference for any of these options is usually determined by the power balance in the relationship and how each party assesses the situation. However, in times of social conflicts, a

major determinant of the choice made is the determination of the state to ensure that the security of the state is not compromised. This often leads to the erosion of rights of individuals and the dehumanization of security pursuit by law-enforcement agencies.

Despite its popularity as an issue and need, security continues to attract attention from policy makers and scholars globally. Also, in many places it is topical not because of its presence but because of its absence. However, as a concept and policy concern, it is not without history. Dating back to the emergence of militarily and territorially sovereign nation-states sequel to the Westphalia Treaty of 1648 national security has become a major concern of nation-states. Dower (1995) traces the origin to the Latin word *securitas* meaning lack of care. Fowler and Coulson (1973) ascribe its use as an adjective and as a verb to 1533 and 1593 respectively. In strategic studies where it actually originated, security has both objective and subjective foci. At the objective level, security addresses the absence of threat to life, liberty, property and core values (Wolfers 1954). In the subjective context security focuses on the nonexistence of fear, anxiety and tension of being in danger of losing life liberty, property and core values (Mbachu 2009).

Whether in a civilian or military regime security is a very serious issue and it has become a power word used to rationalize and legitimize the monopolization of violence by the state in response to social conflicts. This is known as *securitization* which Barnett (2001) describes as the justification of drastic and undemocratic practices in the name of ensuring state security. This implies that once any matter is tagged as a security issue governments feel duty bound to respond to it in way they deem appropriate. Although, it can be manipulated to serve narrow and selfish objectives extraordinary means becomes permissible. In this context, it becomes understandable why military regimes usually perceive any form of dissent as a security threat and why the amount designated as security vote since the commencement of the fourth-republic is seen as beyond accountability by elected officials. This reveals that the state-centric and militaristic understanding of national security as opposed to emphasis on citizens' security continues to be the norm in many post-colonial African states, Nigeria inclusive.

Like the concept of security the conceptualization and implementation of national security has been a topical issue amongst scholars, commentators, politicians and policy-makers. Through different epochs the need to ensure security, stability and order during social conflicts often pitch state and citizens

against each and in some instances serve(d) as basis for disrespecting a country's territorial integrity on the grounds of humanitarian interventions by other countries usually under the auspices of the international community as seen recently in Iraq and Libya. This tends to make national security an ambiguous and situational issue. Lippman (1987: 143) opines that: "a nation is secure to the extent that it is not in a position to lose core values, life, property and liberty, and if it wishes to deter aggression or win war when unavoidable". Given this definition ensuring security becomes the essence of the existence of any state. Shinkaiye (2004:2) conceives security from the intelligence point of view as the: "protection of a nation from all types of external aggression, espionage, hostile reconnaissance, sabotage, subversion, annoyance and other inimical influence."

Therefore as a subject-specific concept, national security within the context of the Westphalia doctrine was all about the state and not the citizens hinged on the assumption that threats or conflicts would only come from outside and not internally thereby disconnecting the state from the challenges of her citizens and foreclosing the likelihood of citizens making demands on the state. However, the change in the trend of conflicts since the end of the Cold War from inter-state to intra-state challenges the doctrinal thinking of national security that it is only after: "completing territorial defence against external aggressions and perhaps internal revolts that the state will be free to perform the developmental activities" (Asobie 1988:32). This is type of state-centric and militaristic conception of national security demonizes the state and reifies it as a system divorced from the interests of individuals within the state (Nnoli 2003).

The concern for national security has led to the development of various approaches to the issue, of which the military approach remains pre-eminent. With regard to the military approach to national security, Ochoche (1998: 106) holds that national security focuses on the amassment of military armaments, personnel and expenditure. Galtung (1982: 76) advance the argument that the military approach to security is justified on the basis that only a strong military force can deter attacks and threats of attacks, as well as provide the means of fighting undeterred attacks. However, it should be noted that in the case of Nigeria, the vast size of the military has not resulted in a corresponding increase in the maintenance of traditional security functions, which Heywood (1997: 360-363) identifies as the maintenance of the security and territorial integrity of the state and society, the maintenance of domestic and civil order, and the provision of humanitarian services.

Aligwara (2009) expresses national security as the safety of those residing within a defined nation-space and sharing common interests. Defined in this vein, it comes close to the perspective of Busan (1983) that national security



binds together individuals, states and international system tightly. Also, given the frequency of intra-state conflicts in Africa Gambari (1996) argues that security in African countries should be thought of beyond the limits of traditional security thinking based on investing solely on military strengths to ward off aggression against the state. Barney et al (1991) explain that national security while hinged on security against external aggression must equally focus on food security, economic security, environmental security, educational security and domestic order. Oberg (1984) argues that the state needs to transcend a militaristic or doctrinal interpretation of national security in order to make the mobilization of citizens during national crisis relatively easier and therefore the pursuit of national security should encompass intangible or ideational issues like life-style, ideology, culture, justice, freedom, poverty, corruption, identity and the environment; all of which have become the basis of *new conflicts* (Kaldor 2007) that have defied the militaristic conception of security since the end of the Cold War. Although, there is a caution against the bludgeoning of all conflicts as *new* (Fearon and Laitin 2003 and Kalyvas 2001) given the history of low intensity conflicts, guerrilla warfare and counter-insurgency prior to 1990. However, there is a convergence of opinions on the trends of wars that are widespread in the aftermath of the Cold War World order. Also, there is an increasing resonance of the implications of state's weakness and failure in some cases in sparking social conflicts which have been the main thrust of the *objectivists'* explanation of conflicts. An inquiry into most of the social conflicts that have occurred in post-colonial Nigeria would reveal the causative role of the Nigerian state and a consistent conflict handling style by successive regimes through the following case-studies.

### **The Agbekoya Revolt (1968-1969) in Western Region: Instrumental Violence as a Response to Structural Violence**

Typically, the exploited class comprises the working class and the peasantry. Their involvement as agency and the state as target in social conflicts underscore the exploitative relationship between labour and capital prevalent in most states. These social conflicts are often in rejection or resistance of any of the three ways of dependence used by the neo-colonial state. These are tax on rents from natural resources; the appropriation of workers' surplus through the price system such as the withdrawal of subsidy on Premium Motor Spirit (PMS) by successive regimes in Nigeria and Prebendalism (Mommoh 1996).

According to Ayeni-Akeke (1988), the Agbekoya revolt (Farmers reject suffering) of 1968-1969 broke out in many cities of Southwestern Nigeria but was more pronounced in Ibadan, Abeokuta, Egbeda and Ijebu areas. It began as

spontaneous reaction by peasant cocoa farmers against economic exploitation and political repression by agents of emergent post-colonial state and local governments. The primary demand on the government was a cut in the flat-rate tax imposed on them which increased by 100% from N6.00 to N12.00. In addition, they were expected to pay other sundry rates such as increased water rates and newly introduced State Development Contribution of N1.50K and additional 5% Federal National Reconstruction levy as contributions to civil war funds. Their demands were turned down and the government directed representatives of the local authorities to enforce the new rates. Many local councils also enforced local rates (such as markets, health and educational rates) for services that were not actually delivered to the citizens and which the farmers knew were actually embezzled. The farmers took exception to the harassment and extortion carried out by the police and sanitary inspectors (Ayeni-Akeke 1988).

The Agbekoya revolt can be conceptualized as a peasant's revolts comparable to similar ones in Iseyin-Okeho 1916, Egba in 1918, the Aba women's riots of 1929, the Ogoni crises and the Bakolori peasant's revolts of 1979. Mommoh (1996) reveals that the Agbekoya revolt was in many ways a continuation of the Mayegun revolt of February 1948 in which the Akanran farmers in Ibadan division resisted the felling of their cocoa trees infected by the Swollen Shoot disease. The prices paid by government for cocoa had nosedived from 160 pounds sterling in 1960 to 65 pounds sterling in 1966. Adeniran (1974:363) gives a vivid account of the enraged peasants:

On Tuesday September 16 1969, an army of peasants (under the command of such ringleaders as Adegoke Akekuejo, Tafa Adeoye, Folarin Idowu, Mudasiru Adeniran, Tafa Popoola, and so on all of the *Agbekoya* and R. Oladejo, Mustapha Okikirungbo, Rafiu Isola, Adeniyi Eda, Adeagbo Kobiowu, and Lajide Aremu of *Mekunnu Parapo*) recruited from Akanran, Akufo, Aransan, Egbeda, Moniya, Olode and other villages around the city of Ibadan ... marched on the city harried government functionaries, broke into Agodi federal Prison and "liberated" the inmates and marked the intensification of government reaction – a furious onslaught to suppress the peasant revolt.

3. Mekunnu Parapo means: *The Union of Wretched Toilers* (Adeniran 1974:365).

Quoting the Governor of the Western region under the existing military government Adeniran (1974:363) presents the preferred conflict handling style of



the government of the day: "My government will fight this rebellion to a finish... with unflinching relentlessness." However, a critical look at the demands of the peasants indicates the perpetuation of structural violence on the peasants to which they were forced to instrumentalize violence to vent their frustration. This stance of the government was in obvious ingratitude to the burden being borne by the peasants as their contribution to ensure that the granting of self-rule was not delayed beyond 1957. However, after the inception of self-rule the lots of the peasants got worse in the face of arbitrary and unfair method of grading, rejecting and accepting of their products; insufficient encouragement and support for optimum production and deplorable transportation and forced levies at flat rates irrespective of capabilities to pay (Adeniran 1974). By 1968 the Agbekoya Parapo came up with a list of coherent demands as enumerated by Adeniran (1974:368):

1. Sacking the local government officials ravaging their villages and the eventual termination of the *Bales* (local traditional chiefs) being used as tools by the government;
2. Reducing the flat rate which in 1968/1969 stood at an average of 8 pounds in the state;
3. Putting an end to the use of force in the collection of taxes;
4. Ensuring a substantial increase in the prices of the crops (especially cocoa) on which the peasants relied for existence;
5. Improving the feeder roads linking the villages with the urban centres where farm produce are sold;
6. Reorganizing the Western States Farmers Union (WSFU) purported to stand for the welfare of the farmers but which was in reality an instrument of enslavement, an unscrupulous government instrument for controlling the peasants;
7. Effecting a radical down-to-earth reform or complete abolition of the local government system in the state which was the springboard of corruption; and
8. Clearing the way for the control of the state by people approved by them and who would promulgate essential reforms; or as some people speculated, the creation of a new autonomous state where their interest will enjoy primary priority.

After series of entreaties to authorities fell on the deaf ears including the lobbying of the Olubadan, the Agbekoya on October 21, 1968 petitioned the government for a cut in flat-rate taxes. This was rebuffed and it provided the trigger for the peasants rage as they went from village to village sensitizing and

conscientising against compliance with the government directive on with a Concordia chant: *Oke Mefa Laosan* (we insist on paying on 1.10 pounds). On November 21, 1968 they invaded Mapo (headquarters of city council) injuring bureaucrats in the process (Adeniran 1974).

Rather than negotiation or joint problem-solving, the government chose the coercive option of arresting, proscription of *Agbekoya Parapo* and tax raid led by soldiers and policemen (Adeniran 1974). The government also responded through its cliché and alleged that the peasants were sponsored by disgruntled elements in the state; a claim that was denied stoutly by the peasants on December 31 of the same year (Adeniran 1974). The government sustained its maniac use of force and in response the peasants torched houses of prominent government figures, sacked *Bales* (traditional rulers) which climaxed on the September 16 with the marching on Ibadan (Adeniran 1974). This necessitated the brokering of peace between the government and the peasants which led to a temporary stand-off between the two. However, shortly after the stand-off the government resorted to combined use of intimidation and unfulfilled promises; scapegoating, buyoffs and later Tafa Adeoye and some member of the middle-class who participated were arrested and detained.

The Agbekoya Parapo-Government face-off alludes to the argument of Alexis De Tocqueville in 'L'Ancient Regime et la Revolution', quoted in Adebani (2004: 328) that worsening deprivation, injustice and oppression are often the major preconditions for organised violence by oppressed groups. The reaction of the peasants also speak to the humanistic assumptions of (organised) violence put forward by Franco Ferraroti quoted in Adebani (2004:328) that: "the violent are not 'mad wolves' but human beings." Also, that violence has a specific historical determination and its causes deserve empirical exploration and that violence is the: "perversion of a virtue and a search for meaning in order to escape the straightjacket imposed by a rational, bureaucratic society". This is because of the disappointment experienced by the peasants because they wrongly assumed that the dawn of self-rule in the region will usher prosperity but rather it bred their cumulative pauperization through the agency of bureaucrats and coercive elements of the state.

Therefore, instead of relying on the consent and self-conviction of the citizens' as motivations for the payment of levies and taxes, the government relied on force through the army and the police to coerce the peasants to perform what ordinarily should be a civic responsibility. Mobilizing peasant to join such revolts can be explained by the opportunity cost of insurrection model by Bazzi and

Blattman (2011: 4) that: "civilians' incentive to rebel rises as household income and economic opportunities decline". Faced by waning economic fortunes, the peasants had no choice other than to organise to liberate themselves by instrumentalising *physical violence* which Alain Chesnais (1981:12) quoted in Adebani (2004:329) explains as characterized by "injury to persons; brutal; external; painful and defined by the material use of force" to challenge structural violence and corruption as evidenced by the conduct of the government and its officials.

### The Maitatsine Uprising of 1980s and National Security in Northern Nigeria

Without doubt, the Agbekoya revolt of 1968-1969 in the then Western region represent a major landmark in the annal of social crisis in post-colonial Nigeria in the decade after independence. As explained in the earlier section, the Agbekoya revolt like most social crisis in which the peasantry revolt against the State arise within the context of a particular socio-economic hardship occasion by state policy. While the Agbekoya revolt is significant, it is by no means a singular exception as the relationship between the state and society continue to be characterized by violent face-off. Indeed, there are series of social crisis that have posed serious national security challenge to the Nigerian state across the country. In all of these, the Maitatsine uprising in the Northern part of the country in the early 1980s of the which the present Boko Haram insurgency in the same region share numbers of similarities occupies important position in the literature on social crisis and national security as it relates to Northern Nigeria.

The Maitatsine uprisings of 1980 in Kano, 1982 in Kaduna and Bulumkutu, 1984 in Yola and 1985 in Bauchi, was obviously the first attempts at imposing areligious ideology on a secular, independent Nigeria. The crisis also marked the beginning of ferocious ethno-national and ethno-religious inspired conflicts in Northern Nigeria (Hiskett, 1987: 209-210; Isichei 1987: 194-208; Ibrahim 1997:511-512). There are number of issues that clearly emphasized the socio-economic and religious character of the Maitatsine uprising. As Kastfelt (1989: 84) argued, the anti-authoritarian and unorthodox religious character of the movement was combined with a strong social and political radicalism. This radicalism was nurtured by the harsh economic reality of the 1980s and it was manifested by the sect rejection of the authority of the Kano state government and by extension the Nigerian state seen largely by the sect followers as corrupt, insensitive and repressive.

An immigrant from Cameroon, the leader of the Maitatsine sect, Muhammad Marwa (nicknamed Mai Tatsine, meaning "master of condemnation"

or the one that "curse") emerged in Kano as an influential preacher in the late 1970's. Although Marwa practised as a Quranic teacher, he deviated from mainstream Islamic scholarship by his rejection of the Hadith and the Sunnah of Prophet Mohammed. He was also reported to have condemned the reading of any book but the Koran as 'paganism' (Isichei, 1987: 196). In his sermons, he spoke against the use of western technology such as the wearing of watches and riding bicycles. Marwa and his followers, many of whom were Koranic students constantly attacked what they saw as the corrupt religious practice of the established Islamic community of Kano.

As the impoverished youth of Kano and the immigrant community became increasingly discontented with their situation, they were attracted to Marwa's organization. Building on their anger against the established secular and religious orders, Marwa was able ride on their resentments to fuel his religious movement (Steven, 2011: 176; Kastfelt, 1989: 83). Muhammadu Marwa had a long history as a dissident preacher in Kano, and had been imprisoned and deported in 1962, but later returned. His followers had been involved in a clash at the mosque in Kano's Sabongari in 1972, and there had been an increasing number of clashes and arrests in 1979 and 1980 (Isichei, 1987).

The first major confrontation between the Maitatsine movement and the Nigerian authorities occurred in December 1980, at a time when the Maitatsine sect had between 2,000 and 3,000 followers. Violent Maitatsine assaults upon other Kano residents and an assumed Maitatsine plan of taking over the Central Mosque of Kano eventually made the Nigerian police, and later the Nigerian Army to move in against the Maitatsine headquarters in Kano. The Maitatsine followers brought out their weapons and the subsequent battle resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, including Muhammadu Marwa himself (Kastfelt, 1989; Hiskett, 1987; Isichei, 1987). According to official figure, approximately 4,177 people died in the uprising and the subsequent security crackdown that accompanied it (New Nigerian, December 1980).

Even as at the time of the first widely reported uprising in December 1980, the movement was not confined to the city of Kano alone. There had been an earlier clash at Jos, on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 1980 when about three hundred sect members fought the police and overpowered them, but left for Kano without any reasonable explanation (Aniagolu Report cited in Isichei, 1987: 1987). In awe of the brutality of the suppression and the extensive property damage that resulted, a commission was put together to investigate the cause of the disturbance and establish responsibility for its occurrence (Steven, 2011: 176).

The massive military force developed by the Nigerian government



brought to a convulsive end the tide of violent assaults on civilians in Kano that characterized the Maitatsine uprising. However, militarized response by the Nigerian state did not wipe out the Maitatsine movement as it later spread to other northern Nigerian cities. Subsequent uprisings in Maiduguri and Kaduna in 1982, in Yola in 1984 and in Gombe in 1985 proved that the Maitatsine followers might have lost the battle in Kano, they were prepared to have a try elsewhere. The failure of the militarized response by the Nigerian state to wipe out the threat of the Maitatsine in the 1980s was replayed in the Niger-Delta when state repression in Ogoniland in the 1990s failed to prevent repeat of dissent against the State-Oil alliance interests in the Niger Delta.

In an effort to unravel the complexity of the Maitatsine movement, Isichei (1987) explains that the movement seems to appeal to those that are disinherited in socio-economic term. Isichei (1987: 201) argued that the Maitatsine sect members were recruited deliberately from the lower class that was attracted by Marwa's attacks on affluence and western materialism. In a sense, it seems the Maitatsine uprising was comparable with the repeated outbreaks of violence among Yoruba cocoa farmers in the 1960s. However, whereas the Agbekoya revolt was rooted in rudimentary class consciousness and a sense of the relative and absolute deprivation of peasant farmers as a class, the appeal of Maitatsine was rooted in eternity. The Maitatsine sect members made war on a society from the rewards of which they were excluded.

While analysis of the uprising can be anchored on economic inequality and iniquity, as Isichei (1987) notes, the problem goes beyond the distribution of wealth within society. The Maitatsine movement flourished in the 1980s, amid the package of economic ills, the main manifestations of which includes: high prices, scarcity of basic commodities, retrenchment and unemployment. The harsh economic crisis and the social problems that emanated therefrom was part of the legacy of profligate politics and corruption that was the main highlight of the politics and governance of the Second Republic. To these, one can add local disasters such as desert encroachment, drought and rinderpest pandemic that plagued the Northern states at this point in time. The Islamic factor and its many dimensions also aided the violent uprising of the Maitatsine sect (Kastfelt, 1989; Isichei, 1987). Indeed, the Maitatsine movement was greatly aided by the almajiri system of Islamic education in Northern Nigeria.

The upsurge of violence against civilian and state targets spearheaded by the Boko Haram Islamist movement since 2009 seems to indicate a revival of militant brand of Islamism in Northern Nigeria and signifies a return of the region back to the grip of religious inspired social uprising. In comparative term, there seems to be a convergence between the Maitatsine and the Boko Haram in term of the context within which the two emerged, their antagonism to established secular

and religious orders and the resort to the use of violence. As Adesoji (2010) argued, in many respects, the explanations offered for the outbreak of the Maitatsine uprisings in the 1980s are relevant to the Boko Haram uprising since 2009. In the same wise, the nature of State response to and management of the social discontent and the violent expressions that defines both the Maitatsine and Boko Haram uprisings are largely similar. More than any other methods, the use of force and repression as modality for responding to instances of expression of social dissent remains the most important and consistently used modality for conflict management by the Nigerian state from the period immediately after independence till present.

Indeed, given the pattern of evolution and use of the security apparatus under colonial rule, the security establishment in post-colonial Nigeria continue to exhibit traits of an occupying colonial force. Nigeria military force has often been used for largely negative purposes involving the oppression and repression of the citizens. This informed Heywood's (1997: 365) position that the military in Nigeria has been used for the purpose of suppressing popular involvement in politics and civil liberties. It has also been deployed to curtail the activities of unions, opposition groups and to quash popular demonstrations of dissent. In short, it is an instrument of censorship. This trend has been particularly prevalent under military regimes. This situation informed Ujomu's (2001) position that the state-centrist conception of security in Nigeria and the reliance on the use of the military has brought to the fore the issue of political morality, which focuses on the question of defining the relationship between the state and the various socio-political groups within the Nigerian society. Nowhere is this more glaring than the Niger Delta, Nigeria's oil bearing region that has witnessed decades of repression carried out by the Nigerian military against oil producing communities on behalf of the State-Oil alliance. The discussion of the use of the state security apparatus to suppress popular dissent and the way this has impacted on Nigeria's national security is the focus of the subsequent section of this work.

#### State's Pursuit of National Security in the context of the Niger Delta Conflict

The story of oil prospecting in colonial Nigeria started with the awarding of licence to a German company, Nigerian Bitumen Corporation in 1909 to prospect for crude-oil in Nigeria. In 1937 the colonial government granted Shell D'Archy the sole rights to explore for hydrocarbons all over the territory of colonial Nigeria (Etekpe, 2007; Anyanwu, Oaikhenan, Oyefusi and Dimowo, 1997). Shell-BP crew of engineers stuck Nigeria's first commercial oil well in Oloibiri community in Brass Division of the former Eastern Region, present day Bayelsa state on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 1956 (Etekpe, 2007; Roberts, 1998). The company



recorded streak of successes as it further discovered crude-oil in Afam and Bomu areas (Aigbedion and Iyayi, 2007). Sequel to Shell's success, the Federal Government in 1961 issued new prospecting licences to other multinational corporations to operate in Nigeria's oil industry. These companies prospect for oil onshore, in the Niger Delta and offshore in the nation's continental shelf. With successful discoveries of more wells and fields, Nigeria's oil production history witnessed steep rise in the level of exploration, and production. However, this also come with serious consequence on the environment, human livelihood, peace and security of individuals and communities in the oil region.

To start with, the history of dissent and state repression did not commence at the immediate period when crude-oil was discovered in the Niger Delta. On the contrary, dissent was aimed at protesting the environmental impact of oil and gas exploration and production activities and the modalities for the distribution of wealth by communities in the Niger Delta start to emerge some years after the commencement of oil production in the region. Indeed, the first show of open dissent against the Nigeria state occurred in 1966 and was led by Issac Adaka Boro, an Ijaw from Oloibiri, the community that hosted Nigeria's first oil well. The outbreak of revolt popularly referred to in the literature on the Niger Delta as the "Twelve Days Revolution" occurred ten years after the discovery of Nigeria's first oil well in Oloibiri and eight years after the first barrel of oil was exported from the shore of Nigeria.

It is instructive to note that Boro's led revolt was informed by the unguarded exploratory and exploitative activities of Oil multinational corporations operating in the Niger Delta and the sense of perceived neglect by the Federal Government. The late Major Boro using the platform of his hastily formed and rage-tag Niger Delta Volunteer Force declared a Niger Delta Republic in the early morning of February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1966. The Boro revolt was easily crushed by the force of the Federal Government thus bringing to an end the first armed insurrection in the Niger Delta in post-independent Nigeria (Tebekaemi, 1982 and Tamuno, 1970).

Years after Boro's revolt, the lots of the people of the Niger Delta continued to get worse under intense and unbridled exploitation of resource wealth by the forces of the Nigeria State and international capital represented by the multinational oil corporations. During those years, the people of the Niger Delta continued to agitate for conscious environmental practice by the oil companies and the need for greater presence of the Nigerian Federal Government in the form of development projects and programmes albeit through institutionalized legal channels but without much changes. It was the situation of environmental degradation, crisis of underdevelopment and rising poverty amidst

wealth appropriated by the Nigeria State that prompted Kenule Saro-Wiwa, Chief Edward Kobani and Dr G Leton to form the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People, MOSOP as a platform to campaign for environmental restitution and development of the oil bearing communities in the Niger Delta. Saro-Wiwa led MOSOP galvanized the people of Ogoni land into taking mass action against the operation of Shell Petroleum Development Company, the sole operator of Ogoni oilfields and the Federal government (Osaghae, 1995; Saro-Wiwa, 1995; 1992).

The peaceful mass action approach of MOSOP and the Ogoni was to mark the first direct peaceful and successful mass-based confrontation against Oil corporations and the Nigeria State. MOSOP internationalized the Ogoni plight through the drafting and mass presentation of a people charter, the Ogoni Bills of Rights. However, the peaceful approach favoured by MOSOP was still anathema to the Nigeria military government. The state thus deployed its military and security instruments of force to repressed the Ogoni uprising. The height of state repression was the arrest, trial and execution of Saro-Wiwa and his eight Ogoni compatriots for the mob murder of four Ogoni Chiefs whom the Ogoni youth identified as collaborators and saboteurs of the Ogoni cause. Rather than work to dampened communal expression of dissent, the judicial murder of Saro-Wiwa and the implosion of MOSOP worked to galvanized the emergence of other nationality movements and spurred rising agitations of the people of the Niger Delta to fight for environmental restitution and resource control (Human Rights Watch, 1995; 1999; Roberts, 1999; Apter, 1998; Raji, 1998; Naneen, 1995; Osaghae, 1995; Welch, 1995).

With the repression in Ogoni-land came the implosion of nationality movements in the Niger Delta. Most of the emerging groups take after the modalities of MOSOP as they publicised their cause through the platform of bill of rights. It was to this end that the "Kaiama Declaration" by the Ijaw Youth Council was promulgated in Kaiama in 1998. The choice of Kaiama was symbolic because the community was the birth place of the late Isaac Adaka Boro and it was meant to resuscitate the spirit of Boro. Other ethnic nationalities also followed suit and published their own bill of rights containing their demands from the Nigeria state and oil corporations. Such documents includes; the "Akaka Declaration" of the Egi People, the "Oron Bill of Rights", the "Warri Accord", Resolution of the First Urhobo Economic Summit, among others.

These bills of rights form the basis for the struggle for self-determination and resource control by each of the ethnic nationalities in the region. While all of these groups exert varying form of pressure on the State-Oil alliance it was the Ijaw ethnic nationality that inherited the vanguard of resistance from the Ogoni. Through the Ijaw Youth Council, the Movement for the Survival of Ijaw Ethnic Nationality and the elder forum the Ijaw National Council, the Ijaw nation began a campaign of forcefully advocacy for environmental restitution, infrastructural

development and increase in derivation cum resources control by the people of the Niger Delta. As argued by Osaghae (2008), Ikelegbe (2006; 20001a; 2001b) and Ojajorotu (2006) the IYC campaign raised the importance of social movement as the driving force behind the resurgence of dissent against the state and oil multinationals in the Niger Delta.

With the return to democratic rule, there seems to be implosion of violent confrontation with the agents of the Nigeria state in the region. The resort to armed confrontation approach can be rationalized as resulting from the failure of the Nigeria state to meaningfully address the problems facing the region and the proclivity of the State to resort to military repression even under supposed democratic regime. The sign that the Nigeria state will not favour the peaceful modality appear early in 1999 when the civilian regime of President Obasanjo order the military invasion of Odi to fish out youth that abducted and kill men of the Nigeria Police Force. The Odi military operation was widely condemned and it marked the beginning of what to become the descent into anarchy in the latter years of the administration of President Obasanjo. After Odi came the military repression in Choba community by Men of the Nigerian armed forces, the invasion of Odioma and the final onslaught represented by the military occupation of the region (Courson, 2006; Albert, 2003, Human Rights Watch, 2003; 2002; 1999 and Effiong, 2002).

It was in the face of State violence and militarization that armed youth movements started to emerge in the region. The first and prominent of such armed youth groups is the Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force, NDPVF of Asari Dokubo and the more sinister Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, MEND (Ukiwo, 2007). MEND was formed by remnant of Asari's NDPVF and other similar groups after the incarceration of Dokubo by the Federal Government. The arrest of Dokubo after signing a peace deal with the Federal Government taught MEND a lesson as the group adopted the faceless approach. Without officially known public figure as the head, it became difficult for the Nigeria state and its security outfits to castrate the group through the arrest of its leaders. MEND campaigns of violence which was directed at crippling the operations of the oil industry was waged through kidnapping of expatriates and local oil workers, vandalization of oil installations and spate of violent acts against the interests of the Nigeria State and the oil multinationals (Courson, 2009; Omotola, 2009).

At the heights of its campaign of violence from 2006 which lasted till late 2009 MEND, through its action was able to force the shut-down of vital oil production installations and cut the nation's daily oil production by at least 25 percent. Though the implementation of an amnesty package by the Federal Government reduced the state of insecurity in the Niger Delta, the situation remains that of the peace of the graveyard. The reason been that for as long as the

state failed to address in an wholistic manner the majors factors underlying grievance and protests in the region the likelihood for resumption of peaceful dissent, campaign of sabotage and violence against the interest of the State-Oil alliance will remains high (Omotola, 2006).

The campaign of violence bordering on State terrorism that has for long represent the management of national security challenges in the Niger Delta is an avid manifestation of the form and nature of the emergence of the Nigerian State under colonialism. Whether in the distant past or in recent time, the deployment of force to quell popular protest and dissent in the Niger Delta and in other parts of the country has never give rise to sustainable peace, security and stability. Rather state repression has gave rise to a vicious circle of protest, repression and further protest (Omotola, 2009). Thus, resolving the political, socio-economic and development challenges facing the region and indeed other troubled parts of the country by all stakeholders is the only recipe for sustainable peace and it is within the context of sustainable peace that national security can better be enhanced (Courson, 2009; 2007; Ikelegbe, 2005).



## Conclusion

The chapter engaged in the discussion of the importance and centrality that the maintenance of national security holds for states across the world. The significance of national security is premised on the fact that it will be out rightly impossible for the essence for which the state is established to be guarantee outside of the context of the adequate security of life and property of the citizens, maintenance of law and order, and the protection of the territorial integrity of the state all of which contribute to the enhancement of state security. The primacy of security is hinged on the fact that it represents one of the global yard-sticks for measuring the functionality of a state responsiveness and how well it can guarantee peace, order and security within its borders. Therefore, one of the fundamental criteria of determining a viable and functional state is its ability to ensure peace and security of its society.

Having said this, the chapter also underscores the fact that one of the common causes of tension and insecurity in most states is the occurrence of violent social conflicts which often pitch citizens against the government of the day or between groups such as identity groups within the state. The inevitability of conflicts in human relations speaks to the need for states to ensure a shrewd conflict handling approach and management style in order to enhance nation-building and national integration on one hand, and to ensure a cooperative relationship between the state and citizens. The way a state handles dissent determines the perception of the state that will be held by the citizens just as the way citizens express dissent determines how the state views the citizenry.

This chapter noted that since the period after the independence in 1960 the Nigerian state has had her fair share of peaceful and violent expressions of dissent and conflict. These have sometimes manifested as forms of internal insurrections (Boro's revolt, the civil war, Maitatsine uprising, Youth uprising in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram) in forms of clear and veiled contexts of acrimonious ethnicity, religion, resource allocation, mismanagement of information and communication, and of late, radical Islamism. All of these have placed unprecedented strains on the capacity of the state in ensuring security within her borders. This has warranted the forceful response of the state to such situations in manners that often neglect the root-causes of such dissents and demands while excessive force is applied to quell such demands in manners that offer no clear distinction between military and democratic regimes. Consequently, rather than enhancing the security of the state and citizens, state responses often redefine the conflict without exploring options for its peaceful resolution that is needed to ensure security. The chapter discusses the security implications of state responses to social conflicts in Nigeria through the lenses of three case studies which are the Agbekoya revolt in Southwestern Nigeria, the Maitatsine uprising in Northern Nigeria and armed youth uprising in the oil producing Niger Delta.

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