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# Breaking the conflict matrix: Conflict praxis and development policy in Nigeria

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**Abstract:**

*The paper argues that though conflicts in Nigeria attract enormous global attention, they have become sporadic and increasingly common and protracted. Sectarian conflicts retard socio-economic development, but contrariwise, development retards conflicts. This double causality gives rise to moral and malicious circles, where development succeeds, societies become progressively safer from violent conflict, making subsequent development easier. It is further argued that where development fails, communities are at high risk of becoming caught in a conflict matrix in which conflicts wreck the economy and increase the risk of further conflict. The paper concludes that the national prevalence of conflict is high because the Nigerian government has done little to avert it. More so, government inaction to stem the tide of conflicts in the country is vehemently rooted in ethno-linguistic or religious, socio-political and economic fragmentations which systematically increased the prevalence of conflict showing that ethnicity and religion are much less significant than is commonly believed because sectarian conflict is driven by ancestral, ethnic and religious hatreds.*

**Keywords:** Sectarian conflicts, Environment, Poverty, Security, Socioeconomic development Policy.

## Introduction

The multiple and unabated sectarian crises bedeviling the Nigerian state have been generally linked in recent times to the unsettled conditions of widespread violent disorder and the accelerated syndrome of failed economic policies. In existential terms, the imminent nexus between conflict and socio-economic development crises is non-linear but dialectical. Underdevelopment crises

breed conflict, and conflict in turn, sustains the dilemma of socio-economic crises in Nigeria. In this regard, any policy on social and economic development which fails to integrate the broader social conditions of Nigeria is to say the least, ineffectual.

Socio-economic problems are articulated as political issues considered in a wider perspective of social relations between communities. This corroborates Bassey's argument that "the set of social relationships, including conflict interaction, technology and human geography shapes the terms and conditions of the operations of states' social and economic development strategies."[1]Thus, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Report observed that:

> Violent conflict generates social division, reverses economic progress, impedes sustainable development and frequently results in human rights violations. Large population movements triggered by conflict threaten the security and livelihoods of a whole state or region.[2]

Indeed, the destructive interface between violent conflict and socio-economic underdevelopment crises was the focus of are cent discussion by the Society for Academic Excellence and the Bassey Andah Institute for African and Asian Studies conference on "Ethno-religious Crises, Development and Good Governance" engendered by the imageries of the hopeless conditions of the Nigerian state. In other words, utilizing the analytical framework of concomitant variables, it is established that deep political and economic failures, rooted in tribal and political avarice as well as ethno-religious hatred are the root causes of Nigeria's socio-economic underdevelopment problems. Thus, it is now a collective *apriori* of proponents of regionalism that the successful implementation of economic policies relating to collective self-reliance in isolation from the prevailing political environment in Nigeria is quite doubtful. C. O. Bassey further explicates that the basic choices of economic development strategies and the focus of social development programmes are always political as well as economic, consequently, they cannot be productively implemented in isolation from the political fabric of the given milieu.[3]

By and large, it is therefore argued that, the common denominator in African conflicts and particularly in Nigeria is the contest for the control of natural resources by the divergent ethnic groups. This proposition is rooted in the general evolution and features of the African State, which set it apart from the nation-states in other parts of the global system. Unlike the contemporary state

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[1] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa." In Bassey, C. O. and Oshita Oshita (eds) *Conflict Resolution, Identity Crisis and Development in Africa.* (Lagos: Malthouse Press Limited, 2007), xvv-xxvi.
[2]United Nations. *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index: Illuminating Inequalities.* Washington DC: United Nations Development Programme and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, 2021), 16.
[3] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xxxi

in Europe, which developed out of a transformation from agriculture to industrial manufacturing, and as such was a product of struggles to control labour-power and capital; while the states in the Americas, which arose primarily out of trade, the state in Africa is a product of conquest of natural resources.[4] Consequently, natural resources have defined the past, are defining the present and may possibly define the future of conflicts in Nigeria. In a similar thought, although the immediate causes of conflicts in Nigeria may manifest as ethnicity, poverty, political ideology or religious intolerance, the remote causes remain the desire to capture and control political power and natural resources. It is also basically because access to resources defines the state and conflicts in Nigeria define security and development.

In Nigeria, security essentially means access to and control of political and economic resources by individuals, communities and classes which captures controls state power in contradistinction to the developed Capitalist State. Deriving from the historical evolution of the Western State, security is construed principally as the security of the nation-state, which has assumed the expression of the collective interests of the people. By contrast in Nigeria, there is no sense of security as the collective interests of the people represented by the state and claimed against the interest of other nation-states. Rather, security is given the very narrow meaning of the protection of people in power. This is because the state in Nigeria is fragmented and brazenly represents sectional and regional interests manifesting as individual, ethnic, religious and class interests. This is not to deny that, the state in the developed capitalist society does not in reality represent sectional interests, essentially the ruling class interests.

However, the state has been able to establish hegemony through the deepening of ideological domination, thereby assuming the appearance of a unified power representing the collective interests of all. Consequently, while in the developed western society, the major threat to the security of the state is construed to be external, while in Nigeria, it is still principally internal. Whereas, the main characters of these threats are assumed to be political and military in western countries, in Nigeria they are principal issues connected to natural resources and economic survival, even though they find expression in sectarian armed conflicts.

It is also within the foregoing comparative architecture that we locate development policy. While in advanced capitalist societies, development is about mastering and deepening the accumulation of capital essentially through the exploitation of human capacities and appropriation of surplus labour. In Nigeria, it is still about mastering the natural environment and exploiting

[4] Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa." Paper presented at the CDD WACSOP Consultation on Conflicts in the Coastal Zone of West Africa, Calabar, June 6 – 7, 2008, p.1.

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nature in its very raw form.[5] Furthermore, we seek to explore the conceptual nexus between ethno-religious/sectarian conflicts, security (resource regimes) and development in Nigeria. We begin by looking at the current state of knowledge on this nexus and subsequently anchor them on empirical experiences of the Nigerian State, where capital extraction by multinational corporations in league with the ruling class has been a major source of insecurity, with far-reaching implications as well as counter-productive consequences for socio-economic development.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Explication**

The observed decadence and crises of insecurity in the Nigerian socio-political and economic system over the last two decades have generated extensive scholarly debate in the literature on the structural and psycho-cultural factors sustaining the quasi-state of anarchy in the country. Conflict triggers have highlighted the ginormous issues including ethnicity, identity politics, and social structures, nation-building as well asan anarchic, virulent, hostile and repressive economic environment replete with overbearing corruption.

The debate in the literature has been characterised by profound epistemic divergencies. The traditional or conservative view is mechanistic and state-centric, and an analytical frame of consequences of its interpretation of the society; whilst its rationalist orientation and focus on the problems is delimited by disciplinary boundaries.[6] The second and perhaps increasingly, most popular radical view tends to be dialectical, holistic and system-level in expression. It interprets civil disorder as a result of the double paradox of class and function bearing on Nigeria's developmental struggles in the comity of nations within the existential conditions in the international division of labour.[7]

In line with the traditional approach to contemporary historical and political-economic enquiry, many scholars have proceeded unreservedly to identify primal factors in the cumulative evolution of many African States, particularly Nigeria, the primula path to the threatened disintegration and the near anarchic institutional disorder in the past two decades. For instance, some brilliant contributions to crises and instability in Africa include Rothchild (1997), Joseph (1991), Deng and William (1991) and Akindele (2003), who have all systematically highlighted the structural and primordial factors that sustain separatist and explosive conflicts development in post-colonial African states.

[5]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 3.
[6]R. Childcote, *Theories of Comparative Politics.* (Boulder: Westview, 1981), 74.
[7] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xviii

To Elbadawi and Sambanis, these factors include ethno-linguistic fragmentation, high level of poverty, failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources.[8] Thus, Bassey further argued that:

> … Ethnic identities and hatred are seen as the causes of violent sectarian conflicts. However, a more systematic analysis of the causes of civil wars conforms to a global pattern that is better explained by political and economic factors as well as by the extent of ethno-cultural diversity in the society.[9]

Thus, the features associated with historical and primordial labels with the Nigerian state and society need to be carefully re-examined because of profound variations in environmental conditions over the last six decades. Indeed, without convincing supporting evidence, it could be impossible to simply assume that the evidence of the elemental configuration of the Nigerian society provides sufficient shreds of evidence to understand present developments and evaluate future trends. It would, however, be a misnomer to ignore cultural conditions in their entirety, since prevailing factors in the political process such as belief systems and values are, at the core, historically conditioned.

Arising from the above, Huntington argued in their conclusion concerning the developing world system that "increasing levels of social and economic development produced broader, or more diverse, and more autonomous patterns of political participation."[10]Nonetheless, Bassey posited that the persistence of ethnic cleavage, and the extent to which it continues to structure the language and perception of social and political intercourse in Africa, have rendered arguably untenable the Marxist and functional prediction of erosion of ethnic identity and conflict with increasing modernisation in Africa.[11]Whereas, R. Bate rightly and persuasively submitted that socio-economic transformation and state expansion may widen and intensify ethnic identification and stimulate pervasive competition based on these enlarged cultural identities.[12] Indeed, Bate's conclusion is rightly and presently being manifested in the Boko Haram insurgency in the North East and Fulani banditry in the North West regions of Nigeria.

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[8]Elbadawi, I. and Sambanis, N. "Why are there so many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict." (*Journal of African Economies,* 9 (3): 2000), 244-269.

[9] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xix.

[10]Huntington, S. *Political Order in Changing Societies.* (New York: Yale University Press, 1972), 2-3.

[11] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xix

[12]Bates, R. "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa." (*Comparative Social Studies,* 6 (4) 1976), 457 – 484.

Following from the orthodox or traditional postulation based on Huntington's disquisition, civil disorder in Africa (nay Nigeria) society is a "necessary and inescapable condition in the creation of political order, and thus, intimately bound up with the process of modernisation and political development." Huntington attributes the presence of violence and political instability in modernising societies in larger part to the "rapid mobilization of new groups into politics coupled with the slow development of political institutions."[13]He further argues that political instability in developing societies is mainly the inescapable consequence of failure to develop political institutions sufficiently adaptable, complex, autonomous and coherent to cope with the emergence of new and variegated social forces resulting from profound changes in the substructural base.

In other parlance, a phenomenal social and economic change in post-colonial Nigeria has been suggested to manifestly complicate the problems of establishing new legitimacies and effectiveness. This is arguably the direct consequence of the diversification and multiplication of social forces and the concomitant diminution of traditional sources of political authority, broadening political consciousness, rising expectations and participation. In this context, comparative experiences of other modernising societies attest to the rate of social mobilization and the expansions as well as the intensification of political activism outstrip institutionalization, and the inevitable consequence is political instability occasioned by the violent disorder.

The foregoing analytical perspective provides an insight into the problems and dynamics of the Nigerian social disorder. For instance, considered from the viewpoint of Huntington's institutionalization theory, the problem of military intervention in the Nigerian political order could readily be explained in terms of the general politicization of social forces and institutions. The explanatory perspective, which sees the proclivity and destabilizing effects of military intervention in politics in Nigeria, as rooted in the political and institutional structure of the society, does not necessarily contradict the alternative argument by Janowitz that "the most fundamental cause of military intervention in politics derives from the distinctive social and organizational organisation of the military establishment."[14]

From this theoretical point of view, societal conditions could be viewed as predictor variables, while military institutional factors could be explicated as intervening variables. This indicates that a necessary and sufficient explanation of the predispositions of the Nigerian military to seize power is conditioned by how intra-military characteristics relate to broader society variables. Hence, societal conditions which are considered to be compatible, or identical, will not necessarily produce the likes of military intervention unless intra-

[13]Huntington, S. *Political Order in Changing Societies.* 4.
[14]Janowitz, M.*Military Institutions and Coercion in the Developing Nations.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 39.

organizational factors are constant.[15]These considerations notwithstanding, the illuminating and predictive relevance of this perspective is necessarily delimited by implicit ideological bias, and for that reason, it has been subjected to devastating criticisms on methodological and practical grounds. Thus, Ake has contended that the theory of institutionalization has "no scientific status as it is neither applicable to the world nor useful to understand it."[16] By expounding political instability and conflict in Nigeria, largely as a function of political modernisation and development, the institutionalization perspective poses a veritable form of reductionism which sees conflict as a defining stage in established progress towards an assumed model of stable political institutions.[17] In this vantage position, the conceptual bias of the institutionalization approach misleads by seeking to parade what is patently ideological as a theoretical conceptual construct.

However, the Neo-Weberian intellectual construct serves as an alternative to the radical exposition of conflict and instability which offers essentially a structural analytical base on the dialectics of development and underdevelopment. The two major clusters of traditional literature on instability and political disorder in Nigeria, so far analysed, share one basic assumption. First, that political instability in Nigeria is a pre-eminent result of endogenous or domestic, system-determined variable. Since such a development in the contemporary international system is very rarely endogenous, the context of change has to be incorporated into the model itself. Put differently, a composite theory of conflict and violence in Nigeria could be anchored not only on the internal dynamics of its social order, but also, on how the Nigerian political economy was incorporated into the global capitalist system at a particular period in the development of the system. This dialectical and global system theoretical construct as it affects the internal processes of a social change constitutes the core complex indices of the radical thought on the crises of underdevelopment in Nigeria.

However, Bode Onimode contends that the fundamental roots of Africa's (particularly Nigeria) continuing mass poverty and conflicts rest principally on the imperialistic exploitation of the continent, with the concomitant and inevitable consequences of stagflation, uneven development, alienation, escalating external debts and the periodic outbreak of social crises inter alia.[18]Contrariwise, the solution to these existential conflicts of the moment according to Onimode must proceed from recognising the failure of the traditional development strategies and the dismantling of the foundation upon which such structure was erected. Undeniably, Onuoha asserted thus:

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[15]Moskos, C. C. "Armed Forces after the Cold War," in *The Post-Modern Military* edited by Moskos, C. C., Wialliams, J. A. and Segal, D. R. (Oxford: University Press, 2003), 55.
[16]Ake, C. *Democracy and Development in Africa.* (Ibadan: Spectrum, 2001), 116.
[17] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xxi.
[18]Onimode, B. *Political Economy of African Crises* (London: Zed, 1998).

> … this necessarily necessitates re-orientating and enlightening the minds of the present and future policy-makers as well as those who implement the policies in Nigeria through an educational methodology that advances the process of dealing critically and creatively with social reality and the discovery of how to participate in the transformation of their world….[19]

In the view of Bates, such an educational methodology would necessarily have to be constructed on the theory and praxis of scientific socialism, with the express objective of evolving ''a political strategy for a socialist Nigeria'' which could be pursued by new regimes ''controlled by the broad mass of the Nigerian populace.'' Ultimately, therefore, the socialist revolution is the only effective way of terminating underdevelopment and the periodic precipitation of political crises arising from it. Nevertheless, the tragedy of the Nigerian political economy, Bates further contends that, it is quintessential that despite the multiple symptoms of accelerated crises, the comprador elites which dominate development planning policy in Nigeria persist in the institutionalization of values which, as Illich noted "leads certainly to physical pollution, social polarization and psychological impotence in the process of national degradation and modernised misery."[20]

While it may be suspected that the above conceptual and theoretical explication of the radical construct has indeed advanced our understanding of the pattern of the forces provoking periodic discharges in peripheral capitalist states like Nigeria, much of these literatures have shown to be methodologically weak, empirically questionable and constitutionally irrelevant across Africa. Realistically, there have been relevant structural changes in the past two decades: institutional reforms, the political economy and constitutional imperatives that were carried out to mediate the conflicts within the ruling elites and between them and the oppressed people; it would indeed be analytically difficult to maintain that nothing has changed. However, it has to be established that on the whole, the revisionists critique of the dominant orthodox literature proffered by radical scholarship represents a most penetrating and insightful theoretical discourse on the conflicts inherent in the Nigerian state.[21]

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[19]Onuoha, J. "Globalization and Ethnic Wars in Africa" in Onuoha, J. (ed) *Beyond Diplomacy: Contemporary Issues in International Relations* (Nsukka: Great Ap Express Publishers Ltd, 2018), 83-85.
[20]Bates, R. "Ethnic Competition and Modernization in Contemporary Africa…", 462.
[21]Ogundiya, I. S. "Political Corruption in Nigeria: Theoretical Perspectives and Some Explanations." (*The Anthropologist,* 11 (4): 2009), 281-292.

**Security: The Resource Regime Thesis**

In the context of the distinction between national security and the security of citizens, we locate our understanding of the link between a favourable environment for socio-economic and security. National security discourse, unlike the discourse of security of nationals, constructs the environment as a natural category, separate from society and existing to be exploited in the services of national security. This construction of the environment according to Ibeanu, coheres with a very vertical, exclusive and competitive view of natural resource governance anchored in individualistic, profit-oriented and non-communal control. Consequently, its application in many parts of Nigeria has conducted rivalries and conflicts over resource flow and livelihoods. Indeed, the many conflicts that have bedeviled the country are directly and indirectly related to this rather colonial construction of the environment that national security discourse privileges.[22] It has been at the very root of resource mismanagement, conflict and underdevelopment in Nigeria.

Contrariwise, the security of nationals' discourse, to which this study subscribe, constructs the environment as an integral component of the society, and therefore, exists principally to support all members of the society in their present and future survival. Consequently, human perception and the use of the environment is socially constructed. Such construction of the environment involves values, expectations, structures and institutions that organise human existence within a specific biophysical environment. As such, the biophysical environment exists in unity with social, economic and political processes and none should be treated *sui generis.* Ibeanu further explains that:

> … this unity is expressed in resource regimes (domestic and international), which define access, exploitation and management, with the political-juridical regime (the state, international regime) holding these intricate linkages together by playing intervening roles in each, as well as solidarity role for all. Collectively, these regimes congeal the character of governance of natural resources and it is their failure in specific socio-political circumstances that generate conflicts and underdevelopment.[23]

From the foregoing, Ibeanu identified three resource regimes. The first is the resource access regime (RAR), which is today defined principally by market forces. The market is the dominant contemporary definer of resource access. Despite the claims of freedom, equity, opportunities and choices that proponents of market forces advocate, the market is patently a most exclusivist regimented and exploitative regime. It is this tendency that foreshadows grave

[22]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 8.
[23]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 9.

consequences for local communities, minority groups, the poor and the oppressed living at the margins of society. The attempt to seek redress for their situation has culminated to conflicts and insecurity in Nigeria.[24]

The second resource regime is that of resource exploitation (RER), which is expressed in technology, which is the society's level of mastery and understanding of the laws of nature and the application of technological knowledge to the exploitation of resources. This has necessitated developing and improving on tools and reducing over-consumption by devising improved methods of using natural resources in creating goods, including recycling and better waste management strategies which would not be harmful to both humans, flora and fauna. This regime is anchored on ingenuity.[25]Unfortunately, existing global structures controlling the distribution of technology, particularly research and development (R and D), have created a world of technological inequalities and dependence. It is within these inequalities that gaps are created between the developed and the developing societies, and the more likely that conflicts would continue to arise as groups seek to maximize control of resources in the face of technologically induced scarcity.

Resource management regime (RMR) is the third resource regime, which is condensed in culture, which is the stock of knowledge a society accumulates over time for usage and preservation of the environment; and the modes of transmitting such knowledge from one generation to another. However, when different resource management regimes come into contradiction with one another within a political community, conflict is inevitable. Nevertheless, it is the political regime (the state) that holds these complex interlocking regimes together. When it fails to express, even if only imagined, the collective interests of all segments of the political community, the three resource regimes are likely to fail, giving rise to violent conflicts and underdevelopment.[26]

Based on the resource regime ideas, we can infer that security has two broad interpretations. First, in its limited meaning, security refers to the capacity of a ruling ensemble to protect interests and values from external threats and maintain the internal social order which is the enduring character of the society. In this sense, security is always linked to defence, coercion, violence and order. This limited perception is also often privileging the security of private and sectional interests, often portrayed as national interest, rather than the interests of all citizens. Furthermore, this limited conception of security rarely considers long-term security, which ought to protect the socio-economic environment to engender the much desired development.

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[24]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 9.
[25]Homer-Dixon, T. "The Ingenuity Gap: Can Poor Countries adapt to Resource Scarcity?" (*Population and Development Review,* 21 (3): 1995), 587-612.
[26]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", pp. 9-10.

On the other hand, in its broadest sense, security has to do with two sets of relationships that people enter into as they produce their means of livelihood, namely: relations between humans and the environment; whereupon security entails sustainable exploitation of nature and sustained regeneration of nature which guarantees sustainable development in the society. The second is human-human relations, which interpretes security asthe equitable organisation of work on the one hand, and equitable distribution of rewards on the other. In other words, inequities in work and rewards create insecurity.[27] In fact, in its extant analysis, Otora corroborates that security means the full protection of nationals by providing adequately for their means of livelihood thereby protecting them from poverty, exploitation, disease, injustice and humiliation.[28]

It is thus, imperative to note that, a critical issue in the functioning of the resource regimes is how individuals, groups and the state construct their security and try to attain it. Herein, lays the quest for socio-economic development. This quest has to do with the continuous, direct and indirect actions taken by individuals, groups, communities and the state to attain their security with specific resource regimes held together by a political regime (the state system). Thus, there is a constant interaction (cognitive, affective and evaluative) between resource regimes, construction of security and actions to attain socio-economic development.[29] Put differently, socio-economic development denotes the evolutionary and transformational properties of resource regimes, and by extension, of security, as mediated by the state.

Consequently, socio-economic development is an integral part of the complex interaction between resource regimes, security and the state. The trajectory of socio-economic development is evolutionary when existing resource regimes are informed, but generally maintained. It is transformational when they are transcended. It is the trajectory of socio-economic development that shapes notions of abundance and scarcity of resources. Three basic issues are significant in forming these notions namely:

(a) Collective perceptions of groups of exclusion and inclusion in the access to resources;
(b) Actual performance of resource regimes; and
(c) Levels of vulnerability and adaptive capacity.[30]

Note, however, that the point of abundance and scarcity do not necessarily refer to the level of availability of resources. The relationship between the two is

[27]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 10.
[28]Otora, O. A. "World System, Crime Transformation and the Travails of National Security: The Nigerian Experience." (*Professor Bassey Andah Journal of Cultural Studies,* 6, 2013),65 – 80.
[29]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 10.
[30]Okechukwu Ibeanu, "Oil, Environmental Conflict and Security in the Coastal Zone of West Africa.", p. 11.

more complex than the mere availability of resources. This explains the pervasive irony of riches across Nigeria today. First, is the fact that the country is well endowed with resources and yet most of her nationals are very poor and its component states and local governments are not developed. Second, is the fact that the areas where these resources are specifically located are usually the poorest, as the case of the Niger Delta indicates. More crucially, abundance and scarcity have to do with access to resources, the manner of their extraction and the value attached to them. These are usually presented in complex social and historical noughts formed in the experiences of communities withone another and the state.

**Impact of prolonged Conflicts and Underdevelopment Crises in Nigeria**

The devastating social consequences of protracted social conflicts in Nigeria have become central inhibiting forces in the quest for meaningful social and economic development. Statistical comparison of Nigeria and other countries suggests that Nigeria surpasses in terms of internal conflicts and colossal destruction of national infrastructure ofsocio-economic development. The impact of these internal convulsions on socio-economic development programmes in Nigeria has been profound. This changing social context in the country has generated vigorous debates concerning issues of development and security. In fact, in the light of the prevailing condition in the country, socio-economic development and security have proven antithetical in the circumstances of unabated insecurity. Thus, the development consequences of insecurity can be identified from their direct and indirect impact on society and the economy. Such impact, Otora (2019, p. 610) notes, involves the destruction of both human and physical capital, the disruption of economic transactions, including the increased cost of conducting such transactions, and the distortion of resource allocation by the state.[31] As an extant consequence, Collier (1999, p. 170), conjectured that:

> … all these effects have a direct implication on the development process broadly defined. In this respect, it has now been established that during the period when wars are raging, the per capita growth rate of the economy gets reduced by 2.2 percentage points compared with the normal non-war period, the per capita growth rate gets reduced by 2.1 percentage points. This suggests a massive derailment for socio-economic development.[32]

The United Nations Development Programme Report (2021),which is a composite indicator of economic and social well-being which shows the changes

[31]Otora, O. A. (2019). "Fluctuating Cooperation and Tensions in Akam – Olulumo (Okuni) Boundary Relations." (*Intranational Journal of Advanced Research,* 7 (10): 2019), 691-702.
[32]Collier, P. et al. (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy.* Washington D. C.: The World Bank and Oxford University Press.

in human well-being based on some key variables including life expectancy, daily calorie intake, portable drinking water, infant immunization, school enrolment, GDP per capita, inflation rate, corruption index, access to information and communication technology, political freedom, civil/human rights and women involvement in public policy, etc, suggest that "ninety percent of the countries with the highest level of human suffering are found in Africa."[33] Similarly, the African Centre for Development and Strategic Studies (ACDESS), Ijebu-Ode under the leadership of Professor Adebayo Adedeji has placed Nigeria in the category of countries threatened by armed conflicts, high-level of insecurity occasioned by banditry, farmers-herders conflicts, Boko Haram, ISWAP, IPOB, hunger, poverty as well as severe and prolonged political crises. Indeed, there is no gainsaying the fact that conflicts, especially ethnic conflicts, harm political stability and socio-economic development.[34] This is indicative of the Nigerian state paralyzed by the crises of underdevelopment fuelled by accelerating economic stagnation. This pathological systemic condition of hopelessness is directly linked to the various aspects of socio-economic development failures in the country.

These wide-ranging anomic phenomena and their impact on socio-economic development processes in Nigeria constitute the inherent conflicts and insecurities, especially in terms of how primordial identities defined the character of emergent social forces and their contestation for resource control and political power. Kaldor observed that unlike the politics of ideas which are open to all and therefore, tend to be integrative, this type of identity politics is inherently exclusive and fragmental.[35]

It is imperative to be reminded and be circumspect of the fact that elsewhere in other parts of Africa, the convulsive dimensions of crises arising from identity politics led to, for instance, the carnage between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda, the mayhem in Darfur and the horrific violence, as well as large scale torture of civilians, pillaging of rural institutions and industrial assets, and mass looting of village property in Sierra Leone.[36] The structural deformities of these peripheral formations manifest in different ways including the crisis of legitimacy, political instability, institutional weakness, lack of natural identity, economic scarcity, and external vulnerability. These deformities are anchored primarily on the domestic class structures, production relations and forms of exploitation that sustain neo-colonialism, and the nature of the client post-

[33]United Nations Development Programme Report. *Global Multidimensional Poverty Index: Illuminating Inequalities.,* 134.
[34]E.C. Emordi and A. E. Emordi, "The State and the Security Challenge in Contemporary Nigeria" O. E. Tangban, C.C.C. Osakwe, S. o. Okeniyi and H. E. Ayamasaowei (eds) *Nigerian Defence and Security: Essays in Commemoration of Nigerian Defence Academy Golden Jubilee.* (Kaduna: Nigerian Defence Academy, 2014), 7-10.
[35]Kaldor, M. *New and Old Wars: Organised Violence in a Globalized Era.* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 7.
[36]Imobighe, T (2003). *Civil Society and Ethnic Conflict Management in Nigeria.* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 2003), 17.

colonial states that these class structures have developed and also operated to intensify this condition. Onimode submits that the destabilizing consequence of these multiple contradictions reflects the prevalence of gladiatorial or exclusionary politics.

Consequently, peripheral social formations by this consideration embody the anomaly of existential state decay. The peripheral character of such state decay in the West African sub-regional social formation has been the state's declining capacity to rule or maintain the conditions for the operation of its eroding productive infrastructure. Two fundamental areas that Bassey highlighted are:

(a) Increasing inability of the state to relate national means to policy ends is shown in the inefficiency of public service, security institutions, policy implementation, etc.
(b) Decline in probity is manifest in systemic corruption. The general response of social forces to this incapacitation of the state has been withdrawal into survival activities. For instance, ethnic militia – Boko Haram, IPOB, Killer herdsmen and Bandits. The contestation of state power often results in a "zero-sum ethnic struggle for dominance, which may be expressed in violent internal conflicts".[37]

**Conflict Containment: The Way Forward**

It is fairly obvious from socio-economic development in the Nigeria state in the past two decades that whatever the strategy or a combination of strategies adopted by the Nigerian government in her quest for socio-economic development, it can achieve only minimal success in the absence of effective conflict management regime, to deal decisively with the present and likely future threats to security. Currently, the literature on conflict management and conflict resolution encompasses a series of assumptions and propositions on distinguishing the conception of conflict, its reasons as well as the trajectory as an instrument of a variety of social and economic objectives. Claude Ake opined that conflict is not a crime of the elites or a disease of the society, but simply a traditional method of resolving the quarrels that inevitably arise in society.[38] Rothchild (1997, p. 1), further notes:

> Grim scenarios notwithstanding, there is nothing inevitable about destructive conflicts between groups and their culturally distinct identity. Deep social cleavages and highly injurious encounters have occurred in many societies where people and groups disagree over basic rules, yet a comprehensive image also shows accommodation, reciprocity and negotiation. Regularised political interactions among groups and ethnic leaders over time are

[37] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xxv-xxvi.
[38] Ake, C. *Democracy and Development in Africa.,* 226

> likely to facilitate their cooperation. But,how are elites structure relations promote predictable interaction and thereby avoid mutually damaging encounters?[39]

Reacting to the above question and offering a triadic framework of conflict reduction in the society, Deng and Zartman submit as follows:

> Using the analytical artifice of the number of parties involved: unilateral models of conflict prevention, bilateral methods of negotiating the administration of solutions to violent conflict, or trilateral instruments of mediation and multilateral strategies of institutionalised conflict discount.[40]

Contextually, the fundamental role of the third party is to avert or interpose the use of force, preventing aggravation of the dispute and keeping the contending parties apart while the processes of conciliation are established. However, it is imperative to emphasize that a combination of peace-building and resource security regimes with the express objective of containment, localization and stabilization of conflict situations in a variety of socio-psychological principles and concepts at the individual, interpersonal, group, inter-group and international level of analysis must be incorporated.[41]

As a regime, the national defence and security policy is expected to combine both diplomatic and military measures to influence insurgents, IPOB, bandits, killer herdsmen as well as other militia groups toward greater veniality and develop innovative alternatives that would be fed back into the socio-economic development policy process to improve the interaction among the various belligerent groups and to de-escalate and resolve the contradictions. Touray has argued concerning the general state of insecurity in West Africa that:

> …neither a mere political declaration with no binding authority nor a simple national military and police outfit. It is essentially a strategy based on a set of principles, objectives and instruments that are directed at promoting and consolidating peace and security within the state as well as releasing energies and resources for the overall socio-economic development of the sub-region.[42]

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[39]Rothchild, D. *Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa.* (Washington D. C: The Brooklyn Institute, 1997), 11.
[40]Deng, F. and Zartman, I. W. *Conflict Resolution in Africa.* (Washington D. C: The Brooklyn Institute, 1991), 300.
[41] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xxvii.
[42]Touray, O. (2005). "The Common African Defence and Security Policy." *African Affairs,* 104 (417): 635-656.

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However, significant challenges remain bearing on the legal, fiscal and institutional capacity of Nigeria's defence and security forces and related instrumental mechanisms as can be seen in the manifestation of religious extremism as a strong factor that militates against peace in the enclave of insecurity conundrum of Boko Haram insurgency in the North East, kidnapping and banditry in the North West and South West geo-political zones. Killer herdsmen have added another source of insecurity in North Central Nigeria. Many innocent farmers are been killed on the farms as they eke their livelihoods by Fulani herders, many of whom now bear sophisticated weapons. The trend has led to so much disaffection between the Fulani and most of their host communities. It has, in fact, caused the refusal of most of the southern rural communities not to accept different overtures by the federal government for settlement of the herders. The friction between the federal government and some southern Governors reached a peak as most of them started passing the anti-grazing laws which disallowed the Fulani herders from moving freely across farmlands. But, as the war rages on, many lives are lost and the relevance of government is questioned.

Several thousands of people have been killed while a large section of the population have been displaced and lives in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps spread across the entire northern Nigeria. More so, kidnapping for ransom has become the new normal and an enterprising activity in the quest for livelihood in Nigeria and has remained intractable. Innocent school children and law-abiding commuters especially in the North West are kidnapped on daily basis and taken into thick forests while their families are thrown into great despair.

Similarly, in the South East, the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), the frontline self-determination group which is been suppressed by the Nigerian military with different covert military operations aimed at decimating the IPOB is fuelling insecurity too. The tenuous level of insecurity has reached its zenith, so much that the IPOB has instituted a policy of 'sit at home order' every Monday for citizens in the region. The IPOB has also directed its anger against government institutions and disruption of government businesses across the South East as well as the resumption of militancy in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. In fact, the level of insecurity across Nigeria suggests a situation where a state of anarchy is been unleashed on the general populace and survival has returned to the Hobbesian state of nature, where human life has become nasty, brutish and short.

Furthermore, several scholarly contributions to the debate on insecurity have aptly concluded that conflict management regimes are only a necessary but not sufficient condition for sustainable peace and socio-economic development of the country. This is because such a strategy does not deal with the structural deformities that generate destructive violence and insecurity in post-military Nigeria. Thus, Bassey lends credence and rightly submits that:

> …historically, a conflict between states has been a predominant source for soldiers and statesmen… however, it has been anarchic conditions within sovereign states that have repeatedly posed the most acute and intractable challenges to international order… The essence of this problem in many Third World countries is the frailty and decay of government institutions, especially those devoted to responding to citizens' demands, preserving law and order, and resolving internal disputes. Domestic pressures brought on by ethnic cleavages, over-population, poverty, maldistribution of wealth, environmental degradation and rapid mobilization often outpace and can even overwhelm the government's ability to respond.[43]

These intra-system variables are widely seen manifesting to be responsible for the rapidity of the resurgence of civil unrest, violence and widespread insecurity after some period of settlement as experienced in the North-Central, North-West, Northeast and South-East geo-political zones of Nigeria, especially in the last two decades. However, the solution to these problems it is widely argued in scholarly submissions resides in the democratic transformation of institutions of governance. This is further given verve by Elbadawi and Sambanis who advised that:

> …the best and fastest strategy to reduce the incidence of intra-state violence and conflicts is to institute democratic reforms that effectively manage the challenges facing diverse ethnic nationalities within the state. To promote inter-group cooperation in society, …political governance and economic management institutions are needed.[44]

In line with the above analytical premise, it is also contended that any sustainable peace-building mechanism must be tailored to address four basic fundamental elements namely; a secured environment, reformed political institutions that are broadly representative, a healthy economy, and a legal framework for dealing with injustices of the past, present and the future.[45] This view glosses over the nature of the post-colonial state in Africa, the pattern of elite recruitment and the congenital dependence and domination of the economy of social formations by the elites. Meanwhile, little critical assessment is given to the nature of the state itself, its location within the matrix of class-divided society, and its relationship with the contending social forces which inhibits socio-economic development in the country.

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[43] C. O. Bassey, "Introduction: The Nexus of Conflict and Development Crisis in Africa…", xxviii.
[44]Elbadawi, I and Sambanis, N. "Why are there so many Civil Wars in Africa? Understanding and Preventing Violent Conflict…",246.
[45]Collier, P. et al. (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy,* 56-57.

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## Conclusion

Going through the annals of the ancient, medieval as well as contemporary history, the neoliberal response to the challenges of socio-economic and sustainable development particularly in Nigeria cannot be over emphasised. This is predicated on the fact that, the problem of the state is narrowed down to that of the efficacy of its social and economic institutions to achieve objectives and programmes of socio-economic development; focusing especially on the respective roles of the elite class, political institutions, the bureaucracy and security architecture. There is, however, a fairly obvious consensus that the politicization of ethnic and religious identities in the contest for material objectives has unleashed turbulent and virulent unsettling conditions of collapse and failed state apparatus in Nigeria with colossal and catastrophic impact on social and economic development programmes. Indeed, whether the underlying cause (s) is attributed to ethno-linguistic or religious fragmentation of the political regime, high incidence of poverty, failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources; a considerable solution is through a multi-sectoral policy response that seeks to establish the priorities for structural and institutional risk-reduction and a resource governance regime to mitigate the existing differences and support peaceful ways of resolving disputes within a polity to engender socio-economic development in the country.

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