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Contents

Nigeria:
Between Governance and (under) Development.
Analysing the Root of the Fractured Security

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Abstract

This paper analyses the problem of recurring threats to human and state security in Nigeria. It situates the problem within the context of the nexus between governance and (under)development. It notes that threats to human and state security predate Nigeria's contemporary political history, as there were cases of security challenges in the colonial era (1914-1960). However, after independence in 1960, and especially after the return to democratic governance in 1999, security challenges in the country multiplied and deepened. The paper argues that the root of the problem lies primarily in the country's prolonged crisis of development, engendered and sustained by political governance systems (colonial, military/autocratic and civilian/democratic) that offer opportunities for predatory accumulation by the elite and compromise the core elements and essence of government.

Keywords: *Governance, development crisis, insecurity, security threats.*

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Introduction

Security, both human and state, referring respectively to protection of people from social, political, economic and environmental threats/hazards (Booysen, 2002), and defence of the territory, institutions of governance and sovereignty of a state (Anum, 2010), is ruptured in Nigeria. The country's colonial history (1914-1960), for example, was marred by security-threatening crises, including threat of secession by the northern region in 1950 and 1953 (Akanji, 2015). There were also threats to human and state

security in the period between 1960 and 1999. The declaration of secession in 1966 by the Niger Delta region, the civil war from 1967 to 1970 between the government of Nigeria and the breakaway eastern region, and sectarian violence in the 1980s challenged the existence of the Nigerian state and resulted in destruction of private/public properties and death and displacement of people. Similarly, threats to peoples' physical, economic, and material safety and the country's stability have been occurring since 1999. These include ethno-religious conflicts in the communities in the middle-belt region, violent militancy in the Niger Delta, Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, among others. This raises the need to critically interrogate why threats to security are a recurring phenomenon in Nigeria.

This question is examined within the context of the nexus between governance and (under)development. This is in the light of three reasons. First is that there is an inextricable link between economics and politics. The linkage, in the Marxian perspective, is to the fact that changes in the economy act as catalysts for changes in all the institutions, including political ones, in the society. This means that the economy is the fulcrum on which all the institutions/structures in the society rest. Nonetheless, political (governance) institution in every society influences and shapes economic choices/decisions and, therefore, contributes to social and economic development or underdevelopment. The second reason is related to the debate about the nexus between development and security, in which it is, on the one hand, argued that development and security are coterminous (Sörenson & Söderbaum, 2012) and, on the other hand, that there is a lack of sufficient evidence of link between development and security (Waddell, 2006; Stern & Öjendal, 2010).

The third reason is that social and economic development in Nigeria is totally at variance with its human and natural resources endowment. Despite a population of over 166million people (UNDP, 2016: 24) and enormous proven oil (37,062 million barrels) and gas (5,284.3 billion cubic metres) reserves (OPEC, 2016), Nigeria is still largely typified by widespread poverty, high rate of unemployment, and aging and grossly inadequate social infrastructure. Poverty rate in the country, for example, was 62.6percent in 2015 (UNDP, 2016), while unemployment rate was 10.4percent in the fourth quarter of the same year (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The deplorable condition of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway, which lacked major maintenance repairs for thirty years (Olaseni & Alade, 2012), describes the state of most public infrastructure in the country. These points to Nigeria as a country in a crisis of development. This raises a number of issues that bother on the cause(s) and sustaining factor(s) of the crisis. These issues are analysed below.

Governance and crisis of development in Nigeria:
historical analysis of the linkage

Nigeria's crisis of development is not unrelated to the policies of its successive governments. For example, the nature of British colonial rule in Nigeria (1914-1960), like that of other colonial powers in Africa, "channel[led] all effort into the production of primary crops required for export and encourage importation of European goods even if it means destroying local manufactures, crafts and industries" (Ade-Ajayi, 1995, pp. 39-40). As a result, British colonial development policy for Nigeria, contained in the 1945 and 1955-1960 colonial development plans, promoted import-substitution industrialisation, making Nigeria import-dependent (Olukoshi, 1993), and paid little attention to its socio-economic development (Dibua, 2006; Walker, 2003; Falola, 1996). The colonial development plans/policies were characterised by poor funding/poor allocation of funds to the major productive sectors of the economy, including education, agriculture and industrial sectors (Idang, 1980). Hence, basic social services and infrastructure were grossly inadequate during the colonial period, as shown by primary school enrolment of barely 36 percent of the population at independence in 1960 (World Bank, 1981).

The development crisis however worsened after independence in 1960 due, first, to the sudden rise of an oil economy in the 1970s, which led to increased reliance on oil as the principal source of government revenue and the neglect of other important sectors of the economy, particularly agriculture and manufacturing. The second was that the rise of oil economy transformed Nigeria into a rentier state, with increasing vulnerability to external shocks, particularly fluctuations in global oil prices. For example, the drop in the international price of oil in the early 1980s led to a fall in government revenues and "triggered an unprecedented crisis of immense dimensions in the economy" (Olukoshi, 1993, p. 58).

Besides, oil economy increased the role of the Nigerian state in the economy in the form of the use of government revenues from oil to "pursue rather exorbitant capital projects, paying expensive foreign consultancy fees, support the external commercial needs of industry and the repatriation of company profits" (Olukoshi, 1993, p. 57). This adversely affected the domestic economy, engendered and sustained a patronage system that developed around political office holders and underlined waste and corruption in government, particularly the Shehu Shagari civilian government (1979-1983). The Shagari-led federal government grossly mismanaged the economy through lack of financial discipline, corruption, patronage and embezzlement of funds by political officeholders at federal and state levels of government (Osaghae, 2002). As a result, from an annual growth rate of 6-7 percent between 1975 and 1980, GDP fell by 8.5 percent in real terms between 1981 and 1983, while consumer prices increased by over 20 percent (Osaghae, 2002). The resultant effect, which lingered into the 1990s, was a drastic fall in the standard of living of most Nigerians, and an increase in the level

of poverty and inflation rate in the country. The poverty headcount of 27.2 percent in 1980 increased to 46.3 percent by 1985 (UNDP, 2009), and the inflation rate averaged 13.4 percent, 22.6 percent and 26 percent over the periods of 1980-1983, 1984-1985 and 1986-1992 respectively (Soyibo, 1999).

The poor socio-economic condition of the people in the 1980s worsened in the 1990s, as shown by a poverty rate of 65.6 percent in 1996 (UNDP, 2009). This was due to the economic policy of the Babangida government (1985-1993), which was predicated on a structural adjustment policy (SAP), and political highhandedness of the Abacha government (1993-1998). The structural adjustment policy of the Babangida government was predicated on reducing dependency on imports, currency devaluation and withdrawal of consumer subsidies on petroleum products. However, the policy was compromised by wasteful spending, corruption and patronage that typified the government.

A pointer to wasteful spending by the Babangida government was its policy of sole financing/funding of the government-established political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and National Republican Convention (NRC) (Oyediran, 1999). Among other things, the Babangida government singlehandedly bankrolled the construction of party secretariats in all the local government councils, state capitals and the federal capital territory. Though the actual financial implication remains unknown, the government's action, apart from being undemocratic, was a colossal waste of public funds. The cumulative effect of the economic policy and financial recklessness of the Babangida government was the fall in the standard of living of the people, as inflation rate jumped from 5.4 percent in 1986 to 49.5 percent in 1992 (Soyibo, 1999), provoking violent reactions from organised labour unions, students, artisans and professional groups (Bangura & Beckman, 1993; Jega, 1993). The country's poor economic condition continued under the Abacha regime, with inflation averaging 50-60 percent (unofficial figure suggested 150 percent). Also, real incomes declined and the costs of essential goods and services rose "far beyond the reach of most families and households" (Osaghae, 2002, p. 285). This was partly due to the highhandedness of the Abacha government, as it suppressed political opponents and violated human rights. This discouraged foreign and international investors from investing in the country.

The socio-economic condition of the country under the Babangida and Abacha governments was carried over into the fourth republic (1999 till date), shown, for example, by the fact that 54.7 percent of Nigerians lived below the national poverty line of $1 a day between 2002 and 2012 (UNDP, 2013), and a 62.6 percent poverty rate in 2015 (UNDP, 2016). This, like under previous governments, is traceable to political patronage, corruption and poor management of government revenues by the three tiers of government between 1999 and 2007 (the Obasanjo era) and 2009-2015 (the Jonathan era). Between 1999 and 2007, award and execution of government contracts were characterised and undermined by corruption and patronage. The case of the US$16billion

National Independent Power Project (NIPP), initiated by the Obasanjo administration to address the problem of insufficient electricity power production in the country is a good example. Reports suggest that the process for the award of the electricity project was politicised and corrupt-ridden, allowing contractors to handle the project with levity even after collecting the mobilisation fees (Oladimeji, 2009). It was this, and the fact that the country continued to grope in darkness that compelled the lower chamber of the federal parliament (the House of Representatives) to probe the electricity project. Evidences from the probe panel, as reported in the national dailies, including the Punch newspaper, pointed to the role of patronage in the process of the award of the contracts (Oladimeji, 2009).

Corruption was also widespread among government officials during Jonathan administration. There were cases of misappropriation and mismanagement of public funds by government officials. An example was the purchase without due process of bulletproof cars worth two hundred and fifty-five million naira (over $2 billion) by the Nigerian Aviation Civil Authority in 2013, leading some officials, including Ms. Stella Oduah, the Minister of Avaition at the time, being put under investigation by the anti-graft commission (Soriwei, Adepegba, Olokor, Ogundele, & Adesomoju, 2014). This, and similar cases, accounted for Nigeria's poor ratings on the yearly global corruption index of the Transparency International, which in 2012, 2013 and 2014 categorised Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world, with a Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score of 27 out of 100 (Transparency International, 2012, 2014). As a result of the high level of patronage and corruption in government, successive administrations since 1999 have been unable to adequately provide basic social infrastructure such as good roads, quality education and health care facilities, regular electricity supply, drinkable water, among others, thus making the people to live and work in extremely precarious conditions.

Socio-economic underdevelopment and insecurity in Nigeria

The nexus between underdevelopment and insecurity in Nigeria relates first and foremost to two indicators of socio-economic underdevelopment: high rate of poverty and high level of unemployment, and how these predispose people to violence, crimes and criminality. Poverty level in Nigeria has been high since the 1980s, as a sizeable proportion of the population have been living below both international and national poverty lines of $1.25 and $1 a day respectively. The poverty headcounts in the country between 1980 and mid 1990s showed an upsurge from 27.2 percent in 1980, 46.3 percent in 1985 to 65.6 percent in 1996 (UNDP, 2009). Current statistics showed that poverty rate in the country was 62.6percent in 2015 (UNDP, 2016). High poverty rate in Nigeria is attributable to a steady decline in the country's economy since the mid-1980s, caused by poor management of public funds, patronage and widespread corruption in government.

In the same token, decline in the Nigerian economy since the 1980s has led to job losses and low creation of new employment opportunities by government. This accounts for the high rate of unemployment in the country, which was 10.4percent in the fourth quarter of 2015 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). The youths are however the most affected. Reports have shown that in Nigeria 'youth unemployment rate has always surpassed the national unemployment rate' (UNDP, 2016). Consequently, some of the youth are predisposed to crimes and violence; they are often recruited and mobilised by political actors to perpetrate electoral malpractices. For example, the youth wings of political parties in the first republic (1960-1966) consisted mostly unemployed youth, whom the politicians mobilised to commit acts of arson, looting and other forms of electoral offences (Ashiru, 2010). In the fourth republic also, political gladiators capitalised on the high level of unemployment and poverty in the country to recruit willing youth as political thugs and personal guards during campaigns and rallies, and recruited some as paid voters on election days.

Similarly, socio-political exclusion and marginalisation of youth as a result of poverty and unemployment predisposed some of them to religious radicalization. Youth radicalization by religious extremists became a serious issue in Nigeria after 1960, particularly from the 1980s, which coincided with the period of economic decline in the country. The consequence of this has been cases of sectarian violence, particularly in northern Nigeria. A notable example was the *Maitasine* violence in five northern states between 1980 and 1985 (Akanji, 2009; Tamuno, 1991). The *Maitasine* violence was due to a number of factors, two of which are instructive.

First was the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in northern Nigeria in the 1980s, engendered by the presence and activities of radical Islamic clerics and movements, many of which had external funders such as Saudi Arabia and Libya (Pham, 2007). Among the radical movements were the *Izala,* the *Tijanniyya, the Maitasine,* the *Quadriyya,* the *Jama'atu Nasril Islam* (JNI), and the *Muhajirun* (the Nigerian Taliban) (Akanji, 2009; Pham, 2007). The second was the availability of a pool of vulnerable and mobilisable youth called *Almajiri*, engendered by the collapse of the traditional Quranic school system in northern Nigeria.

The collapse of traditional Quranic school system was caused by the economic policies of the Shagari government and the Babangida government, which led to withdrawal of government subsidies from the social sectors (Sule-Kano, 2010). Among other things, the policies undermined the capacity of many parents and families to cater for their children, since they engendered job losses, and of the traditional Quranic schools to provide adequately for the socio-psychological needs of their pupils and students, called the *Almajirai* (singular *Almajiri*) (Sule-Kano, 2010). This gave rise to the *Almajirai* taking to street begging, hawking and street loitering and becoming vulnerable to radicalisation by radical Islamic preachers in the Quranic schools.

It was in this context that Muhammadu Marwa, a radical Cameroonian Islamist based in northern Nigeria, indoctrinated and radicalised the pupils (the *Almajirai)* in his Quranic school and mobilised them for religious violence (called *Maitasine* violence) in Kano, Kaduna, Borno, Bauchi and former Gongola states between 1980 and 1985 (Akanji, 2009). The violence disturbed the peace of the affected states and led to several fatalities, including death of 4,000 people in Kano (Tamuno, 1991). Besides, the *Maitasine* violence threatened the age old fragile inter-ethnic relationship between the *Hausa-Fulani* northerners and people of southern ethnic extractions in the north. The violence also fractured the relatively peaceful inter-faith cohabitation of the people of northern Nigeria, as northern Christians were the main targets of the violence. However, though the *Maitasine* violence constituted a source of security threat while it lasted, the issue of underdevelopment has since engendered more sources of serious security threats in Nigeria. Two major examples, namely, Niger Delta militancy and Boko Haram insurgence, are discussed below.

Case studies: The Niger Delta and Boko Haram examples

Since 1999, Nigeria has been facing a number of internal security threats. However, Niger Delta (ND) militancy and Boko Haram (BH) insurgency stand out, because of the dimensions, scope and scale of the threats and impact on the people and the country. The militancy in the Niger Delta region, notably in the states of Bayelsa, Rivers and Delta, started as a form of popular agitation by people of the region for redistribution of state resources in the late 1950s (Akanji, 2009). Over the years, the attitudes and reactions of successive governments, including continued neglect of the region in the distribution of social and economic infrastructure, heightened the agitation (Akanji, 2009; Ajayi, 2009).

In response, successive governments employed, among other strategies, the combination of force and dialogue to address the agitations. The Obasanjo presidency (1999-2007), for example, ordered military bombardment of Odi town, a Niger Delta community, in November 1999, in response to the abduction and killing of police officers by unknown youths (Akanji, 2009; Ola, 2002). The military bombardment led to the death of many innocent people and the destruction of several properties, leading to it being tagged "genocide" (Ola, 2002). But though the abduction and murder of the police officers was condemnable, the government's action was far more condemnable because it resulted in large scale violence during which innocent women were raped, properties were destroyed and several innocent civilians lost their lives (Ajayi, 2009).

The government's action however escalated the Niger Delta crisis, transforming it into full scale militancy in which militant groups perpetrated all forms of criminal acts, including kidnapping of expatriate oil workers for ransoms, destruction of oil pipelines, illegal oil bunkering, and murder of oil workers (Akanji, 2009; Ajayi, 2009). Also, the

militants attempted to shut down oil flow stations on a number of occasions, forcing the oil companies to reduce their services, and at some points demanded multinational companies in the region to withdraw their services or face outright armed attack (Akanji, 2009). Militancy in the region has had serious impact on the Nigerian economy, albeit economic security of Nigerians, including cut in oil production and government revenues. An analyst put the loss Nigeria incurred due to ND militancy at an average of 300, 000 barrels of oil per day, translating into a sum of US$18 million daily and about US$58.3billion (N7.345 trillion) over a nine-year period (Ajayi, 2009, p. 117).

Similarly, Boko Haram insurgency that began in 2003 in the northern state of Yobe had by July 2009 escalated and extended to three other states, namely, Borno, Bauchi and Kano. Other northern states, particularly Adamawa, have also been affected by the insurgency. Given its radical Islamic philosophy that 'western education is a sin', BH ideological mission was to 'overthrow the Nigerian state and then impose strict Islamic Sharia law in the entire country', because the country is "filled with social vices" (Onuoha, 2010, p. 57). Since July 2009, however, BH has been engaging in terror activities, including abduction, kidnapping, and premeditated attacks on churches, mosques, schools and government buildings. This has necessitated government military responses, during which extrajudicial killings have been recorded (Human Rights Watch, cited in IRIN, 2013). There have equally been reports of dialogue between government and BH as well as proposal for amnesty for members of the sect (Daily Independent, 2013). The terror activities of the BH have resulted in wanton destruction of public and private properties, death and internal displacement of many people across northern Nigeria. For example, the BH was responsible for the bombing of the United Nations office building in Abuja, in 2011, during which 19 people lost their lives (CBC News, 2011). Also, BH insurgency crippled socio-economic activities in the affected northern states. In Borno states, for instance, 50 of the state's 175 schools were destroyed, while around 15,000 school children were forced to stop attending classes between February and May 2013 (IRIN, 2013). Reports by the Human Rights Watch also showed that over 3,600 people have been killed in BH-related violence since 2009, including extrajudicial killings by Nigerian security forces (cited in IRIN, 2013). In April 2014, over two hundred girls of Government Secondary School, Chibok, Borno state were abducted by members of the BH, and all efforts to rescue them by the Nigerian military have failed. This however has been due to low morale in the military (Ameh, 2014).

However, the significance of Nigeria's crisis of development in BH insurgency and ND militancy cannot be overemphasised. This is buttressed by the socio-economic condition of the people in the states that constitute the Niger Delta region and those that are the hotbeds of BH insurgency. This is revealed by the report of the World Bank and United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID)-funded

Harmonized Nigeria Living Standard Survey (HNLSS) 2009/2010, an enlarged version of previous National Consumer Surveys and a follow-up to Nigeria Living Standard Survey 2003/2004, released in 2012 by the National Bureau of Statistics. The report, which covered all the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, and 774 local government areas in the country, provides information on the average Nigerian household's livelihood (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The welfare component of the survey was conducted in 77,400 households, with an average of one hundred households per local government area.

The results of the survey showed, among other things, the extent of poverty and lack of access to and knowledge about health care services in ND states and BH-hotbed states (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). For example, while data in Table 1 indicates poor standard of living of the people in ND and BH-hotbed states, the data in Table 2 shows poor access to and knowledge about health care services in similar states. From the survey also, Bayelsa, an ND state, with 32.6 per cent, has the highest number of very poor people in the country (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Bayelsa state, with 46.4 percent, was also the state with the lowest number of health care facilities for pre-natal services in the country, followed in the third, fourth and fifth places respectively by BH-hotbed states of Borno (36.6), Yobe (21.5) and Bauchi (20.5) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Table 1. Living Standards: % Distribution of Household Livelihood Based on Income

	Niger Delta (ND) States			BH-hotbed States			
	Bayelsa	*Rivers*	*Delta*	*Bauchi*	*Borno*	*Yobe*	*Adamawa*
Very Poor	32.6	12.0	13.6	7.1	3.9	11.0	10.2
Poor	35.0	45.9	43.5	42.3	41.7	35.4	46.6

Source: Extracted from HNLSS 2009/2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012, p. 29)

Table 2. Health Care: % Distribution of reasons given for not using pre-natal health services

	Niger Delta (ND) States			BH-hotbed States			
	Bayelsa	*Rivers*	*Delta*	*Bauchi*	*Borno*	*Yobe*	*Adamawa*
No Health Care Available	46.4	10	5.6	20.5	36.6	21.5	16.1
Health Care not Necessary	23.2	23.8	11.1	35.2	33.3	24	18.8

Source: Extracted from HNLSS 2009/2010 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2012, p. 15)

However, though monocausal explanation of violence is not tenable (Goodhand, 2003) and the fact that chronic poverty and poor welfare condition, which the data in Tables 1 and 2 portray, are not peculiar to only the ND and BH-hotbed states, they nonetheless do not weaken the significance of poor socio-economic condition in the outbreak and sustenance of the two cases.

However, the role of economic incentives can also not be downplayed in the overall understanding of the ND militancy and BH insurgency, as well as other major sources of security threats in Nigeria. Records have shown that there are beneficiaries of the crisis in the Niger Delta and BH insurgency. Three groups of financial beneficiaries of the Niger Delta crisis have been identified, namely, militants, the Joint-Military Task Force (JTF) that was established by the government to combat militancy in the region, and some governors of the Niger Delta states (Agbo, 2009). In the same vein, Onuoha (2010) noted that though the BH draws its members from disaffected youths and un-employed graduates, it does also have some well-educated, wealthy and influential people as members. He cited Alhaji Buji Fai, an ex-commissioner in Borno state, and Kadiru Atiku, a former university lecturer, as members of the sect.

This explains the recurrent and protracted nature of both ND militancy and BH insurgency. This is particularly because government approaches have so far failed to recognise the need to tackle the role of the beneficiaries and the socio-economic underpinnings of the crises. For example, the administrations of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (2007-2009) and Goodluck Jonathan introduced an amnesty programme, involving vocational skill acquisition, educational and literacy training by ND militants as a way of ending militancy in the region. But while the amnesty policy brought about some relief to the region and the country in general, in the form of cessation of militant activities, it lacked adequate provision to address the issue of the poor socio-economic condition of the region.

Similarly, despite the fact that successive governments were aware of the beneficiaries of the crisis, there was no concrete action against them. The failure of the Yar'Adua and Jonathan administrations to act decisively on the list of alleged sponsors of militants in the Niger Delta, discovered by the JTF and handed over to the presidency in 2009 (Agbo, 2009), is a clear pointer to official complicity in the crisis. This also shows that the amnesty policy was an arrangement that was doomed to fail, because it lacked the capacity to address the root and sustaining factors of the militancy.

In the same vein, the Jonathan government, which imposed state of emergency on three northern states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe on 5 June 2013, due to increasing BH threats to national security (Botelho, 2013), was not serious about tackling the insurgency. Though the state of emergency was a laudable approach, given BH's terrorist inclinations and the damages it caused, the fact that the Nigerian government failed to put in place tangible measures to address issues of chronic poverty, youth unemployment and the collapsed traditional Quranic school system in northern Nigeria shows that the insurgency was far from over. The military approach was only a stop-gap arrangement, because it cannot foreclose the possibility of a re-emergence of BH and/or similar groups in the future, especially if the condition(s) that underlined the emergence of the group in the first place continues to exist. This is capable of undermining efforts by the Buhari government (2015 till date) to crackdown on former government

officials and persons whose corrupt activities contributed to the failure of the efforts of the previous administrations to combat the insurgency.

Conclusion

There is no gainsaying the fact that there is a relationship between crisis of development and insecurity in Nigeria. High level of poverty and unemployment and the dysfunctional state of government institutions have contributed to insecurity, underscoring the fact that there can be no security without development. Hence, it is imperative for the Nigerian state to foster social and economic development in order to mitigate continued threats to both human and state security. Recurrent youth violence, BH insurgency and ND militancy, among others are all issues that can be mitigated through eradication of poverty and creation of jobs. In addition, democratic institutions need to be strengthened to act as defence mechanism against bad governance, which has been responsible for the country's crisis of development. Nigerian civil society and the international community need to increase pressure on the government and the governing elite to promote accountability and transparency in government. This will reduce corruption and waste in government, and encourage judicious use of public funds for public purposes, which will foster socio-economic development of the country.

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Peacebuilding in Africa:
A Review of the African First Ladies Peace Mission

Bosede AWODOLA

Abstract

This paper is a review of the efforts of the African First Ladies Peace Mission, an organization of the wives of African Heads of State on peacebuilding activities in the continent. It relies on documents and reports from the Mission as well as observations made on the field activities. While the paper recognizes the bold initiatives of the First Ladies in advocating for gender equality in peacebuilding processes and in decision making, yet, it is discovered that the organization is being confronted with various challenges such as; internal dynamics of African states, lack of understanding of its purpose, problem of visibility, its legal status, and commitment among the First Ladies and professional staff to effectively deliver on its mandates. The paper concludes that the organization remains a model that can be replicated in other continents of the world.

Keywords: *First Ladies, Peacebuilding, Mainstreaming, Conflict Resolution, Gender Equality, Action Plan.*

Introduction

The discourse on the role and challenges that women face in conflict resolution and peacebuilding activities has continue to generate concerns in Africa and beyond. According to Ogege (2009), one of the fundamental issues in conflict resolution and peacebuilding has been the exclusion of women from this process in Africa due to various factors including socio-cultural beliefs. As a result, the involvement of women in decision making, conflict management

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and post-conflict processes are limited in most societies in Africa. The continent is be-deviled with several violent conflicts with thousands of lives and valued properties lost and many people have become displaced from their dwellings, particularly, women and children. Menkiti (2009) described women's pains as both physical and psychological, and, as victims, often widowed; they form the largest number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Regrettably, when such conflicts are finally brought to an end, the roles of women in post-conflict peacebuilding processes and activities are rarely considered, an absence that has become a major hindrance to peacebuilding activities in Africa. Also, at the negotiation table, women are considerably underrepresented in peace negotiations, operations, structures and governance institutions. Rather, men are mostly involved as members of delegations to negotiate peace, which suggests very clearly, that the role of women in peace and conflict resolution is neither recognized, nor appreciated. A likely pointer to the view, that peace and conflict resolution matters are seen as the sole prerogative of men (Oppong & Abu, 1987; Brown, Cervenak & Fairman, 1996; Donli, 2009; Asamoah-Hassan, 2002). This prejudice against women may have become an acceptable behavior in Africa and may have affected past peace efforts as well as worsen conflict situations currently in place.

Considering women have multiple roles as mothers in every society and they are worse-affected in the course of conflicts, the United Nations and other regional bodies are increasingly recognizing the position of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts (Abu, 2012). Consequently, a number of frameworks have emerged to deal with the negative consequences of women in and out of armed conflicts, especially as victims of sexual violence, slavery, exploitation and exclusion. Such responses are sub-sumed in the general humanitarian and human rights framework of the 1945 United Nations Charter, which seeks to protect the dignity of mankind, irrespective of gender, and the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights that seeks to isolate and rescue women from arbitrary, dangerous and discriminatory cultural practices as well as deny them rights and opportunities through stereo-types (African First Ladies Peace Mission, 2012). Furthermore, the Fourth World Conference on Women (1995), commonly re-ferred to as Beijing Conference, also advances the goals of equality, development and peace for women in the interest of all humanity. The platform provided a holistic agenda for empowerment of women through the removal of obstacles against active partici-pation of women in all spheres of public and private life, by advocating full and equal share in economic, social, cultural, political and decision-making.

These developments led to the establishment of the African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM) in 1997 as an organization of the wives of African Heads of State. The First Ladies keyed into these frameworks and institutions that dealt with the plight of women in order to promote the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes and

activities; particularly in preventive mechanisms, peace negotiations and peacebuilding in Africa (Agbalajobi, 2009). In recent years, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) also passed resolutions that added credence to active involvement of women in peacebuilding, negotiations, protection and active involvement in post conflict reconstruction. These resolutions include, United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 in 2000, UNSCR 1820 in 2008, UNSCR 1888 in 2009, and UNSCR 1889 in October, 2009. These are important instruments for advancing the women, peace and security agenda.

While AFLPM has promoted the inclusion of women in peacebuilding activities by utilizing their vantage position as wives of Heads of State, yet, the activities of the mission is shrouded in controversies because of lack of clear understanding of its purpose and intention. Thus, this study rather than romanticize the performance of the organization, seeks to offer an objective appraisal of its activities. To this end, the paper reviews the roles of the AFLPM in promoting women participation in peacebuilding activities in Africa and the impact such roles have made on women participation in peacebuilding. How does AFLPM employ gender as a strategic tool in their various interventions? And how effective are such strategies in promoting peacebuilding and conflict resolution on the continent? A critical analysis of these concerns will provide an objective appraisal of the activities of the organization. The study covers the period 1995- May, 2015 using books, speeches, reports, and other materials from the mission, as well as close observation of the activities of the organization.

African First Ladies Peace Mission, Formation and Objectives

The history of the AFLPM cannot be properly understood except within the context of the United Nations' Fourth World Conference on Women which was held on 4th - 15th September, 1995 in Beijing, China. The conference, set out to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women; it also emphasized the critical link between the advancement of women and the progress of society (AFLPM, 2012).

Maryam Sani Abacha, then First Lady of Nigeria, led the Nigerian Delegation to the Conference and presented a speech in which she elucidated the harsh and discriminatory traditional practices in Africa that have contributed to the marginalization of women. She advocated the need to apply 'gender perspective' to national, regional and global issues in order to realize the capabilities of women, by emphasizing equal access to development opportunities as enjoyed by men and further urged women to come out with concrete measures and strategies for the realization of these objectives. She also stresses the need for peace, without which, no amount of effort would improve the quality of life of women, as she emphasized the devastating and unimaginable consequences of violent conflicts in Africa and identified women and children as the biggest casualties of such conditions, citing examples of Liberia, Rwanda

and Uganda in 1995.[1] Her presentation provoked positive reactions amongst African participants, it called for action to find solutions to challenges that women face in protracted conflicts in Africa.

On 11th September 1995, Six African First Ladies from Benin, Burundi, Gambia, Lesotho, Nigeria, and Uganda met to further appraise the protracted conflicts on the African continent. After extensive deliberation it was resolved that the First Ladies will undertake a peace mission to Africa to complement the efforts of their spouses, as well as regional organizations and their respective national governments, with a view to fostering peace as well as mitigating the adverse effects of wars, especially as they affect women and children (Bassey, Awodola, Chiotu, & Alozieuwa, 2015). Thus, came into being, the Africa First Ladies' Peace Mission.

The first summit of the mission took place in 1997 and it was then the First Lady of Nigeria was elected the first President of the Mission. In all, AFLPM has had eight presidents with a two-year mandate, as set out in the Internal Regulation of the Mission. The table below gives details of the elected presidents.

Table 1: Elected President from 1997-May 2015

S/N	Names	Country	Year
1.	Dr. (Mrs) Maryam Sani Abacha	Nigeria	1997-1998
2.	Justice Fati Lami Abubakar	Nigeria	1998-1999
3.	Madame Edith Lucie Bongo Ondimba	Gabon	1999-2001
4.	Mrs. Constancia Mangue Nsue De Obiang	Equatorial Guinea	2001-2003
5.	Mrs. Chantal Campaore	Burkina Faso	2003-2005
6.	Madame Antoinette Sassou Nguesso	Congo Brazzaville	2005-2007
7.	Hajia Turai Umar Musa Yar'Adua	Nigeria	2008-2010
8.	Dame (Dr.) Patience Goodluck Jonathan	Nigeria	2010 - 15th May, 2015

The broad objective of AFLPM is the prevention and management of conflict in Africa as well as the need to evolve strategies that can enhance peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding through humanitarian and diplomatic actions. Other specific objectives include the need to promote the culture of peace through development initiatives as well as offer humanitarian support services to victims of conflicts especially women and children in armed conflict (AFLPM, 2012). To achieve this objective, a comprehensive

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1 Mariam Sani Abacha was the First Lady of the Federal Republic of Nigeria from 17th November, 1993 to 8th June, 1998. She presented a speech as the Head of Nigeria Delegation to the Fourth World Conference on the Status of Women at Beijing, China, in1995. A powerful and indeed, gripping speech which set in motion the idea of a Peace Mission by the African First Ladies present at the event to explore robust involvement of women in the search for peace and resolution of conflict in the continent.

Plan of Action was designed and adopted for 2012-2014 with appropriate organizational structure put in place for effective administrative purposes. The Executive Secretary is to oversee the administration of the mission.

Theoretical Perspective

This study is guided by the concept of gender equality and based on the need for "gender sensitivity" as a tool for promoting inclusiveness in developmental activities of the society. The concept, according to the Report of Activities of Specialists on Mainstreaming, Council of Europe (1998) advocates the need for equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in public and private life of citizens in order to promote their full participation in national development. Gender equality involves accepting and valuing equally the differences between women and men and the diverse roles they play in society. The 1998 report has emphasized the need to change structures in society in order to ensure and promote equal power relationships between men and women as well as constant review of societal values, in order to guarantee sufficient room for differences in gender as oppose to the notion of hierarchy which tends to place men higher than women (UNIFEM, 1995).

The concept placed emphasizes on mutual and genuine collaboration between men and women and discourages any disproportion in values allocation to both sexes; it emphasizes individual capacities, irrespective of sex, in solving societal problems with a view to making maximum use of all human resources. Important areas of gender equality that are focused upon include human rights, enhancement of representative democracy, and economic independence of individuals and shared responsibility (UNIFEM, 1995). These areas are seen as fundamental and must always be sought for in order to achieve the overall objectives for equality. As noted by the United Nations Population Fund, gender equality is a necessary precondition to achieving sustainable growth and reducing poverty in any society. It also confirmed the fact that empowered women tend to contribute more to the productivity of whole families and communities as well as improve the capacity and prospects of the next generation to contribute to development initiatives (UNFPA, nd.). As greater empowerment and more effective protection of women against the specific dangers they face in armed conflicts not only benefit women alone but the entire society at large.

It is important to stress that gender equality needs to complement the issues of mainstreaming gender in order to promote the inclusion of women in development activities. The African Union Commission's Gender, Peace and Security Programme 2015-2020 also underlines the importance of gender mainstreaming in conflict prevention and peacebuilding strategies (Dock, 2015), in order to ensure the cause of women in all sphere of the society. Gender mainstreaming involves the reorganization, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so as to ensure equality of perspec-

tive in all policy initiatives at all levels and stages of policy implementation. The idea of gender mainstreaming approach to development originated at the 1995 United Nations World Conference in Beijing, China, where the inclusion of both women and men in every developmental project was endorsed as the only way to bring about sustainable economic growth and development in society. *The Action for equality, development and peace* sought to remove all obstacles to active participation of women in all spheres of public and private life by seeking full and equal share in decision making in economic, social, cultural, political spheres of the society (AFLPM, 2012).

Applying both theoretical perspectives, especially as they affect the processes of peace-making, peacebuilding in Africa, it is obvious that the inclusion of women as equal stakeholders in these processes have been lacking. Both theories are predicated on the incorporation of women into peacebuilding activities and policies, an agenda that the AFLPM has been championing in Africa. The concepts are of the view that bringing men and women as mutual partners for effective peacebuilding processes will increase participation at all levels of decision-making. Seabright (2015) argued that, while it may be the case that violence is a predominantly male trait, managing it requires influenc-ing the behavior of both gender in ways that are far more subtle than merely replacing men with women in positions of power and policy making. In addition, peacebuilding activities constitute a major developmental project that promotes peace, indeed an es-sential and necessary ingredient of development. Hence, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325, 2000) specifically addressed the disproportion-ate and unique impact of armed conflict on women and recognized the under-valued and under-utilized contributions that women can make to reduce and prevent conflict as well as in enhancing the promotion of peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building. Given such capacities, therefore, the UNSCR 1325 has stressed the importance of equal and full participation of women as active agents in peace and security in the world (AFLPM, 2012).

Peacebuilding is a major concept in conflict resolution and management and an effec-tive means of preventing reoccurrence or continuation of armed conflicts in a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human right activities (Karame, 2004). It is a process that requires a wide range of synergy, between men and women of differing cultural background, functioning together in order to fulfill the mandate of maintaining and promoting sustainable peace agenda in any community. Yet, the fact remains that most approaches to peacebuilding have either ignored or marginalized issues of gender, particularly of women: for women have consistently remain minority participants in peacebuilding projects; they receive less attention than men in peace-building policies while gender analysis rarely informs peacebuilding strategies. The contribution of AFLPM in promoting inclusiveness must therefore be seen as an activity in the right direction.

Activities and Strategies Implementation

The Proceedings of the 7th Summit of AFLPM (2012) has comprehensively and clearly spelt out its 'Plan of Action'. The plan is divided into seven parts and expected to be adopted and implemented at local, national, sub-regional and continental levels by the African First Ladies. One of the strategy is the building of peace-culture in African societies through a sensitization and awareness campaign in order to reduce poverty and the eradication of the activities of street children which, taken together, have become potential tools for violent conflict in the continent. The programme also includes institutional linkages between international and regional legal instruments or frameworks to enhance the role of women in peace efforts and to promote the education of women and children in domesticating and strengthening responsibility of women in the society. Similarly, capacity building in conflict resolution and peacebuilding for women through training workshops is also included in the Action Plan. Such trainings are to be held at local and national levels with a view to providing women with skills and capacities for conflict prevention, management and resolution in their communities.

Furthermore, protection of women and children in conflict zones are expected to be reinforced through advocacy visits by First Ladies and sensitization campaign against forced child marriage. Accordingly, construction of the AFLPM permanent secretariat as well as complementary humanitarian support for refugees/IDPs by national governments, and development partners are also proposed in order to reduce human suffering. Also, monitoring and evaluation of project activities are to be carried out by Statutory Committees and Task Forces to oversee projects embarked upon by the Mission (AFLPM, 2012).

A recent publication of a book, *Africa First Ladies Peace Mission: The Journey so Far*, documented the activities and achievement made by the AFLPM since its inception in 1997. The activities include: the provision of humanitarian assistance to the victims of conflicts across Africa, relief materials presented to refugees and IDPs in Burundi, Central African Republic, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic, Sierra Leone and South Sudan, consultation workshops/summits held to sensitize stakeholders including the 1st Summit in 1997 and 1999 in Abuja, Nigeria 1997, 3rd Summit in Libreville, Gabon 2001, 4th Summit in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea 2003, 5th Summit in Ouagadougou Burkina Faso 2005, 6th Summit in Brazaville, Congo 2008, 7th Summit in Abuja, Nigeria 2012, as well as 8th Summit in Abuja, Nigeria 2015 (Bassey et al, 2015). Bureau meetings were also held to deliberate on the activities of the organization in Abuja and South Africa in 2014 and quarterly publication that documents the activities of the Mission were published.

At the national levels, not much was recorded across the continent, except Nigeria where the former First Lady and the President of the African First Ladies Peace Mission, Dame

Patience Jonathan took advocacy campaign to six geo-political zones of the country on peaceful co-existence of citizens. She also organized stakeholder's luncheon, one-million-women match and a youth concert on peace and collaborated with the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution to celebrate International Peace Day. The fact from the report submitted during the third meeting of the Bureau by the regional vice president indicated that most countries are still struggling to actualize the objectives of the Mission in the continent.

Discussion

This is not to deny the fact that the efforts of the First Ladies in Africa ought to be appreciated and perhaps, emulated in terms of its areas of concern. Awodola (2012) in assessing the organisation has described the initiative as instructive and that it portrayed African women as viable instruments for nation building. Even though, the achievements of the organization are not commensurate with its robust Plan of Action.

The provision of relief materials to refugees and IDPs is a laudable effort, and indeed a useful component of peacebuilding mechanism. However, it can be argued that such gestures, good as they may appear, do not necessarily transform into the much needed desire for peace as well as the need to reduce sufferings that are usually encountered in camps that tend to often increase tension and conflicts in such sites. It is true such support may provide immediate or temporary succor to the victims, but it does not address some fundamental problems that women and children usually experience in the camps. Such problems include, but not limited to, gender-based violence, the lack of educational support for children, the contextual and psychological needs of the disabled and the aged. Neither does it offer the much needed economic empowerment for the women. It is also falls short of the prospective needs for reintegration of these victims when and if they return to their communities. Nonetheless, IDPs remains an essential platform to create greater international awareness of the conditions of refugee's and the challenges faced in such camps in Africa.

For sustainable peace and development, countries in Africa should endeavor to entrench the culture of peace in their societies, a fundamental area of concern which the AFLPM wishes to embed in various communities in the continent. Unfortunately, the achievement of the organization so far speaks otherwise; none of their activities reflect this concern at both the continental and national levels. However, a few activities were recorded in Nigeria including a one-day event of advocacy visit to each of the six geo-political zones, a one million women match for peace and a youth concert organized by the First Lady of Nigeria under the platform of AFLPM in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. Such one-day event brings to question the impact such events could have on the target groups. For example, it is doubtful if the assembly is sufficiently representative of all shades of women from all the states of the Federation in spite of the claim that they

were dressed up in uniform with AFLPM logo and marched past the podium in which the First Lady of Nigeria, Dame Patience Jonathan took the salute. A further investigation revealed that most women that attended the event have little or no knowledge of the goals and objectives behind the event; they were simply requested to be present. An overall assessment of the programme seems to indicate a mobilization for a political cause rather than a gathering of women for peace. Realistically, it is impracticable to inculcate a culture of peace in a day's event; in simple terms, the event was simply seen as a political jamboree.

Whereas, the programmes may have been borne out of good intentions, the methodology employed was questionable, problematic and ineffective to advance the cause of sustainable culture of peace. The programmes were short on peace content that can consciously motivate women and youths in peace, security and development matters. Building a culture of peace is a long term project and an agenda that demands continuous training in order to create and deepen awareness among the populace with a view to changing people's attitudes towards peace. It also requires a wide range of strategies such as production of TV/Radio documentary, drama, adverts in newspaper and leaflets, regular concerts, workshops, town hall meetings, conferences and even introduction of peace curriculum in educational institutions at the local and national levels.

Building the capacity of women groups in conflict resolution and peace building remains a major aspect of the Plan of Action of the AFLPM. It requires constant training, workshops and seminars as well as advocacy visits. So far, the activities of the peace mission since its inception has revealed that not much has been achieved in this regard. In fact, there is no evidence to show any training or workshop conducted for women at any level. The only workshop on record was the one that has no direct impact in building the capacity of women, that is, 1st ECOWAS First Ladies Workshop in Nigeria in 1996. The lack of focus on the objective of AFLPM on this matter is indeed a major setback to women in policy, mainstreaming gender and gender equality. One is of the view that strengthening women capacity, especially through promotion of knowledge and skill acquisition in the areas of conflict analysis, mediation, negotiation, conciliation and advocacy will serve as motivation for women to be more proactive as well as motivate them to be abreast with the matters affecting them especially at the local level.

Women and children's rights still remain a challenge as Musau (2015) observed, after 20 years of intense advocacy for women's rights especially in Africa, there is a palpable feeling of disenchantment with the slow pace of progress. According to her, some of the challenges women faced in 1995 are still prevalent, violence against women has reached alarming proportions, with one in every three women in Africa experiencing some form of violence in her lifetime, many girls still face the threat of female genital mutilation and early or forced marriages and unwanted pregnancies. The fact remains that violence continue to persist as one of the most heinous, systematic and prevalent

human rights abuses, particularly in Africa, it is a threat to all women and an obstacle to all efforts for development, gender equality and promotion of peace in all societies in the continent (Zhianpour, Arashpour, & Shekarchizadeh, 2015). Therefore, mere debate without action on these germane issues could make meaningful impact.

The Annual Report on the 2014 Millennium Development Goals, a United Nations publication that tracks progress towards achieving the MDGs, claimed that some 33 million children in sub-Saharan Africa were out of school in 2012. Nigeria has about 5.5million girls out of school while Ethiopia had more than a million. The situation differs from one country to the other and between rural and urban areas in each country, the evidence revealed that 56% of the out of school children are girls (Kuwonu, 2015). Similarly, Musau (2015) stated that two-thirds of women in Africa have been classified as functionally illiterate. To enforce better access to education, she suggested that girls be retained in school and those who drop out be given a second chance to repeat classes. The statistical evidence should agitate the First Ladies to put more effort in the domestication and implementation of protocols that promote children and women's rights and focus attention on any form of abuses in the educational system as a strategy towards this goal. While official visits to conflict zones may suggest a sense of solidarity with victims of conflicts, such visits lack the essential elements that are meant to promote and protect children and women's rights, as envisaged in gender mainstreaming policies.

Ighobor (2015) resonating the work of Mari Tripp on the increasing number of women parliamentarians on the continent, noted that it was attributable to the Beijing Declaration on gender equality. Rwanda now leads other African countries with women making up 64% of parliamentarians, more than 40% of seats held by women in Senegal, Seychelles and South Africa, whereas Mozambique, Angola, Tanzania and Uganda women occupies 35% of the parliamentarians seat. In another twist, a survey conducted on participation in politics by women in 34 African countries by Afrobarometer, showed that some of the worst performers are also from the continent including Swaziland (6.2%), Nigeria (6.7%) and Benin 8.4% (Ighobor, 2015). Although, Nigeria has proclaimed the principle of affirmative action in all appointments; it is however not clear whether this could be attributed to the effort of the AFLPM. The fact remains that African First Ladies have not done enough to advocate for mainstreaming gender into the various sectors of the society. This issue is a cardinal aspect of the Action Plan and one that involves a range of activities under the purview of the Advocacy and Planning unit of AFLPM.

Similarly, the 2015 African Union Summit under the theme *Year of Women Empowerment and Development Towards Africa's Agenda 2063*, also assessed the progress made on gender equality in Africa since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and its Plan for Action. It noted that while Africa continues to make progress towards gender parity, yet

there are quite a large number of women and girls who continue to be discriminated against while violence against them has not reduced in any significant way. The most pertinent observation was the absence of the AFLPM at the 2015 AU Summit with an Agenda that is very much related to the theme of its mission. Whatever the reasons responsible for this lack of recognition by AU; the absence of First Ladies, will continue to generate critical gender debate. This fact notwithstanding, the lack of presence of AFLPM, as an institution at such a continental fora is a wakeup call to reposition and redefine its Mission within the continental body.

Challenges and a Way Forward

African First Ladies has made a giant stride by establishing the peace mission. The objectives are laudable and the context justifies the need for its existence either in promoting peace or reducing the incidences of violent conflicts and other humanitarian emergencies in the continent. Their efforts cannot be wished away, in spite of the challenges confronting the mission. The challenges are enormous, including the absence of genuine commitment among the First Ladies. For example, out of the 54 countries in Africa, only 33 countries are members of the organization and only about 10 are active participants - a situation that calls for worry given the consigned role of the AFLPM. One may in part attribute this to the internal dynamics of each country and partly to the assumed symbolic command of enormous respect, power and influence of the office in the cultural content of many countries in Africa. Despite the absence of a formal role in the constitution, observers tend to link such offices to the Office of the President/Chief Executive of the countries.

Consequently, the internal dynamics in each country often hinder the First Ladies to proactively engage on issues that are perceived to be men's sole formal responsibility to avoid conflict. This may explain why some of the member countries are unable to pay-up their annual fees as contained in Articles 23-25 of the Internal Regulation of the mission as well as the lack of support from national governments, especially the lack of funds to finance the activities of the peace Mission. In fact, the report of the 2nd Executive Bureau Meeting (2014) indicated that the financial situation of the mission remains a major challenge.

Lack of sufficient awareness of the intension and goals of the organization may also have generated negative public perception for the AFLPM. The strategies employed to disseminate information are not only faulty but very often they send negative impression about the motive behind the organization. For example, government budget for the office of the President may have been expended, without appropriation, for the activities of the AFLPM. A great deal of attention was often placed on both the paraphernalia of the person and the office rather than meeting the demands of the issues of Peace Initiatives. This has invariably presented the mission in bad light.

While the plan for the construction of the permanent secretariat is still ongoing, the mission has been functioning from an interim secretariat temporarily located within the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Abuja, Nigeria, with only four support-staff to provide technical assistance to the mission. Apart from the technical staffs that have been seconded from government agency, the temporary secretariat also employed twelve staff whose capacity to conduct peace work is highly in doubt. They neither possess any cognate experience nor professional background on peace related issues. The absence of a qualified Executive Secretary was also a major constraint, for that office has been vacant since the inception of the mission in 1997. The position of the Executive Secretary as well as directors still remained vacant by May 2015. The office of the Executive Secretary is expected to oversee the daily activities of the mission, the absence that may have hindered the organization from performing to an optimum standard.

Also, the inability of the mission to properly and strategically position itself within a specific narrative framework remains an issue. Troubling rhetoric's over the status of the mission remains questions such as: Is AFLPM a non-governmental organization or an agency of the national government? Does the African Union recognize its place and role as peace-makers? Some observers see the mission as a personal project of the First Ladies rather than a continental institution in pursuance of the most important human agenda in the continent, that is, the promotion and advocacy for peace. Yet, the necessary visibility needed to garner support is not easily available. In the same vein, while the African Union (AU) endorsed the importance of its mission, yet the AFLPM does not enjoy the needed attention and support to tactically succeed in its quest to promote peace in the continent. The absence of the mission at the just concluded African Union Summit in South Africa in 2015 with the theme "Women Empowerment and Development towards African's Agenda 2063" speaks volumes on the nature and supposed roles of the organization.

Furthermore, the Peace bulletin, a quarterly publication of the mission is not only limited in scope, its coverage of the wide range of peace activities in African is rather narrow. One would expect that such a publication should be an advocate of the prevalent issues of conflict in the continent and, in projecting the goals of the mission to be proactive in engaging the negative public perception of the mission. However, this has hardly been the case.

Consequently, refocusing the peace mission has become an urgent priority. There is a need to institutionalize the AFLPM by giving it a legal status. AFLPM can be registered either as a non-governmental organization to serve as a pressure group in the continent. In that position, it could seek for observer and advisory status both at AU and UN. Also, the mission can pursue international acceptance or seek to become an organ of the African Union in order to be accorded the necessary recognition and support at the

national and regional levels. This may be worth pursuing in order to generate goodwill as well as serve as links to issues of subtle peace diplomacy on behalf of the continent. Precisely, the institutionalization of the mission will increase the commitment of the First Ladies and garner the much needed support from the national government and other relevant stakeholders to help it survive the socio-political conditions presently challenging its goals in the continent.

Aside the annual contributions to the mission by each country, it is equally important to put in place a more vibrant strategy to fund the mission without government assistance. An idea of generating fund through private individuals and corporate bodies was indeed raised during the 3rd Bureau meeting in October, 2014 by the First Lady of South Africa. Such idea should be sustained in order to help the organization to execute projects and run its peace activities across the continent. Such funding activities could become a matter of urgency if the mission is to embark on serious sensitization campaign and advocacy as well as engage in capacity building for women at different levels of the society.

Its comprehensive projects will also include child and women's rights and conflict prevention mechanism through workshops, seminars and conferences, in order to ensure a buy-in of its advocacy project by policy makers. Needless to emphasize the importance of skilled staff in its secretariat, as we have noted, that the current employees lack the necessary professional background to discharge the goals of the Mission. It is essential to fill the position of the Executive Secretary and those of directors as a matter of priority in order to kick-start the reform process that will be necessary to activate the AFLPM. In the meantime, a research team should be put in place to examine, monitor and interrogate the fundamental issues of gender equality and mainstreaming with a view to promoting the culture of peace stability and sustainable economic growth in the continent.

The AFLPM secretariat should be able to come up with concrete programmes and activities that it could work with development partners, United Nations agencies, international local and regional non-governmental organisation on issues of women, peace and security into to promote its peacebuilding agenda in the nation states of Africa particularly in local communities across the continent.

Conclusion

Whichever way one looks at the initiative of the AFLPM, one must acknowledge the giant stride of the First Ladies in bringing peace issues to the public through their activities. The AFLPM has no doubt provided some level of succor to the victims of conflicts in the continent. While it is true that conflicts continue to rage with new dynamics and attendant negative consequences in the continent, it is also the case that the First Ladies have not relented in their commitment to reduce the incidence of conflicts and its toll

on women and children in Africa. The AFLPM remains a model that can be replicated in other continents of the world. The focus of such a body need not be strictly restricted to only issues of conflict, but on other matters that could deepen gender equality in order to enhance peace, stability and sustainable development of the African continent and others across the world.

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Cameroon:
Power Politics, Land Conflicts and Controversy over Redistribution in Bafut History

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Abstract

Conflict is a broad term and scholars have advanced different definitions for specific types of conflict. In the Bafut kingdom of North West Cameroon, conflicts have been caused by wanton grabbing and irrational redistribution of land. Within the kingdom's traditional political system, there is a complex network of relations between the leaders and with members of the community. This paper establishes that problems of land and redistribution have bred conflicts in Bafut and deterred cordial relations and coexistence within communities. It has also resulted in collusions, political crisis and strenuous relations between different segments of the society. Through colonial and post-independence administrative documents, assessment reports, local government reports, petitions, government decrees and laws and other published works we conclude that the controversies over land distribution that led to conflicts in Bafut history were a result of interplay of power politics.

Keywords*: Power Politics, Conflict, Cameroon, Redistribution.*

Introduction

Land and related issues in Africa has been a source of conflict within and between institutions and communities. A recent phenomenon of land grabbing in different parts of Cameroon, especially the grass fields region as well as the expanding agro-industrial sector, has exacerbated land conflicts. Some of these land related conflicts have been caused by a gluttonous self-seeking elite (Simo, 2011). In Bafut, land redistribution or expropriation contributed to protracted

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conflicts in like elsewhere in Cameroon and Africa. Political and economic factors emanating from passionate attachments to territorial location provoked mixed feelings and claims over land. Today, people claim and engage in conflicts over land. The control over land invariably means the control of people. Political leaders, including also the family head, control land and the people under them. The control of land goes with redistribution and the challenges that go with this. In Bafut, land redistribution created a lot of problems between the centralised leadership and leaders of semi-autonomous communities. This is a clear indication of the conflict between traditional leadership and other local sources of power in Anglophone Cameroon (Samah, 1999, 2006; Ngwa, 1999 2002).

Land disputes may lead to struggles for political control in different communities. Lund (1998) has argued that land is a symbol of power. The more control one has over land, the more power s/he exercises over both human and economic resources. Also, van Rouveroy van Nieuwaal (1996) further posits that in the post-colonial era, many African chiefs continue to struggle for control over people and land resources just as they did in the pre-colonial and colonial times. It is thus evident that while we trace the origin of land conflicts and controversies in Bafut, it is a universal issue that should arouse academic curiosity.

Bafut is a composite kingdom made up of eight semi-autonomous chiefdoms. It is situated some twenty kilometres northwest of Bamenda, the capital of the North West Region of Cameroon. It covers an area of some 340 square kilometres with a population of nearly 98000 inhabitants. This population is made up of people from diverse backgrounds settled in three zones. At the centre are the people of *mumalaa* (heart of the country) who trace their dynastic origin to Ndobo or Tikari area, northwest of Foumban in the West Region of Cameroon. To the South and North are the *ntare* (ridge area) and *mbunti* (lowland) people of Widekum origin from the South West Region of Cameroon. Bafut is a polity with a paramount chief (Fon) under whom are sub-chiefs, who administer different ethnic groups of diverse peoples within the fondom. The dominant group that wields power are the Tikar and the sub-chiefdoms are mostly of Widekum origin. The sub-chiefs in Bafut claim to have brought their people into Bafut from various places of origin. Thus, the paramount Fon's right to exert local authority or control over their people is not legitimate (Niba, 1999). Such claims have not only threatened the survival or existence of traditional authority in Bafut, but have also incited ethnocentrism and other vices in the *fon*dom. Here, the bone of contention was on wanton land grabbing and irrational and illogical redistribution of land in the *fon*dom. The uncompromising stand of the Fon, his chiefs and people threatened to tear the *fon*dom apart. However, the conflict had its roots from the socio-political arrangements and relations that were established in the area from inception.

Socio-Political Organisation of Bafut Kingdom

Bafut is patrilineal in its kinship relations where descent and succession is traced or claimed through the father. Any son could succeed his father through intestate or testate succession. The smallest unit of the kinship group is the nuclear family (*nji inda*, meaning, bottom of the house). This is synonymous with the smallest territorial unit of the *fon*dom, namely, the compound (*ndugu*), which consists of a man, the compound head or *mbong ndugu*, his wife or wives, unmarried sons, daughters, servants and other dependents. The compound head may also be the head of an extended family or a patrilineage (*ngwe'enda*), which comes after the nuclear family. There is also the lineage (*acheu*) which consists of a number of extended families whose members claim descent from a common ancestor. It is headed by the successor of the founder of the lineage (*tacheu*). A number of lineages constitute a village.

The Bafut *fon*dom was a heterogeneous polity. It fitted broadly into the class of an African 'incorporative kingdom'. Such kingdoms consisted of conquest which started from a nucleus and the impetus for conquest was given by an immigrant group. At the head of this 'incorporate kingdom' was the Fon or traditional ruler. He was both its political and spiritual head and also exercised both executive and judicial authority over his subjects. His position was re-enforced by the near-sacred nature of his personality (Ritzenthaler & Ritzenthaler, 1962). The Fon had multiple political, judicial, religious, and social duties. He controlled external relations with other peoples, making wars and concluding treaties. Internally, he made laws. All justice was in his name and he was the final court of appeal and had the power of life and death over his subjects as sanctioned by them. As chief priest of the *fon*dom, he offered sacrifices to God through his ancestors and interceded with them for the welfare of the people. In summary, the Fon was the visible manifestation or incarnation of the Bafut body politic, so to speak.

As in most African kingdoms, the Fon of Bafut was assisted by some royal relatives namely, *maamfor* (queen Mother), two brother assistants to the Fon, namely, the *ndimfor* (elder brother) and *muma* (younger brother), who also served as advisers. Another brother adviser was *Tabufor* (father of *fon*s). He was usually any son of the late Fon who happened to have been born before his father was enthroned as Fon. By the circumstances of his birth therefore, the *Tabufor* had no ambitions for the throne, hence his role as father to the new Fon. However, none of the royal advisers acted as regent when the Fon died or was absent from the palace. The body which shared power with the Fon and acted in his absence was the council of elders or *kwifor*. Literally, *kwifor* means holder or supporter of the Fon. It was an institution common to all the Grassfields kingdoms of Cameroon and was called different names. Thus it was called *nwerong* in Nso, *kwifoyn* in Kom, *nkwifon* in Mankon, *kuiifuai* in the Laimbwe villages of Menchum and Boyo Divisions and *ngumba* in Bali. Some of these have been studied by Chilver

and Kaberry (1960, 1967 and 1970) and Kah (2015). The members who must have reached the *bukum* rank were hierarchically ordered.

The functions of *kwifor* were carried out through different agencies or lodges. One important duty of *kwifor* included the enforcement of rules regarding land utilisation. Apart from *kwifor*, there was another council of elders, this time of princes only, namely, *nda-takumbeng* (house of thunder). It acted, though not always successfully, as a check to the overwhelming powers of *kwifor*. Its *raison d'être* was to protect the interest of princes in the entire territory.

 On territorial organisation and administration, Bafut family units lived close to one another. However, some moved further afield, either in search of fertile farmlands or because of some calamity. As already noted above, a number of compounds constituted a ward. A number of wards made up a quarter (*nukuru*), and a group of quarters consti-tuted a village (*nte*). The villages made up the Bafut *fon*dom (*Ala'a Bufu*). The number and size of component settlements was determined by population, coupled with spatial limitations such as natural barriers and available farmland and water. According to the reports of Hawkesworth (1926), there were 23 villages in Bafut. A few years later in 1934, R.J. Hook listed 26.[1]

Bafut had two types of settlements. First there were the semi-autonomous villages each with its own chief (*atangchuo* – war planner). The villages were linked to the cen-tre under various conditions governing their relationship. According to Hook's list, as mentioned above, seventeen villages fell in this category. They were: Bawum, Mambu, Mankaa, Mankwi, Banji, Akofunguba (south in the *ntare* area), Beno, Buwi, Manta, Tingo, Mbekong, Butang, Bugiri, Aba and Bukabunano (Obang). Most of them were located to the north in the upper Menchum valley. There were Bukari and Buwe which are among the oldest villages in Bafut. These are located to the northeast of the capital of Bafut.

The second type of settlements constituted those villages clustered around the palace, and ruled directly by the Fon. These were: Mbebali, Mbebeli, Manji, Njibujang, Bujong, Njinteh, Niko, Mankaha, and Nchum.[2] The inhabitants here consisted mostly of the Tikari immigrants, who were closely allied to the Fon. These villages had no chiefs with any hereditary title as such but an appointed head (*tanukuru* – father of the quarter) existed. He was appointed by the Fon among the *bukum* of the village, that was, any one of them whom he deemed competent. In some cases, a prince was appointed. That was

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1   See Hawkesworth, Bafut Assessment Report 1926 National Archives Buea (NAB), AB3d, R.J. Hook, An Intelligence Report on the Associated Village Groups Occupying Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Division of Cameroons Province (Hereafter referred to as Bafut Intelligence Report 1934).

2   See Hook's Intelligence Report.

one way the Fon involved his relations in the administration. The *tanukuru*, along with the other elders of the village constituted a governing council (*butabenukuru*), which met often to deliberate on matters of immediate concern to their village. The matters might be the implementation of the Fon's directives, collecting and transmitting their own tribute to the palace and arranging for community projects. It was also the pre-rogative of the Fon to create new villages, by appointing heads to new settlements. It was by doing so that he had more villages under his direct control. However this did not imply that the exercise of power on Bafut territory was smooth. There were areas of conflict within the political structure of the kingdom as was noticed in other African kingdoms (Mair, 1977; Rowe, 1975).

We have stated earlier that, the Bafut dynasty claimed origin from Tikar, from which the legends brought the ancestors of the kings just as those of Kom, and Nso (Hawkesworth, 1926; Hook, 1934). As a composite *fon*dom, the different component chiefdoms had their own traditions which were at variance with those of the central *fon*dom. A typical example was the chiefdom of Bawum whose traditions place their roots of origin from Ala'ante near the present Bamenda Station. Driven by natural disaster, their chief, Ntoh, led them towards Bafut and settled at Mbebeli as guest of Nibachi, the chief.

The origins of a long-standing disagreement and conflict between the Fon of Bafut and Ntoh of Bawum cannot accurately be ascertained. But from available evidence, there appears to be a deliberate effort on the part of Bafut to suppress the fact that the Bawum ruler was around when Filu came, and therefore should not have laid any claim to special treatment. This seems to have been done in order to neutralise a dangerous rival to the Bafut dynasty. These contrasting claims had resulted in conflict between the descendants of the two rulers that have continued even to the present day. According to evidence from both sides, this conflict once led to bloodshed (Chilver & Kaberry 1967).

The Bafut palace and, by implication, the central government of the kingdom remained in Mbebeli for some time. Later, one of Filu's successors moved it from the rocky and hilly location of Mbebeli to its present location at Mumalaa. This has been discussed by Ewusi (1978).[3] Traditions attributed the initiative of this transfer to one of the Fon's wives who went fishing with other women in the Nkinsari stream at Mumala. On ex-ploring the surroundings she discovered some level land. Thinking that it would make a suitable site for a palace, she took the idea to the authorities. They readily endorsed it and affected the move. But, soon afterwards, something went wrong. Fearing that the woman might start feeling proud and hence make unacceptable demands for pref-erential treatment, palace diviners recommended that she should be eliminated. She was thus killed at a nearby square called Nsanimunwi. It is held that a pit trap was

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3   The transfer of the palace is treated here. Further evidence of this move can be deduced from the fact that the site of the former palace in Mbebeli is a shrine where sacrifices are offered yearly.

prepared and camouflaged. Over it was placed a ceremonial stool. Lured to the place under the pretext that she was being honoured, the woman sat on the stool and fell into the pit which became her grave. Tradition nicknamed this unfortunate woman Ndiela'ambwe, meaning someone who did something good but was rewarded with evil.[4] The Ndiela'ambwe issue is an episode deeply embedded in the collective psyche of the Bafut people.

The expansion of the Bafut *fon*dom from its new base at Bujong in Mumala'a could be traced to both internal and external factors. The key external factor was the impact of the Bali-Chamba incursion into the Bamenda area at the beginning of the nineteenth century (Jeffreys, 1962; Chilver & Kaberry, 1970). The Chamba incursion apparently affected the balance of power in the area. It brought them into conflict with the bigger chiefdoms and induced the smaller ones to seek refuge under the bigger chiefdoms. After a clash with the Chamba, Bafut became a rallying point for refugees from the south and southwest of the Ngemba area (Tweed, 1926). Some of them eventually returned to their places of origin while others remained. Among them were the chiefdoms of Mambu and Mankanikong, both of whom claimed to have come from the same area, Mberewi (Chilver & Kaberry, 1970). These chiefdoms became tributaries of Bafut through voluntary submission. How voluntary was the submission cannot be ascertained for conflicts and misunderstanding periodically flared between these two chiefdoms and the central authorities.

Another external factor was land hunger which led the Bafut to expand northwards into the Menchum valley around the middle of the nineteenth century. It was also dictated by the desire for tribute. In a series of raids, the Bafut conquered peoples such as the Otang, Buwi, and Bugri. Others such as Mbakong, Manta, and Butang voluntarily submitted (Warnier, 1985). Such expansion was what made Bafut to be a conquest state. Another area which Bafut brought under its control was Njimuya, across the Mezam River, with its rich savannah farming and hunting grounds. Apart from subduing the inhabitants and making them pay tribute, some Bafut people started migrating and settling there. The Fon of Bafut personally offered land and raffia bushes to his well-wishers and strangers in this area.

The migration of Bafut people piecemeal into uninhabited areas in search of fertile land was a key internal factor of conflict. The necessity to expand was due to a population increase from the middle of the nineteenth century resulting from conquest. According to Warnier, quoting from Pavel, the German officer who led expeditions into the Northwest, Bafut, in 1890 had around 25,000 people from diverse origins (Warnier, 1985). This population needed land for sustenance. Bafut people thus started moving and settling in

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4 In other translations, this nickname means the one who showed the country and got missing. These interpretations all boil down to describing someone who was good but was rewarded with evil.

the Menchum valley and Njimuya. This trend continued as migrants moved later on into Agyati, Ntabuwe, Akosia, Nforya and very recently Nsoh. As they moved into these new lands the Bafut elements preferred to continue to maintain their allegiance to the Fon of Bafut rather than to the chiefs of the area. That is what gave Bafut the characteristic of an incorporative kingdom, following Vansina's typology (Vansina, 1962). Such an arrangement would sooner or later, breed conflicts, as local rulers found their power being whittled down by the encroaching influence of the central authority.

A question one may ask is how the Bafut indigenous government establishment was sustained. The maintenance of government everywhere requires some allocation of resources and services. These came from the Bafut people themselves. The Fon was the custodian over the land he had overall control of the economy but it was the people who exploited it to maintain the palace. It was incumbent on them to do so without demanding payment in return. Whatever the Fon gave in return was only token appreciation. Though some people considered it a privilege and honour to render gifts and services to the palace, some usually resisted. Sanctions followed any recalcitrant behaviour thus resulting sometimes in conflict. The people in search of land ownership for livelihood also ran into conflicts with the custodian of the land. The Mankwi and Bawum land disputes constitute the peak of such conflicts within the Bafut fondom.

Land Grabbing, Redistribution and Conflict

The Banji- Mankwi Land Dispute

The Mankwi and Banji land problem was the outcome of a leopard skin incident that occurred in 1949. At the end of the crisis in 1954, Fon Achirimbi II did not succeed to recover his customary tributes from Banji. Although the colonial District Officer, Westmacott, expressed satisfaction that the Fon and his sub-chiefs had earnestly declared their intention to seek peace and live happily, the Fon saw the arrangement as a major victory of the sub-chiefs over him and thus a serious setback for him. Following the reunification of Cameroon in 1961, Achirimbi demanded that the issue be revisited. In a letter to the administration he stated *inter alia*:

> *Even if there was an agreement of that nature signed in 1954 by the colonialists, then, that should not arise now because you know the importance of native laws and custom and should not at all keep such bad decision taken by the colonialists on matters that damage greatly native laws and customs. I will want that decision of 1954 to be revoked (personal communication, 1961).*

In fact, Achirimbi had been provoked by the behaviour of some chiefs who interpreted the peace accord as legal and official acknowledgement of their autonomy by the state. For example, the Chief of Banji at the time, Ben Ngwa, was particularly happy with the 1954 accord. He wrote letters to the D.O in Bamenda asking for privileges befitting the

status of an autonomous chiefdom at the time. In one of his letters he wrote:

> *I want the D.O to put a helping hand on my market. Make it go ahead. I am now digging the main road to my village so that you can be able to reach there too, and I have asked for tools and you have not given them why? Try and give me the work things. Yours most humble petitioner Village Head of Banji* (Village Head of Banji, personal communication, July 1955).

In another related letter written in 1959, the same chief stated that the Fon of Bafut for long had imposed undue pressure on him and his people, claiming them as his subjects. In 1954, he and the Fon had agreed to establish permanent and lasting peace. The terms of the peace accord clearly spelt out that village heads in future would be regarded as chiefs and not sub-chiefs. Thus, it was clear that he, the chief of Banji, was an autonomous chief and not a sub-chief under the Fon of Bafut. If Achirimbi, for any reason, desired to change the decision of the peace settlement, he could not do so alone (Village Head of Banji, personal communication, November 10, 1959).

Achirimbi saw in these petitions disobedience and arrogance from a sub-chief. In reaction, he adopted a strategy which effectively clipped off the wings of Chief Ben Ngwa. Achirimbi intensified the allocation of farm land and raffia bushes *(akooh)* to Bafut people and strangers who paid allegiance to him in Banji. Some of these people included Wanki, Ndiforbangong, Lazarus Nche of Mankon, Muchi, Mfocham, Mundaban, Tangoni, Ngonga, Akimawa, Nyambu and Akenji from Mbebali. Predictably, the Fon's decision to allocate land to foreigners in Banji was rejected by the Chief. The feelings of Chief Ben Ngwa were expressed in a remark which he made about one of the persons, Nyambu, settled in Banji. In a petition to the D.O, the Chief of Banji said: "it is this very Nyambu who is used as a tool by the Fon of Bafut" (Village Head of Banji, personal communication, November 3rd, 1955). Encouraged by Chief Ben Ngwa, the Banji people expressed their indignation in a petition written by one Ngwanigha to the District Officer in these words:

> *Akenji is a person from Manji quarters of Bafut and I am from Banji village. We have problems with the Bafut people over land and raffia bushes. Akenji [...] sprang into my raffia bush without cause. How this man got into my bush is what I cannot understand. It amount to nothing than suppression which has always been the Bafut people's attitude towards us because they style us as their slaves* (Ngwanigha of Banji, personal communication, July 26, 1956).

In fact, the allocation of land to Bafut people and strangers in Banji was calculated to achieve two aims: the first was to ensure that the Fon's customary tributes were collected in their entirety and sent directly to the palace. The permanent supply of kola nuts from the Fon's kola nut trees at *akooh* Tumenkeri had to be assured. No tributes destined for the Bafut palace were to pass through the Chief of Banji again. The second aim was to curb the influence and control of the Banji Chief over land and people in the

area. It was thought the powers of the chiefs were going to be reduced keeping them in a position of subservient. One area which suffered and irked the Banji chief was the fall in taxes passing through him. Many Bafut people and foreigners, who settled in Banji by-passed the chief and paid their taxes directly to the Fon of Bafut. This angered the Chief of Banji who wrote a petition to the D.O for Bamenda expressing his discontent.

It was evident, all along, that the Fon of Bafut had been taking advantage of his privileged position as the sole Local Authority in Bafut, to exercise full control over land and the people who settled on it. He also decided how and through whom people paid taxes. But in so doing, he obviously stepped on the toes of the Chief of Banji given that he too was an officially appointed tax collector or agent in his village. The decision of Bafut people and strangers residing in Banji to pay tax directly to the Fon of Bafut did not only create problems of rebate earnings, assessment, accountability and collection of tax for the Chief, but it also challenged the authority of the head of that village. Indeed, many of such challenges over the authority of the Banji Chief were recorded from Bafut people resident in Banji. The question is, how did Mankwi people get entangled in land question and power tussle between Bafut and Banji?

According to the Regent of Banji, Nfordan William Tallah, the leaders of Banji and Mankwi, namely Talah Banji and Talah Mankwi were brothers who settled in the same area. Talah Mankwi settled at Ntahmuche while Talah Banji was at Ntahtita. Ntahmuche was situated at a location where the Bafut-Bamendum boundary was demarcated in 1933 by the British. In this area was found vast stretches of land with wild palm and raffia grooves. They were given various names such as *akoohnfor* (Fon's bush) found in Mughie and *akooh* Tumenkere in Adiemukong. Here, the Fon claimed a good number of kola nut trees and raffia bushes. Most of these resources were controlled by the Mankwi people on behalf of the Fon. With time, the Mankwi left the area and moved up the hill to their present site situated across the River Mezam (Muyaa). While the Mankwi moved out of Njimuyaa, they still maintained their farm lands and raffia bushes (*akooh*) in the old settlement. The Mankwi women continued to work these farms while the men tapped wine from their raffia and palm bushes (Nfordan William Tallah, personal communication, November 8, 2008).

In 1960, the Banji people started to encroach on the Mankwi farm lands and raffia bushes. Resistance to their encroachment was met with force by the Banji people who burnt down houses and seized hoes from Mankwi women (Talah Mankwi, personal communication, September 7, 1960). Rather than meet force with force, the Mankwi chief reported the matter to his superior, the Fon of Bafut. The action of the Chief provoked anger that widened the conflict. This was due to the interpretation given by the Banji people to the action of Chief Talah. To them, the Fon of Bafut was using the Mankwi people to exercise influence or get things (*njooh*) from Banji. This was justified by a

petition written by the Banji people to the administration which read thus:

> *It can be said that the present land dispute between Banji village and the people of Mankwi quarters is the old quarrel camouflaged: the Fon of Bafut is inciting the Mankwi people against the people of Banji village for the abolition of the customary right of the Fon of Bafut over the Banji as was evidenced by the truce reached before the then District Officer on the 29th November, 1954* (O/M Ogwo Esqr, personal communication, June 12, 1961).

The Banji people thought that way because at a time when their chief championed the course of opposition against the Fon of Bafut, the Chief of Mankwi remained loyal and respectful to the Fon. Gifts of farm produce and palm wine from the bushes around this area were regularly sent to the palace. In reaction to the complaint of the Mankwi people the Fon wrote to the D.O for Bamenda and the police asking them to take serious action against the Banji. On 26 August 1960 he wrote:

> Sorry to inform you that, in this morning, people of Mankwi quarter Bafut came and reported to me that all their houses are now burnt by Banji people [...] Mankwi people also informed me that they are now getting ready to fight with Banji. I, being the Fon of Bafut [and First Local Authority-in-Council] told them to wait for you. Therefore I send this letter very soon with my car to you for early action now. If not so, war will be here today (Fon of Bafut, personal communication).

In a follow-up letter, as President of the Bafut Traditional Council, the Fon wrote to the Commissioner of the Cameroons in these words:

> *Sir [...] see that we had made peace with Banji since 1954. Therefore, we the Council of Bafut without fail report to you the above... should leave Bafut land to Mamfe or anywhere which Commissioner will think fit. The Fon of Bafut has boundaries with Babaji, Bamendum, Mbelifang, Mukuru and others. There are no more boundaries inside Bafut land. Bafut clan is 33,998, population. How can people who are only 100 men want to spoil our good name? If our Fon was not an officer, we would have done what is not good with Banji [...] these people are always giving us much trouble. If you do not take serious action, these people will do more bad than this* (Fon's Office Bafut, personal communication, August, 1960*)*.

It is clear from these letters that a farm land dispute had degenerated into war. The Banji people fighting against the Mankwi people were actually fighting the Fon of Bafut. This was evident in many letters written to government in which they described the Fon of Bafut as an "age-old oppressor". This incident resulted in loss of lives and property. Five Banji people were killed while a good number of Mankwi people were wounded. Property was destroyed both in Banji and Mankwi. The reaction of the Southern Cameroons Government on the issue was significant and noteworthy. On 8 May 1961, the D.O. for Bamenda wrote to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Local Government

Buea, stating the position of the administration on the issue.

> *Banji people are of Widikum origin conquered by Bafut in the past. Although in reality a Quarter of Bafut, Banji is regarded as a village in so far as certain customs are concerned by courtesy of the Fon. The land on which they live is originally by conquest and now by long custom and acceptance by the administration, Bafut land. But all the quarters of Bafut farm widely throughout the area. They do not stick to accurately demarcated enclaves and they have not got boundaries within Bafut. This suits all the quarters except Banji. Banji would like a boundary, but it would be unwise to agree to this for in due course, the Banji would attempt to set-up a separate village with a village head who would want to regard himself as an equal to the Fon* (District Officer, personal communication).

Eventually, the position of the administration in Bamenda was endorsed by the West Cameroon Government in October 1961. In a letter written to both parties involved in the conflict, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Local Government, Buea said that:

> *I am directed to inform you that His Honour has received and considered the positions forwarded by you to him on the above subject. His Honour considers that the dispute occurred as a result of misunderstanding. His Honour feels sure that you will resume the friendly and peaceful relations you have enjoyed in recent years* (personal communication, October 5, 1961).

From the above, it is clear that the West Cameroon Government, like their colonial predecessors, rejected any centrifugal forces that attempted to balkanise the Bafut *fon*dom. They also upheld the position of the Fon of Bafut to the detriment of his Sub-Chiefs. According to the Government, the Fon continued to be the single leader to wield power and authority over the entire Bafut community. It was therefore in the interest of Government that if peace had to prevail, the status quo had to be maintained. The Sub-Chiefs in turn were embittered by government support of the Fon. Some of them reacted by making their voices heard in various ways ranging from civil disobedience to more petition writing and disputes. Such was the case of the Bawum Chief concerning the land issue at Nsoh.

The Bawum Land Problem

Nsoh quarter of Bawum-Bafut became a bone of contention between the Fon of Bafut and the Chief of Bawum, Nicholas Ntoh. The problem had a long history although things came to a head in 1967 when Ntoh was dropped as a tax collector. Worst of all, according to Chief Ntoh during a political party, that is, the Cameroon National Union (CNU) organisation, which was the sole political party in Cameroon at the time, Nsoh was detached and joined to Mambu to constitute a Branch. This move was seen by Ntoh as

dismembering Bawum, over which he was chief. But what was the root cause of the Nsoh problem?

According to Matthias Niba who was a teenager in Bawum in the early 1950s, when he was growing up in Bawum at the time, Nsoh was farm land exploited mainly by Bawum people. Mbebeli people had their farms beyond Nsoh at Swei. In fact, the name Nsoh only applied to the area where the Bamenda Airport is situated today. Other locations went by the names Assissong, Ature Ntoh (Ntoh's hunting grounds), Akooh Chebi, Akooh Ncha and Nibe Mufersi. Today all these places are collectively called Nsoh. At that time, it was also called Afo-Bawum (Bawum farmland). As was the custom, all the villages and quarters in Bafut had their farmlands located some distance from the settlements. Other farmlands, for example, were Agyati for the Mankaha people, Nforya for Niko people and Akosia for Njinteh people. From the late 1950s and early 1960s, Bawum people as well as Bafut people from other villages and quarters started settling, that is building permanent structures, at Nsoh. The trouble centred on who had the overall authority in Nsoh; was it Ntoh Bawum or the Fon of Bafut? The Bawum settlers felt that Nsoh was the extension of their village, Bawum, and so Ntoh had the sovereign authority there.

The other settlers from other parts of Bafut, particularly from Mumala'a, stood their grounds that they had nothing to do with Ntoh. Their sovereign was the Fon of Bafut. Of course some of these non- Bawum people had acquired vast stretches of land at Nsoh. One of them was Pah Numfor, a teacher at Presbyterian School, Nsem. The other was the Rev. Aaron Su, a prominent Presbyterian Pastor. The Fon of Bafut obviously threw his weight behind his own subjects as a way of weakening Ntoh's claims to Nsoh. He started scheming to create Nsoh as a separate quarter detached from Bawum. To concretise these plans, he encouraged one John Mufersi, himself a settler in Bawum from Mambu, to stake his claims as quarter head of Nsoh. Mufersi was to be answerable to the Fon of Bafut rather than to Ntoh Bawum. Actually the name 'Nsoh originated, according to Bawum traditions, from the fact that the people of Nsongwa near Bamenda once settled there for some time before moving to their present site. That was the background to Ntoh's petition in 1967.

In this petition, Ntoh interpreted his being dropped as tax collector and the detachment of Nsoh and being joined to Mambu in the party reorganisation exercise as a move by the West Cameroon Government to drastically reduce his authority and control over Bawum subjects in Nsoh and the quarter as a whole. To Ntoh, he had been deprived of his customary right to control economic resources in Nsoh. Writing to the Premier of West Cameroon, Ntoh argued that Nsoh was inhabited by Bawum people and so they could not be grouped under Mambu as indicated by the CNU registration programme in Bafut West. To Ntoh, Nsoh was "part of Bawum" and must be grouped with it for the registration. If this was not done, no single Bawum inhabitant would register for the elections. Ntoh also complained that another quarter of Bawum, Swie, was taken away

and attached to Mforya, thus causing Bawum to lose two of its quarters. This loss was synonymous with the chief's loss of his customary right of control in these quarters. Chief Ntoh found it difficult to stomach the situation. After sending his petition, he left for Buea, accompanied by one of his close aides, Jerome Ayancho, to see the Premier on this issue (Chief Nicolas Ntoh, personal communication, April 20, 1967).

Earlier in 1965, the Bafut-Ndop Council had sued Ntoh for alleged embezzlement of tax money collected from his village for the 1963-64 fiscal year. This case dragged on to 1968. While it went on, Ntoh was temporarily suspended from his administrative duties of customary court judge and tax collector in Bafut. In the course of these events, John Mufersi appeared from the blues to be made tax collector for Nsoh. Bawum people resident in Nsoh interpreted this as a ploy to undercut their natural leader, Chief Ntoh in the area. In fact the act did not only challenge the authority of the Chief of Bawum but it threatened the status of Bawum people resident at Nsoh. Thus on 27 August, 1968, Bawum people in Nsoh wrote a petition to the D.O for Bamenda Division in which they declared: "Ever since our forefathers left the interior of Bawum and established this extension settlement on their farmland and we their descendants grew up as citizens of Bawum, we do not think and do not wish that anything should ever split us from our fatherland" (Bawum Settlers of Nso-Bawum, personal communication, August 27, 1968). The petitioners complained about John Mufersi, the "official tax collector of Nsoh and assessment officer". They argued that the father of John Mufersi left Mambu and came to Bawum not as a ruler. He was an ordinary villager who paid tribute to Chief Ntoh alongside their fathers. But then the Bafut Traditional Council connived with Mufersi and he was appointed tax collector in Nsoh. To them, the Traditional Council had no right to appoint anybody against their wish to rule them when in reality they had a recognised ruler in the person of Chief Ntoh. Thus, the petition appealed to the West Cameroon Government to instruct John Mufersi to use his nominal roll and other traditional insignia only for his family. He was not their ruler and did not live with them in Nsoh.

From all indication, as proven in the two petitions discussed above, Chief Ntoh and Bawum people pointed accusing fingers at the Bafut Traditional Council for being responsible to what was happening in Nsoh. Chief Ntoh particularly blamed the Council for giving false information to the West Cameroon Government in Buea, especially the D.O. for Bamenda Division to balkanise the Bawum chiefdom. It was therefore on the information provided by the Traditional Council that the D.O. carved out the party registration centres in the area. According to the petitioners the Council also concocted the "game plan" which convinced the administration to appoint Mufersi as tax collector in Nsoh. On 17 September, 1968, John Mufersi, the acolyte of the central palace reacted to Chief Ntoh's petition and that of the Bawum people in Nsoh. In a letter to the Secretary of State for Interior, West Cameron, he stated:

> The present Chief Ntoh of Bawum in Bafut West has been trying to make Nsoh Village as a quarter in Bawum village. This has resulted to a quarrel between him-

self and I.This village of Nsoh has been ruled by four great grandfathers, then by my father and now, myself. During their reign none had a case with any of the late chiefs of Bawum. How this trouble of chieftaincy came about now is really above my imagination. Nsoh like any other quarter or village in Bafut was given to my great grandfather by the Fon of Bafut to collect tax before 1919. Since then, there had been no trouble until now (personal communication).

In fact the declaration of John Mufersi raised a number of issues. Firstly, following the prescription of the Direct Taxation Ordinance, since 1917 those who assisted Native Authorities as tax collectors or agents were village heads, quarter heads and some few compound heads. From the colonial to post independence government records, the name of Mufersi appeared nowhere as tax agent, let alone being a tax collector in 1919. Secondly, up to 1963, Nsoh had not fully emerged as a village, quarter or compound (*Ayenda*) within the Bafut political and administrative structure.[5] Nsoh was still growing under its parental chiefdom, Bawum, whose inhabitants used the area as their farm lands. Thus, the claim that "Nsoh village" has been ruled by four great grandfathers of John Mufersi was false. Thirdly, the position of a tax agent was not automatically synonymous to being a chief nor was it a step towards the forceful imposition of a chief on a young quarter that had a well-known history of migration, settlement and development. It was against this backdrop that Chief Ntoh wrote back to the State Government to enlighten it on some of the points raised by John Mufersi in his petition.

On 19 September 1968, Chief Ntoh explained that the real biological father of John Mufersi was a tax payer under Bawum. The problem was created in 1947 following confusion which Thomas Asongwed the Administrative Secretary-Treasurer for Bafut Native Authority caused in the area. Asongwed took over from A.M. Kubri in 1946. Before this, Ntachu quarter under its family head Nforba and Yenkamengoh quarter were compiled in one nominal roll under Bawum. They paid their tax under Bawum without problems. But Asongwed came and separated these quarters from Bawum. According to Ntoh, Mufersi and Nforba had no privileged position in Bawum; they were impostors (Chief Ntoh, personal communication, September 19, 1968). Ntoh used history to justify his point. He said John Mufersi's father called Mufersi Nebangwa left Mambu and came to Bawum because of a chieftaincy problem which he had caused there and Chief Wanki expelled him from Mambu. Mufersi then settled in Bawum under Chief Ntoh who later made him a quarter head in Bawum between 1913 and 1914.

In another perspective, Mufersi used tradition and custom to justify his rulership in Nsoh. He asserted that historically, all women who had farms at Nsoh gave food to

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5   See list of villages, quarters and compound (Ayenda) in R.J. Hook's Intelligence Report on the Associated Village Groups Occupying Bafut Native Authority Area of the Bamenda Division of Cameroons Province.

him to take to the Fon. This was a duty accorded him by Bafut tradition and custom. The question, which he then asked was why tradition did not allow Chief Ntoh to do the collection if really his claim over Nsoh was real or legitimate. Besides, the famous ancestral shrine *nibemufersi*, that is, the waterfall at the Nibe stream was in Nsoh. He and the Fon of Bafut had for years offered sacrifices to the gods just as their forefathers did. In effect, if Ntoh was the rightful authority in Nsoh, he could have been the one to perform this duty. But Ntoh had never gone to the shrine to ask the gods to bless his people. However, the point here was not the argument on who had the traditional right to offer sacrifices to the ancestors and gods of the land. That is why Ntoh made it clear to the D.O. in his petition that his action should not be mistaken for an attempt to abrogate tradition, state law, native customs and practices, or break away from Bafut. To Ntoh, the Bawum were subjected to Bafut and they were simply crying for the right over their land. In other words, they were simply laying claims to their customary rights as Bafut people. Any group of people or individual would do same without necessarily resorting to enmity or conflict. That is why Nicholas Ntoh appealed to the D.O to call Mufersi to reason with the rest of the quarter heads in Bawum. This was to avoid involving the entire Bafut public in a matter that could easily be resolved to "safe faces". Besides, if the matter was left in the hands of the Bafut Traditional Council, they would worsen the situation rather than bring peace in Bawum. On behalf of all Bawum men, women and children, Chief Ntoh pledged their loyalty to the Government of West Cameroon and wished 'long life' to the Fon of Bafut and the entire Government of the Federal Republic.

From the explanation of Chief Ntoh, a new set of questions cropped up. Firstly, Ntoh acknowledged that his father made Mufersi quarter head in 1913 and they lived together, without problems. Secondly, he acknowledged his allegiance to the Fon of Bafut whom he wished 'long life.' Where then was the root of the 1967 problem? Was it just the fact that Bawum people in Nsoh were not made to pay taxes through the natural leader, Ntoh? Actually, Chief Ntoh risked losing a sizeable proportion of his own population, that is, Bawum people settled in Nsoh. That would have weakened his authority as a village head. He feared losing half of his chiefdom to Mufersi and by extension to the Bafut palace. So the fight was against the Fon of Bafut and his palace hierarchy. Mufersi, being the agent or instrument of the palace in the area, had to bear the brunt of this fight. The main problem centred on the control of land and its resources. The palace authorities and Chief Ntoh both claimed customary rights over land in Nsoh. The re-mote causes of the problem were rooted in the history of migration and traditional land tenure system in the area. These have already been explained above. In the 1960s, land was gradually gaining value in Bafut. As a result the palace authorities raised a claim that land in Nsoh was conquered by the Bafut from Mankon. According to them, it was 'crown land' or royal property. Since then, the palace used conquest as their base of legitimacy to claim ownership over the land. The same authorities insisted that people in Nsoh should regularise their situation with the central palace or quit the land.

The Bawum descendants in Nsoh, as evident in the petition of 27 August 1968 did not mince words in telling the palace authorities that their forefathers had effectively occupied the land which they inherited. By virtue of effective occupation for a long time, they had owned the land. Thus, the issue of the palace claim over the land in Nsoh was out of question. Also the Bawum people in Nsoh were not also interested in any form of traditional administration imposed on them by the central palace. They had their natural leader who was Chief Ntoh. He should be the one to rule them and no other person or institution.

Chief Ntoh argued that *kwifor* and *takumbeng,* palace institutions had never been part of the institutions or structures responsible for the control and administration of land in Bafut. Their singular role was to assist the chiefs restore order on the land and not to rule. In modern parlance, it would be said that the police corps had taken over the duty of the D.Os. Besides, the Federal Government did not recognise *kwifor* and *takumbeng* as any auxiliary arm of territorial administration as was the case with the chiefs. All these power intrigues annoyed Chief Ntoh. In March 1968, he had mobilised the chiefs of Mantah, Mankahnikong, and Obang to write a petition to the Prime Minister of West Cameroon. The petition stated that some traditional measures had been introduced by the Fon of Bafut which would inevitably "stir the Bafut community to unrest". Top on the list was the new creation called *takumbeng*, which embarked on the indiscriminate seizure of land and raffia bushes from the Bafut people without justification (Chiefs of Bafut West, personal communication, March 29, 1968).

Other Bafut communities on their part joined their chiefs to petition against the new traditional arrangement set-up by Achirimbi II in Bafut. The first was the case of the Akofounguba people who openly expressed disgust and accused the Fon of setting up a bad administrative system under the "so-called *takumbeng*". To them, *takumbeng* was designed and particularly assigned the duty of seizing land from Bafut people by force. This was followed by the Mforya people. *Takumbeng* insisted that the bushes belong to the palace and so the occupants had to evacuate them. Unable to bear the threats, the Mforya people appealed to the S.D.O for Bamenda Division complaining about the seizure of property in their village. According to the petitioners, Bafut princes brought 'war' to destroy the Mforya people. Mforya, Akofounguba and Nsoh thus had identical problems with the palace. The treatment which people in one of these areas suffered under *takumbeng* administration was replicated in the other. This had repercussions on the rest of the Bafut *fon*dom.

On Wednesday 17 July 1968, the S.D.O for Bamenda Division on the instructions of the Ministry of Local Government in Buea probed into the Bafut problems. The message from Buea instructed the S.D.O to take special note of: "Those matters of traditional ethics that appeared to be getting out of control and thereby developing such dimensions that result into conflicts and increase the social problems in the Bafut Area Administration"

(Permanent Secretary Ministry of Interior, personal communication, June, 1968). At the end of discussions in the meeting of 17 July, the S.D.O. for Mezam, M.G. Nkamsi realised that there was misunderstanding and lack of cooperation in the *fon*dom. The Fon and his Traditional Council were held responsible for this unhealthy situation. Consequently, the S.D.O instantly dissolved the Traditional Council and ordered for the formation of a new one that would reflect the various interest groups or shades of opinion in Bafut. The Sub-Chiefs and quarter heads of Bafut were eventually called to assume their positions in the new Traditional Council. The S.D.O further asked *takumbeng* to curb and confine its activities to its proper quarters or lodge in the palace. Regarding tax collection, the S.D.O asked that everybody should pay tax to the recognised tax collector or agent of the quarter or village where he resided. It was only after this arrangement that most of the problems on land were laid to rest in Bafut during the last years of Achirimbi's reign. However, this was short-lived given that within the context of the unitary state, the Cameroon government came up with new land laws which constituted another bone of contention in the Bafut community.

Government Regulations
and the Question of Land Rights and Ownership in Bafut

The major problems with the new state regulations revolved around issues of land rights and ownership, authority and control in the community. Land rights and owner-ship, henceforth, fell under the title national land. All national lands were henceforth to be managed and administered by the State. To this effect, Consultative Commission or boards were created and presided over by administrative authorities (D.Os). Many chiefs of former West Cameroon including those of Bafut found it difficult to accept the fact that the right and ownership of the land on which they settled had been reverted to the state. They despised this notion stipulated by article 14 of the Land Law and continued to claim the right of ownership over community land under their jurisdiction.

Actually, land in pre-colonial Bafut was owned by the people or the community with the chief as the custodian. The land was also owned in usufruct by extended families while the Fon remained the overall custodian. For Bafut especially, in the semi-autonomous villages, the chief (*atangcho*) exercised the custodian right in return for special trib-utes to the Fon. All 'unoccupied' land was under the control of the Fon, or in the Bafut popular phrase it was *kwifor* land. However, the notion of custodian was an honorary position where the norms and advantages of the office, permitted the chief to enjoy tributes, money and other economic resources. But this was not synonymous to the right of ownership over the land by the chief. But with time, many chiefs interpreted the role or duty of custodian as having given them the right of ownership over the land in their community.

When the colonialists arrived, they claimed the right of ownership of land which could be expropriated from the local people at any time for various purposes or interest. In

French Cameroon, where direct rule was applied, the colonialists completely took over control of the land there. In this way, they claimed to own the land over which they exercised rights of ownership. In this context, traditional leaders derived very little benefits from land transactions. In the British Cameroons, where indirect rule was applied, the British allowed the leaders of some local communities like Bafut to continue with the management of land issues and control. With this arrangement, there was little or no change in what the chief derived as benefits from land in pre-colonial and the colonial periods. In fact, the British did not only permit chiefs like Achirimbi II to reap economic benefits on land but they actually supported his claim over the right of landlord and ownership of the community land under his jurisdiction.[6] This created the impression in the minds of Bafut chiefs that they were not only custodians of the land under their control but they were real owners with ownership rights.

The West Cameroon government did not change what the colonialists had arranged before. Then there was the unitary government and the 1974 land reform. Here, the government completely decided to get to itself the right of land ownership. As stated in the law, this was to help solve numerous litigations on land and ensure equitable and rational distribution of land to all Cameroonians. This arrangement implied that all other local arrangements on land had to be cancelled. Local leaders or chiefs had to renounce any old claim to land rights and ownership in their communities in favour or support of the State regulations. But this did not still make sense or meaning to traditional leaders in Bafut. Here, the Fon and his sub-chiefs and quarter heads continued to lay claims to rights of land ownership in the community. They despised the government claim of land ownership and sole dispenser of such rights in the local communities, thereby creating problems of varied dimensions in the *fon*dom. This was the case in Nsoh Bafut. Here, the question of rights and land ownership resurfaced. In 1972, Mufersi Neba Fuh had succeeded the uncle John Mufersi as "quarter head" in Nsoh. The *kwifor* and Fon of Bafut confirmed his quarter headship in Nsoh. Traditionally, Mufersi was not only made 'custodian' of land under his jurisdiction but he inherited extensive lands in the area which he claimed the right of ownership. Such was the case of *ntaà* Mufersi and other pieces of land in the area.

Consequently, four years after the 1974 land law was enacted, Chief Ntoh of Bawum raised a problem of land rights and ownership in Nsoh. In a letter to the S.D.O for Mezam titled "The Fon of Bafut declared war in Bawum", Chief Ntoh complained that his land was being seized and given to Mufersi Neba Fuh at Nsoh. Besides, Neba Fuh was

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6   In the face of the Obang tribute crisis, Achirimbi II claimed the right of landlord to Obang. He insisted that the people must either pay the customary tributes to him or rents on the land where they were settled. Failure to pay the rents, they should quit his land and return to their place of origin in Widekum. Eventually, the British administrators concurred with this claim on grounds that it was not repugnant to natural law and equity.

made quarter head of Nsoh by the Fon of Bafut to administer or control land which he (Ntoh) owned. Ntoh had written several petitions on this matter to the administration in 1973, 1976 and 1980. In all these petitions, he did not mince words in declaring his ownership right over land in Nsoh. In the 1976 complaint, he told the Fon of Bafut and Mezam S.D.O in clear terms that he wanted his land and rights seized by the Bafut Fon and his palace authorities. During the meeting of 1980, Neba Fabs speaking on behalf of Chief Ntoh and all Bawum people in Bafut argued that the British Divisional Officer in Bamenda in 1938 confirmed the right of Chief Ntoh of Bawum over land ownership in Nsoh. That this was done in the presence of Achirimbi II, who confirmed the land in the area as the farm land of the people of Bawum, which Chief Ntoh was head.

This argument simply confirmed our assertion that the British colonial authorities made the leaders of Bafut to feel that they owned the land under their control and on which they exercised rights of ownership. But the question here is, after 1974, should we talk of one leader seizing the land rights of the other? Better still, was it possible for a local chief to openly claim ownership of land in front of state authorities without presenting any legal land title to justify such claims? It was in this light that the Fon of Mankon contended that with the modern trends of development and evolution in the state of Cameroon, such arguments and documents presented by Neba Fabs should no longer be considered. He declared that in the past he too was a big chief but today as an enlightened chief he cannot disobey the administration under which he was an auxiliary or subordinate. In effect, the Fon, Angwafor, was insinuating that those old claims of land rights and ownership rampant among Bafut leaders and the people had to be discarded in modern times. The format and regulations introduced by the Unitary State Government had to be followed. Of course the only way to claim land rights and ownership of land was to procure a legal land title from the state and not only by means of litigations and conflicts.

However, our point here is not to judge which traditional leader in Bafut has ownership right over land in Nsoh. This episode is used here to show how in spite of the existence of the 1974 land law, some conflicts still persisted in Bafut. This meant that the Government's right of ownership over all lands in the national territory was in a sense challenged. The objective of the Unitary State to use the land law to settle old conflicts and litigations over land were therefore compromised in Bafut. In fact, the scenario here was as though the land law had no effect on land disputes and conflicts in the community.

However, one must not lose sight of one thing and it was the fact that the control of land was directly linked to control of people and resources. So, Chief Ntoh's argument over land rights could not be minimised or ignored completely. The control of land in Nsoh was directly linked to the control of people. Land and population were important and inseparable components of power politics and authority in the local communities. If the land in Nsoh were fragmented and given to other quarter heads to control, that was syn-

onymous to fragmenting the authority of Chief Ntoh on land which was under his area of jurisdiction. The bone of contention was even with the Bawum people settled on land at Nsoh. The question was whether these people were willing to accept the control or authority of another traditional leader different from their natural leader, Ntoh. Evidence from past developments revealed that the Bawum people in Nsoh were not prepared to be ruled or controlled by any other traditional authority apart from Chief Ntoh. Hence the issue of land was just a smoke-screen or tip of the iceberg. The main issue at stake was conflict of authority and personal economic interest amongst the Bafut leaders. This phenomenon caused tension and strained relations within the Bafut community. It did not only continue to generate conflicts of varied dimensions but it also became a persistent source of headache to the modern State administration in Bafut even up till date. This was probably not a true representation of the State's intention which was out to protect the local communities and to resolve some conflicts or problems which had rendered life difficult in some local communities. Again, limited knowledge on the part of the local masses and their chiefs about the objectives of government created problems. The local masses and their chiefs were left with the option to interpret the law the way they understood it. This provoked deviant acts against the law.

Besides, the government reforms and administrative arrangements came at a time when the head of local traditional administration – the Fon, left Bafut in September 1971 to resume his studies which had been interrupted when he was installed as Fon. In his absence, the traditional administration was run by a Regency Committee which lasted up to 1982. The five-man Regency Committee was approved by the West Cameroon Government and it consisted of Chief Mbah Wanki, representative of the Bafut sub-chiefs, Prince Che Sama, representative of the princes (*takumbeng*), Suh Bennaà, Che Bonjem and M.C Nimang represented *kwifor*. John M. Nyamboli was designated as Secretary of the Committee. According to Security reports,

> [...] government authorities installed a Regency Institution to administer the Bafut people in the absence of the Fon Abumbi who went to school to complete his secondary school education [...] although now a student, he still maintains his full right as Fon and attends the West Cameroon House of chiefs and other big occasions as a fon and not as a student. Other administrative functions have been delegated by him in writing to his kingmakers who are now his regents consisting of the following resident at Bafut: Suh Bunaa, Che Bonjem, Sama Achirimbi, M.C Nimang and William Mbah Wanki.[7]

The Traditional Council also continued to operate as one of the local administrative structure to assist the regency in its task. So, the Regency, the Traditional Council and

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7   Service de la Sûreté de Bamenda, Note d'information No. S.4/vol.1/657 sur objet : Fon de Bafut rentre au collège.

the Customary Court were to pilot local administration in Bafut in the absence of the Fon. Each of the local structures put in place had to perform its assigned functions in accordance with state laws, policies and constitution. They were also to uphold the authority of the Fon in all their activities as prescribed by tradition and the State Government.

Although Government reports stated that the choice of regents did not pose a major problem, in reality, there were problems.[8] The *kwifor* nobles on the regency Council connived with the Traditional Council to establish corrupt by-laws regulating land matters in Bafut. The by-laws eventually annoyed people in the community. Here, the Traditional Council, in pursuit of some financial benefits accruing from land in Bafut, devised means through which they could continue to exercise control over land. These nobles and Traditional Council members came up with a rule which stated that a man having a raffia bush could only cultivate a piece of land within the distance of 100 feet (33 metres) from the bush. The rest of the land was then appropriated and given out to any interested Bafut youths who gave money and food (*njooh*) to the palace. It was in this light that the palace authority seized hectares of land from people in different quarters of Bafut.

Furthermore, the Traditional Council established two Committees within namely the land and Disciplinary Committees respectively. The latter had more powers over the former when it came to decisions and judgements related to land. But, while the Disciplinary Committee held to the view that the distance around some one's bush should be 100 yards (98 metres) so as to allow the owner enough farm land on which to work, the land Committee disapproved and insisted on 100 feet (33 metres). This led to differences amongst the Committees which hindered smooth operations in land matters in Bafut. This was evident in the words of Mulaha Suhlum from Mforya who lamented that "Bafut people who own bushes and land are just left aghast because they don't know what the traditional councillors can decide to do. They had seized several bushes from Bafut people and spoiled cases reported to their council" (Melaha Suhlum, personal communication, June 13, 1974). In a petition to the D.O for Mezam in 1974, Suhlum decried the consequences of the internal by-laws established by the palace authorities on land in Bafut. To him, the laws deprived many Bafut people of their lands which were given to wealthy men by the traditional Council. Besides, the spirit of the Green Revolution campaign launched by the Government was being killed in the Bafut people by these palace authorities who hardly distinguished "their left from right" (Suh Lum, persona communication, June 6, 1974). Clearly therefore, the palace authorities acted in illegality.

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8   This was the first precondition given to government by Abumbi that must be fulfilled before he could return to the palace or occupy the Bafut throne again. In 1971, government fulfilled the promise made to the young Fon.

With hindsight the question is how could they have gone away with the act under the noses of government authorities? In other words, how could obnoxious by-laws be made and implemented on land matters in Bafut without administrative intervention? The answer is simple. They were still under the influence of the old notion that land in Bafut belonged to *kwifor* and they could dispose of it with little opposition from whosoever. Secondly, they were still enjoying the freedom granted them by the former West Cameroon government to carry out land transactions in their community with little intervention from state authorities. Thirdly, a vast majority of the rural population, many of whom lived under the authority of the chiefs still had respect for their administration. Thus the central palace authorities in Bafut seized this opportunity to continue to control land unperturbed. This also gave them the freehand to violate procedures of land expropriation laid down by State regulations be it in former West Cameroon or East Cameroon systems. However, it was hoped that the situation would change with the enforcement of the new land ordinances of 1974.

Eventually, these ordinances were enacted in July 1974 but the old practice and customs which were often accompanied by the seizure of land from Bafut people intensified. The excesses of such acts were highly felt in the semi-autonomous chiefdom. The consequences on the political administrative machinery at the central palace were equally enormous. John Shu Fontem painted a picture of the disorder this situation created within the Bafut political structure when he reported on the situation prevailing in Bafut in the absence of the Fon. He observed that a conflict of authority arose between the regency and *kwifor* over land issues. Consequently, many Bafut people completely refused to obey any orders from the palace whether issued by *kwifor*, the regency or the Fon himself when he came home. Internal hatred and disunity set in fast. Even the customary tributes of oil, wood, wine, supplied to the palace by all the villages and quarters in Bafut, dropped considerably. Also, the people turned more and more to the administration. According to Fontem, the people had appreciated the newly formed Traditional Council, a direct arm of the government, more than the rule of either the *kwifor* or the Fon himself. But the administration of the Council was also not the best. At the same time, neighbouring chiefdoms as Mankon and Bambui began encroaching on Bafut lands. All these developments arose, according to Fontem, because of a gap created in the traditional set-up. The absence of a permanent authority was a big problem during this period. Consequently, what was reputed to be the strongest *fon*dom in the Grassfields of the former West Cameroon was torn apart by domestic strife (Fontem, 1973). Another factor was that the Fon's power and authority over land control was fast declining in the face of the new land and chieftaincy reforms. The Fon and his traditional aides in the palace were determined to do anything as long as it permitted them to have firm grip or control over land and the Bafut community as a whole. Such attempts were unable to restore peace in Bafut but generate more problems or conflicts.

Another serious issue is the composite nature of the fondom. Bafut is a composite polity with a paramount chief (Fon) under whom are sub-chiefs that administer different ethnic groups of diverse peoples within the fondom. The dominant group in whose hands supreme power resides is the Tikar and the sub-chiefdoms are mostly of Widekum origin. Apparently because power, rather than being rotatory, was held in virtual perpetuity by one group, momentarily, tension will build up and explode. For the fact that in Bafut the control of land was directly linked to control or exercise of power and authority over people, each leader struggled to grabs enough land over which he was to exercise authority. The more land a chief and his followers occupied, the more influence and power the leader in question commanded in the area. Thus, conflictual issues, especially the Mankwi, Banji and Bawum land problems were not unconnected to power struggle. Secondly, conflict related to land revolves around 'rights over people'.

The sub-chiefs in Bafut claim to have brought their people into Bafut from various places of origin. Thus, the paramount Fon's right to exert local authority or control over their people is not legitimate. Such claims have not only threatened the survival or existence of traditional authority in Bafut but have also incited ethnocentrism and other vices in the fondom amongst which is land grabbing and the controversy over redistribution. In recent times, the struggle to control land and local populace increased in magnitude. In this the role of government authorities as an instrument of conflict management or conflict resolution surfaced in Bafut. At one point in time, colonialists (administrators) were on the side of the Fon. After independence the plea of the aggrieved chiefs and their people gained the sympathy of government authorities in the area. Here, the bone of contention was on the wanton land grabbing attitude, the irrational and illogical redistribution of land in the fondom. The uncompromising stand of the Fon, his chiefs and people threatened to tear the fondom apart.

Conclusion

We set out to investigate how and why land issues were linked to power politics in Bafut history. We have discussed the controversy over land invasion and redistribution and our findings show that the right over control and access to land and the meaning of these rights have become a source of growing controversy and debate in many communities including the kingdom of Bafut. The use of land as a means of control or exercise of authority over people is an issue of interest. As land became scarce with a commodity value attached to it, conflicts over the control of right of access to and allocation of its use led to tension between the Fon of Bafut and his sub-chiefs. The Mankwi and the Bawum land problems for example manifested a conflict which portrayed a tussle over the control of rights of access and allocation of land between the Fon and his sub-chief. It also portrayed the intrigues of power politics in the community and how the people got entangled by circumstances in the web of such politics. Yet, the general

arrangements made at the level of the political structure were adulterated by strains and stresses that engendered conflicts.

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Nigeria:
The challenges
of Reintegrating Niger Delta Militants

Hussain Taofik OYEWO

Abstract

The Federal Government of Nigeria granted amnesty to all persons involved in militant activities in the Niger Delta as a last ditch effort to save the region from continued havoc and devastation. The amnesty led to Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) of ex-militants in order to bring peace and development to the area by transforming ex-militants to meaningful and productive citizens. This study assesses the reintegration part of the DDR process. Analysis of the reintegration of ex-militants in the Niger Delta of Nigeria highlights its uniqueness, slightly different from other reintegration practices in Africa. While the Niger Delta reintegration program targets ex-militants, most practices in Africa are planned towards ex-combatants and other associated with fighting groups including communities. The limited participation of others stakeholders, the absence of a commission on DDR, the training of militants beyond the shores of Nigeria, as well as the exclusive funding of the reintegration program by the Nigerian government without donor support, are special features of the reintegration program in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. It is recommended that community participation and collaboration with the private sector would promote job creation for ex-militants and the committee should as well establish a post reintegration program.

Keywords: *Nigeria, Niger Delta Militants, Amnesty, Reintegration.*

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Introduction

The Niger Delta Region of Nigeria is a densely populated region; it extends over 70,000 km² and houses the world's third largest

wetland. It consists of Bayelsa, Rivers, Delta, Akwa Ibom, Cross River and Edo in the South-South, Abia and Imo in the South-East and Ondo State in the South-West region of Nigeria. The region has a population of about 29 million people of over 40 ethnic groups including Kalabari, Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Isoko, Itsekiri, Ilaje are among the inhabitants speaking about 250 different dialects.

The Niger Delta is known for its unique history of contributions to the Nigerian state from pre-colonial days till date. At present, the richly endowed region is the geographical heart of crude oil exploitation where Nigeria earns 99.7 and 90 percent of its export and annual income respectively (Ogege, 2010). In spite of the benefits of the oil and gas economy to the Nigerian state, the oil-rich Niger Delta communities wallow in abject poverty, reinforced by the progressive downward revision of the derivation principle of revenue allocation with each regime, and reduction in the 'share' of federal allocations to oil-producing ethnic minority states from 50% in 1966 to 3% in the mid-1990s. It was only in 1999 that it was again reviewed upward, to 13% derivation. With agriculture forming the dominant activity in the Niger Delta and engaging the most active labour force, extant extraction and exploitation of oil by various the transnational oil companies such as Shell, ExxonMobil, Total, Chevron, Elf, Agip (Eni) and Texaco since the 1960s has caused an adverse environmental impact on the soil, forest and waterways of the Niger Delta communities, through oil spills and gas flares perpetrated by the transnational oil companies (Oluwaniyi, 2011).

Continued environmental degradation, loss of means of livelihood, unemployment, poverty, loss of lives and general underdevelopment in the region led to organised militant insurgency resulting in sabotage of oil pipelines, bunkering, kidnapping and open confrontation with government forces. The federal government however granted presidential pardon to the militants in 2009 in order to restore peace and stability to the region. The essay intends to outline the possible implications of the amnesty proclamation and the subsequent reintegration program to peace and development in the region. To achieve this, the paper will give a theoretical background to the concept of reintegration, then provide country case experiences of reintegration in Africa, reintegration program in the Niger Delta and conclude with the challenges and recommendations.

Theoretical Background to Reintegration

Reintegration is the third element in DDR (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration).

DDR is a collection of project initiatives that come early in post-conflict environments to contribute to security and stability so that recovery, reconstruction and development can begin. Simply put, DDR aims to recover weapons, break down armed groups and help ex-combatants. Following on from this, reintegration can be defined as a way in which fighters change their identity from 'combatant' to 'civilian' and alter their behavior

by abolishing the use of violent means and increasing activities that are approved by the mainstream community. The change in behavior is mostly visible in three arenas: social, political and economic. The political dimension involves ending efforts to achieve political goals using violent means. Instead, combatants enter into mainstream politics at the local, regional or national level either as individual voters or as political advocates or representatives of a larger group. In economic terms, reintegration entails a move away on the part of the combatant from the livelihood support mechanism associated with the militia networks. Instead, as part of economic reintegration, combatants seek long-term gainful employment (formal or informal) or initiate other legitimate and legal income-generating activities, including agriculture, which allows them to support him/ herself and any dependants. Finally, in social terms combatants reduce their contact and reliance on militia networks and enhance their interaction with mainstream communities and family (Torjesen, 2013). Here is where the key theory of restoration comes in.

Reintegration could be seen as a restorative measure which promotes the repairing of harm or correction of crime through negotiation. Instead of the offender facing punishable judgment he/she is reintroduced into the society and damage is corrected. The ultimate aim of restorative justice is one of healing. Through receiving appropriate reparation, the harm done to the victim can be redressed; by making good the damage caused, the offender can be reconciled with the victim and reintegrated back into his/her social and familial networks through such reconciliation and reintegration (Wundersitz & Hetzel, 1996). It could also be viewed as a process in which remorseful offenders, victim and affected community work together in the resolution of a criminal matter. According to the theory the emphasis is on restoration: restoration of the offender in terms of his or her self-respect, restoration of the relationship between offender and victims, as well as restoration of both offenders and victims within the community (Haley, 1996). In this case our concern centre on ex-militants in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria who took up arms against the state, vandalized oil installations, illegally stole oil (oil bunkering), kidnapped foreign and local oil workers and engaged in other activities which destabilized the region and reduced oil production which is the main source of government revenue.

Reintegration is the reinsertion into civilian life of former combatants, together with their families, in order that they resume, economic, social and political life. This generally entails the provision of packages, including cash, in-kind compensation, training on the job and encouragement to embark upon self-help, income generating projects (Macartan & Jeremy, 2005). Reintegration is a long-term and complex social, economic, psychological and political process by which ex-combatants acquire civilian status, through gaining access to civilian forms of work and income and becoming productive members of the society. It is the process through which ex-combatants leave their fighting units, rejoin and are accepted by civilian social group such as families or communities.

Reintegration is multifaceted and includes the ex-combatants vocational training and education, absorption into social and economic activities, reconciliation, psychosocial healing and political participation (Date-Bah, 2010).

Reintegration programs sometimes address the psychological impact of conflict on ex-combatants. In some cases, ex-combatants are traumatized by brutal experiences of conflict and may experience depression, drug and alcohol abuse, violent behavior or even suicide. In this regard it is important to give particular attention to youths affected by conflict (Paul, 2012).

Community acceptance of ex-combatant is and his/her family and the ability to participate in local events and decision making to the same extent as other as other community members are features of social reintegration. Economic reintegration on the other and is geared to the ex-combatants obtaining sustainable jobs and thus having a means of livelihood. Reintegration of ex-combatants requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach: involvement of many bodies – not only national, but also community-based structures (public and private), strong political support, the ex-combatants' personal initiatives, a focus on tackling both the psychological residue of the conflict in the ex-combatants mind as well as in other citizens too (Date-Bah, 2010). These are essential components to be considered in a reintegration program in order to divert their attention from destructive to constructive activities.

Country Case Experiences of Reintegration

African countries like Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Congo-Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and South Africa have had violent conflicts that have led to reintegration programs which are a fundamental precondition for peace, stability and human development in emerging post-conflict societies.

The experiences in West African countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone would be discussed.

Liberia's fourteen years civil war finally ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) signed in Accra on 18 August 2003. Before then and following a lull in the conflict, a DDR program was hastily implemented from 1994 to 1997, but with limited results. The 1997 DDR process was such that reintegration of ex-combatants was focused on while abandoning the needs of refugees, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL) and the international community developed the Result-Focused Transition Frame work (RFTF) as the overarching framework and planning tool for setting goals and actions in ten priority areas called clusters. Cluster two dealt with disarmament, demobilisation, rehabilitation and

reintegration (DDRR). In the RFTF, DDRR corresponds to cluster two. However, in the Community Resettlement and Reintegration Strategy (CRRS), developed by the NTGL and the international community, the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants was aligned with cluster three, which dealt with refugees, returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). The reintegration of ex-combatants was linked to the resettlement process as a way to create a strong framework that will accommodate all groups and facilitate the physical, economic and social reconstruction of the entire society. This approach was justified by the experience of the 1997 DDR process, which showed that "programs aimed only at ex-combatants divided communities and caused considerable resentment on the part of civilians who received no special assistance (Sany, 2006). By 31 December 2004, the official end of the disarmament and demobilization phase, the DDR program had disarmed about 103.019 ex-combatants, which far exceeded the envisaged 38.000 (Date-Bah, 2010). In addition, 28.000 weapons had been collected. The reintegration component of the initial DDR program was not successful as unemployment rate among the ex-combatants was as high as 80 percent at the end of the program. A special reintegration project for residual caseload of demolished combatants was implemented in 2008 to 2009, among other things. It conducted skill training activities in all the counties of the country and built the capacity of the local implementing partners to deliver such training. It also conducted opportunity mapping and SME training for the trained ex-combatants to facilitate their job absorption, in addition it tried to organize the trained ex-combatants into co-operative grouping. At the end of the program in June 2009, only few of the ex-combatants had achieved job absorption. This included a small number that had received apprenticeships and on the job placement in private company (Date-Bah, 2010).

Among the projects major challenges were its rather short duration and the basic level of the skills provided, which did not make the ex-combatants marketable in the highly competitive Liberian labor market. While the project recognized that most of the ex-combatants had to enter into self-employment, the ex-combatants had, however not been linked to a micro-credit institution to facilitate this process (Date-Bah, 2010).

Sierra Leone's eleven years civil war initially ended with the signing of Lome Peace Agreement (LPA) in 1999. The subsequent resumption of the war from 2000 to 2001 finally ended with the Abuja Protocols in 2001. The LPA included provisions for a comprehensive Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program (DDRP) for combatants of the various factions. Its main goal was to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate the ex-combatants in order to ensure security and peace in Sierra Leone. Its key area of focus were to a) collect, register, disable, and destroy all conventional weapons and munitions retrieved from combatants during the disarmament period; b) demobilize approximately 45.000 ex-combatants of the Armed Forces of Sierra Leone, Revolutionary United Front (RUF), Civil Defence Force (CDF) and paramilitary forces; and c) prepare

and support ex-combatants for reinsertion and socio-economic reintegration upon discharge from demobilization centers.

Among the strategies adopted for the program implementation were the establishment of an institutional arrangement which combines national ownership, partnership with key international and national partners, and coordination between the diverse bodies. Overall responsibility of the programs implementation was in the hands of NCDDR (National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and reintegration) and UNAMSIL (UN Mission for Sierra Leone), supported by UN bodies and non UN bodies like USAID, GTZ, EU and NGO's (Date-Bah, 2010).

The reintegration program which ended in 2004, encountered a number of setbacks, including the fact that it was not very comprehensive. Its total duration was four years, a duration that was considered not long enough for a program that requires an open time frame. On the whole, the DDR program was eventually able to setup several disarmament and demobilization centers across the country, it disarmed and demobilized over 71.000 ex-combatants, provided economic reintegration programs covering public works, vocational and apprenticeship skill training, as well as formal education. Social reintegration measures were also implemented, including, promoting forgiveness and reconciliation. Additionally, former child soldiers were provided with family reunification assistance. On the whole, most of the ex-combatants chose to resettle in towns as opposed to rural arrears (Date-Bah, 2010).

Among the programs challenges were inaccessibility to parts of the country, which limited full coverage of some program activities, inadequate capacity of local implementing partners, poor understanding of eligibility criteria and inability to address the war's root causes and to apply the various recovery measures – political, social and economic. Other essential ongoing measures in the country which needed to be taken into account by the reintegration process include security sector reforms, commission, judicial reform and decentralization of government.

It is important to note that the National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in Sierra Leone and Liberia provided direction in terms of structure, framework and the implementation of the program in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, leading to a more imperative planning and coordination. Similarly, multi-donor trust fund helped Sierra Leone and Liberia to carry out DDR program which ordinarily would have been difficult considering the expensive nature of embarking on DDR program anywhere in the world. Social and economic reintegration in Sierra Leone and Liberia helped the various categories of ex-combatants to engage in meaningful and productive ventures that improved their livelihood. Community Participation of reintegration program in both countries also enhanced the success and credibility of the program.

Amnesty Program and Reintegration in the Niger Delta

On the 25th of June, 2009 President Umar Musa Yar'Adua granted amnesty to all persons who have been directly or indirectly involved in militant activities in the Niger Delta. It became necessary as a last ditch effort to save the region from the continued havoc and devastation that was been caused by the activities of the militants which ranged from kidnapping of expatriates and Nigerian oil workers to blowing up of oil installations and direct confrontation with government forces. Their agitation was the constant neglect of the government to environmental degradation, social dislocation and poverty escalation.

In 1966, Isaac Adaka Boro, a former police officer from the delta, recruited, trained and armed men into an organisation known as Niger Delta Volunteer Force. They blew up oil pipelines and engaged the police in gun battle and declared the Niger Delta a republic (Sampson, 2009). Although this only lasted for 12 days as they were arrested and tried for treason, it was enough to create consciousness in the minds of the people.

Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) was founded in 1990 following the signing of Ogoni Bill of Rights which called for political and economic control of Ogoni affairs by Ogoni People. Ken Saro Wiwa a human rights and environmental activist used this platform to demand for a fair share of the proceeds of oil exploration and redress of environmental damage in the Niger Delta. He organised protests in Ogoni land and attended various international forums to voice the protest of Ogoni people to the international community. The development was worrisome to the military government of late General Sani Abacha. On the 10th of November 1995, Ken Saro Wiwa along with eight others was hanged, after been found guilty of killing four Ogoni chiefs by a special military tribunal (Ibeh, 2012). The act ignited worldwide condemnation and Nigeria was suspended from the common wealth of nations and sanctioned by some other international bodies.

From 2004, many militant groups emerged in the Niger Delta composed mostly of young men displeased with the high rate of underdevelopment, environmental degradation, political marginalisation and unemployment.

Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force was founded by Alhaji Mujahid Dokubo-Asari. Asari and his group were players in the lucrative bunkering trade (breaching pipelines to steal crude then refine it locally or selling it abroad) and he openly admits to funding his group through sale of stolen oil, claiming that he is just taking back what had been stolen from Ijaw people (Malina, 2010). In 2004 he threatened to attack oil workers and launched a guerrilla war, he was arrested in 2005 by the Nigerian government on treason charges but was released in 2007.

The Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) launched itself onto the international stage in January 2006 by claiming responsibility for the capture of four

foreign oil workers (Hanson, 2007). Among its demands are the demilitarisation of the Niger Delta; upgrading of infrastructure such as schools, roads, clean water, electricity; and social improvements in the shape of jobs for local communities, the release of jailed activists and compensation for oil pollution (Nodland & Hjellestad, 2007). he group's primary tactic is kidnapping foreign oil workers; it sometimes attacks pipelines and is responsible for at least two car bombings (Hanson, 2007). MEND is a conglomeration of distinct militant groups without a clear hierarchical structure and no single individual head. Its subsidiary groups include Federated Niger Delta Ijaw Communities (FNDIC), Boyloaf, Outlaws and Niger Delta Strike Force (Malina, 2010). Other militant groups are Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV) formed in 2003 by Tom Ateke and People's Liberation Force (PLF) led by Egbiri Papa.

By 2009, the level of insecurity caused by the activities of these militant groups had climaxed to a point where the entire world became apprehensive of the nature of the calamity. Nigeria's crude oil production dropped from 2.3 million (bpd) to 700.000 (bpd), as at May, 2009, Nigeria was losing about N8.7 billion ($58 million) daily due to the violent conflict in the region (Abel, 2011).

In finding lasting solution to the crisis the government of President Yar'Adua set up the Technical committee on Niger Delta headed by former MOSOP leader Ledum Mitee and made up of 45 wise men and women in September 2008. The committee was to collate past records on the Niger Delta issue and advice the federal government forward (Aghalino, 2012). The committee assembled and reviewed over 400 reports, memoran-dum and other documents from local, national and international stakeholders. These included the Arewa Consultative Forum (ACF) in northern Nigeria, Afenifere – the pan-Yoruba socio-cultural body in western Nigeria, Ohan'Eze Ndigbo and the Movement for Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) in the southeastern Ibo and oil companies operating in the Delta (Omunu, 2008). After due analysis, it presented its report in three parts comprising compact with stakeholders in the Niger Delta, the second part laid broad themes and roles for stakeholders in a regional transformation agenda and the third part recommended that the federal government create institu-tion and mechanisms to implement the compact and other medium term processes. The high point of the report is the recommendation of amnesty for militants within a comprehensive demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation programme and a negotiated undertaking by militant groups to stop all kidnappings, hostage taking and attacks on oil installations (Aghalino, 2012). With Federal Government commitment to bringing peace and stability into the Niger Delta region and the country in general, the Federal Government on the 25th of June, 2009, declared unconditional amnesty to all Niger Delta militants in the creeks as well as those facing prosecution in the law courts, including Henry Okah who was standing trial, Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo), Tom Ateke and other militant leaders declared wanted by the Niger Delta security unit,

Joint Task Force (JTF). The President, however, gave an October 4, 2009, deadline for all those who wanted to enjoy the amnesty to take advantage of government magnanimity.

The reintegration of ex-militants in the Niger Delta of Nigeria was a component of the amnesty granted to the militants that was followed by DD&R program. As discussed in an earlier section of this paper, certain factors must be taken into consideration in order to achieve a measure of success in the implementation of reintegration. While it may be difficult to apply the same approaches in all cases, it is important and necessary that lessons from other reintegration programs should be put into consideration in the course of the planning. Reflections on such lessons can assist in reducing challenges in the areas of planning, implementation, framework and management. To what extent has the current reintegration program in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria been able to meet the important elements in reintegration?

By the end of the amnesty period in October 2009, 20.192 ex-militants (and non-militants) comprising 20.049 males and 133 females respectively across the nine states of the Niger Delta denounced militancy, registered for the amnesty programme and surrendered their weapons – consisting of 2.760 arms of different classes and calibre, 287.445 ammunitions, 3.155 magazines, 1.090 dynamite caps, 763 explosives and sticks of dynamite, and 18 gun boats – to the Presidential Amnesty Committee (Oluwaniyi, 2011). In November 2009, 6.166 former militants were added, another 3,642 former militants were added in October 2012 constituting the second and third phase of the amnesty programme and bringing the total to 30.000.

The DDR process started with acceptance of the Amnesty Program after which ex-militants were promised N65, 000 daily and a promise of vocational training and awards of legitimate contracts to camp leaders pending the end of reintegration. Unlike previous experience in other African states where reintegration programs are driven by donors because of the huge resources to implement, the Nigerian government took total ownership of the whole process. The cost of the program in 2012 alone was $405 million and well over $1 billion since the program started (Omojuma, 2012). The government did however seek the international community's support in seeking visas to ex-militants due to travel abroad for educational and vocational training. Oil companies were also charged to develop the Niger Delta region through economic empowerment and job creation for youth. Herbert Lurtini Non-Violence Centre, South Africa and Rhode Island Centre for Non-Violence and Peace Studies, Kingston, Rhode Island, United States also collaborated with the government in the reintegration process (Oluwaniyi, 2011).

The planning and administration of the amnesty program is administered by the Chairman of the Presidential Amnesty Program who is also the Special Adviser to the president on Niger Delta Affairs. It is important to note that other relevant government agencies like the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, The Ministry of Niger Delta,

Niger Delta Development Commission, National Directorate of Employment, National Poverty Eradication Program are not involved in the program. These are agencies with professional staffs whose knowledge and experience would make meaningful contribution to the program.

In keeping up with the key components of reintegration program which are social and economic support to ex-combatants through education support and vocational training, the Presidential Amnesty Office has placed 11,525 of the 30,000 ex-militants in skills acquisition/training centers, as well as in formal education within the country and offshore. Of this number, 4.929 are trained abroad while 6.382 are either in educational institutions or placed in skill acquisition centers in Nigeria. Another set of 6.067 ex-militants were set for deployment within and outside of the country in 2012. While 113 had been assisted in securing employment with maritime, welding and fabrication companies another 30 out 150 ex-militants trained by Proclad Academy were employed by Proclad Group of Companies in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The office facilitated the employment of 40 maritime trainees by the Century Energy Group in Nigeria.

From the analysis of the reintegration of ex-militants in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, it is clear that the program has its uniqueness, slightly different from other reintegration practices in Africa. While the Niger Delta reintegration program targets ex-militants, most practices in Africa are planned towards ex-combatants and other associated with fighting groups including communities. The limited participation of others stakeholders, the absence of a commission on DDR, the training of militants beyond the shore of Nigeria as well as the exclusive funding of the reintegration program by the Nigeria government without donor support are special features of reintegration program in the Niger Delta of Nigeria. The next section of this paper will highlight other issues pertaining to the reintegration of ex-militia combatants from the Niger Delta.

Highlight of Issues in the Reintegration process

An important observation in the reintegration program is the obviously low number of female militants and women generally involved in the process. The vulnerability and roles of women and girls during the conflict and post-conflict were overlooked during the reintegration process. They may not have participated in direct physical combat but were possibly associated with various warring factions as porters, spies, cooks, sex workers. These sets of women were likely rewarded from proceeds from oil bunkering and ransom. It is important to note that these set of women having lost their jobs due to the ending of the insurgency and with the possibility of discrimination or stigmatization from their host community and with no provision for them in the amnesty program they might have no other alternative but deplorable survival options like crime and sex work. The program is also not committed to UNSCR 1325 which specifically recognizes the distinct role of women and girls as agents in armed conflict and emphasizes the

importance of recognizing the special needs of women and girls in the negotiation and implementation of peace agreements including in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process (United Nations Security Council, 2000) .

The Objective of reintegration is to incorporate the ex-combatant and his/her family into civilian society (Social Reintegration) and to attain financial independence in productive activities (Economic Reintegration) (Body, 2005). In terms of economic reintegration the Amnesty Programme is doing fairly well especially with training of professional skilled force. Some of them have graduated but are unable to secure job. The Ledum Mitee committee that preceded the Amnesty program had recommended Amnesty as well as other plans which included undertaking New Town Development, building the Coastal road, building regional railway network, encouraging the private sector to develop industrial clusters, and to complete the long-drawn East-West road. These are macro measure which would not have only created job opportunities for members of the community as well as ex-militants on completion of their trainings but would have led to greater development of the area which in essence would address some of the main issues for the agitation.

The establishment of a national commission on DDR in post-conflict countries allows for better planning and management of reintegration program. Such Institution provides opportunity for stakeholders to operate in a collaborative manner as the case in Liberia and Sierra Leone. DDR programs are modeled in different countries according to the level and damage of conflict. Nigeria didn't have a full scale war and so it shouldn't have an elaborate DDR program like what is obtainable in Liberia and Sierra Leone. However, the Amnesty Program Office should involve a wider range of actors, including from the public sector, private sector, civil society as well as the agitators.

Finally, reintegration programs require huge resources to implement and are mostly driven by donors. Nigeria government should have allowed donor agencies to handle the reintegration process because of their experience in program delivery and account-ability. Experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone has shown that donor agency involvement would not deprive us of local ownership and the billions of Naira spent on the reintegration process would have gone into much needed enduring and inclusive developmental projects in the region.

Challenges

In spite of the remarkable gains of the amnesty program in terms of peace, security and development, there are some challenges that must be noted:

The amnesty program did not incorporate in its package credible and comprehensible consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. It refused to use the bottom-up approach which would address the main issue and have a wider range of ownership. First, the

opinion of the inhabitants who suffered the brunt of the environmental degradation was ignored. Secondly, the ex-militants who were the foot soldiers were not also involved in planning; rather the government collaborated with their commandants who seemed to be only interested in their personal expansion of wealth and power. The commanders were also accused of multiplying the number of their followers in other to get a bigger share of the amnesty fund.

The third phase of the amnesty program has been besieged with series of issues on ex-militants agitation to be included in the amnesty program. They claim that some of the people that were included in previous phases were not actually ex-militants but those that were favored by the amnesty office or ex-militant commanders. Some of them stormed the National Assembly to appeal their case and have vowed to return to the creeks if they were not included in the next phase. It remains unclear if these are indeed ex-combatants or just youths that want to benefit from the program.

There have been complaints about the privileged access to reintegration enlistments by some ex-militant leaders and their camp at the expense of others. For instance, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) awarded pipeline surveillance contract to companies owned by ex-militants Leaders Government Tompolo Ekpumopolo, Mujaheedin Asari-Dokubo, Ateke Toms, Bipobiri Ajube and Ebikabowei Victor Ben (Boyloaf). These contracts and other possible benefits have been protested as being discriminatory. For example ex-militants in Aqua Ibom State protested in Uyo in September 2012 over non-inclusion in surveillance contracts awarded by the NNPC and lopsided and deliberate neglect of Aqua Ibom people in the Amnesty Program.

The Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) has threatened to resume hostilities in the Country. This is in response to MEND leader Henry Okah who was convicted for the October 1, 2010 bombing in Abuja. They said the organization would target multinational oil firms and South African firms operating in the country. These has great tendency to disrupt the reintegration process as some of the ex-militants on training could be recalled.

The amnesty program exclusively targeted only militants without consideration for the victims of militancy and hostage taking in the region. Mothers who have lost children, children who had lost fathers, families that have lost homes and persons who have been displaced by the conflict were not included in the amnesty package, presumably as a result of their lack of means of violence. Inclusive amnesty programs normally provide benefits and assistance packages for disabled combatants, dependent children of ex-combatants, female ex-combatants, child soldiers, women partners of ex-combatants, vulnerable persons, internally displaced persons, war affected civilians, ex-combatant communities, amnestied political prisoners, and elderly persons connected to armed groups.

It is also important to note that there are youths in the Niger Delta that did not join the militant groups to cause havoc against the state. These are young, hardworking men and women, some of them are university graduates. This group of people feels disenfranchised, as they were totally sidelined in the process. This sends a worrying message that for youths to benefit from trainings that would further develop their potentials as Niger Delta indigenes they must raise arms against the state.

The role of communities in facilitating resettlement and reintegration of ex-combatants into civilian and community life is very important to any sustainable and effective amnesty program. The host communities are regarded as part of reintegration program and should be empowered to participate in the design, planning and execution of reintegration programs. In the Niger Delta amnesty program, poor community reintegration makes for reluctance of ex-militants to return to home communities. The lack of good community integration program is a big factor in the relocation of ex-combatants to urban areas with less likely concern for social stigmatization rather than return to home communities.

Some of the ex-militants have been showing unruly characters in their various training centers, causing disruptions and embarrassing the government. Twenty eight out of 100 ex-militants sent for a training program in Trinidad and Tobago have been deported. Trinidad and Tobago considered them inimical and threatening the good relationship between Nigeria and the country. Eight ex-militants were deported by the Sri Lankan government for breaching ethical contract. The Chief Executive Officer of the Presidential Amnesty Program had to travel to secure the release of twenty seven ex-militants from detention in Ghana. They were accused of unruly behavior in the hotel where they were staying as part of their welding training course. Some ex-militant have also been caught with illicit drugs in Nigerian Camps. All of these have been posing challenges for the Amnesty Program Office as some countries are reluctant to accept them cause of negative experiences from other countries.

No concrete measure has been taken by the federal government to address the root causes of the conflict and proffer solutions as to how the whole region can be reintegrated back into the system. Main critical issues such as poverty, corruption, unemployment, alienation, exploitation, marginalization, degradation, health amongst other issues are not tackled and they endanger the unstable peace and security in the Niger Delta region. The foregoing have shown community members, ex-militants that are still alienated from the amnesty program and the only way you can be sure to keep them off arms against the state is for there to be meaningful development in their area that would give them the opportunity to harness their potentials. If not the post amnesty program would become a vicious circle to benefit a few. Like the stories of Isaac Adaka Boro and Ken Saro Wiwa has shown us the Niger Delta agitation would continue, probably in more sophisticated ways until the root causes are resolved.

Conclusion

This essay critically assessed the reintegration of former militants in the Niger Delta of Nigeria, focusing on the root causes and the trend that led to the amnesty program and the implementation of the post amnesty program. The reintegration program focused mainly ex-militants without involving members of the community. It is important to note that the neglect of unemployed youths or those that suffered damages in the cause of conflict might lead to resentment among the communities. It is important that the program should be communal in nature, meet the needs of the communities as well as that of the ex-militants.

The Niger Delta reintegration program has low women participation. Women and men assume different roles in combat and should not be seen from socio-cultural angle only. The program should be all embracing to accommodate women needs which are sometimes different from men's need. It is also important to engage the stigmas and community cultures that retrain women and girl's successful reintegration. Unsuccessful reintegration of women may result in them having to resort to sex work or other activities that might constitute security risk in future.

At the root of the Niger Delta conflict are widespread poverty, poor sanitation and waste disposal infrastructure, low enterprise development outside oil and gas sector, poor electricity and pipe borne water distribution due to the terrain, poor quality educational and health facilities, and severe environmental degradation. The reintegration process should be holistic in dealing with all this agitation through the construction of social amenities such as good roads, schools, hospitals, housing, electricity, water, well distributed economic growth, improvement in security and transparent governance.

The government should adopt a fair revenue allocation formula. Those whose communities have abundant oil and gas deposits as natural endowment should be compensated. A credible revenue allocation formula would lessen agitation, tension and perception of unfairness on the part of the Niger Delta inhabitants.

The eventual success of the programme to me is based on genuine democratic principles of participation accountability and transparency. The committee should work closely with other relevant public institutions with professional and experienced staff that can contribute to the ongoing programme. It is also important that the committee work closely with private sector in order to absorb the militants at the end of their training.

Finally, programs like this stand to face challenges especially in the course of implementation. At this point, it is my opinion that the Amnesty committee should address some of the identified inadequacies in the program in order to make it more effective. Notwithstanding these challenges, the bold initiative by the Nigerian government should be commended. Since the commencement of the amnesty programme the country has enjoyed relative peace in the Niger Delta area.

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Waziristan:
Escalation and De-Escalation Orientation of War and Peace Journalism Op-eds in Pakistani Newspapers

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Abstract

Understanding the manifest and latent content of conflict news coverage provides an insight into dynamics of conflict representation. This study analysed four op-ed articles, written by four prominent experts of the subject, during the 2007 Waziristan conflict. The analysis was based on Wilhelm Kempf's model of conflict escalation and de-escalation focus of media coverage. These articles were selected from 24 op-eds, published in two high-circulation English-language Pakistani newspapers, on the basis of their high levels of war and peace journalism orientation. These articles addressed, separately, two events in which an internal rift within the militant groups (Waziri-Uzbek fight, March 18 - April 12, 2007) was followed by a military operation launched by the Pakistan Army against the militants (War in Waziristan, July 24 - August 24, 2007). The analysis showed that war journalism op-eds typically had more escalation themes and peace journalism op-eds had more de-escalation themes. However, the de-escalation themes were not exclusive to peace journalism op-eds and vice-versa. Overall, op-eds presented diverse and extreme views, especially about conflict resolution. It was also found that abstract language and attribution of previously published reports apparently contributed towards escalation themes in the four articles, and concrete language and original reporting mostly added to de-escalation themes.

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Scholars have defined the term 'conflict' as a disagreement or interference between two or more individuals or interdependent groups (Cupach & Canary, 1997; Martin & Nakayama, 2010; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). The disagreement involves a "perceived or real incompatibility of goals, values, expectations, processes, or outcomes" (Martin & Nakayama, 2010, p. 431). Pruitt (2001) argued that conflicts can broadly be categorized as either clashes of two or more parties (overt conflicts), which would include everything from fist fights to wars, or a perceived divergence of interests (subjective conflicts).

From the perspective of journalism, conflict is not only considered a significant criterion for news selection and coverage (Clayman & Reisner, 1998; Gans, 2004; Golan & Wanta, 2003; Schultz, 2007; Shoemaker, Danielian, & Brendlinger, 1991), but also it is often a way in which journalists interpret and present different types of newsworthy incidents such as political developments (Neuman, Just, & Crigler, 1992; De Vreese, 2005). According to Kempf (2002a), the intractable conflicts lead journalists towards war discourse. The range and reach of the media and its influence on the masses instigate the warring parties to exploit it for their propaganda aim. Media can no longer be seen in the framework of a simple "stimulus-response model" but in today's world it serves an important mediating role during conflict and war (Lynch, 2003).

As a part of the democratic process, the information sharing involves presentation of both positive and negative connotations (Kempf, 2002b). The op-ed acts as a journalistic contribution to democracy by presenting a platform for debate on competing ideologies of an issue of public importance (Song, 2004). As an advocacy tool, op-eds are written by newspaper staff, column writers, policy experts and issue advocates to influence public opinion and policy (Golan & Carroll, 2012; Kowalchuk & McLaughlin, 2009). The op-eds which are published in esteemed venues are inclined to gain status and attention for intellectuals (Coser, 1997). The diversity of the ideas discussed in the op-eds provides different viewpoints to the reader to make an informed opinion about a certain issue. However, this creates the problem of meaning because the meaning of the text is not always at the surface level (Kempf, 2002b). Since the perception of conflict is a subjective thing, questions focused at identification of the conflict object and its transformation into satisfactory solution for conflict party can change the war discourse into peace discourse (Kempf, 2003).

The present study is focused on the qualitative analysis for escalation and de-escalation aspects of op-eds, published in two high-circulation English-language Pakistani newspapers during the 2007 Waziristan conflict, which showed the highest levels of war and peace journalism orientation (Lee & Maslog, 2005) during preliminary analysis. The following section provides the debate on theoretical and epistemological evaluations of war and peace and escalation and de-escalation.

Peace Journalism and the Escalation and De-Escalation Model

In today's globalised world, where conflicts and war in one corner of the world affect the other corner of the world, it is very important for the world peace and security to contrive, amend and formulate effective ways of handling conflict. We have to look for the mediating systems and procedures that can give us deeper understanding of the conflict in order to reduce its impact (Shiner, 2007). The media and peace research is focused on looking at the ways media can be used for conflict prevention and de-escalation (Luostarinen, 2002).

Conflict is treated as a news value in coverage of war (Galtung & Ruge, 1973; Lee & Maslog, 2005). This treatment forces coverage to be sensationalist and commercial (Allen & Seaton, 1999; Hachten, 1999; Toffler & Toffler, 1995). Journalists themselves often consider sensationalism and commercialism as antithetical to journalistic profes-sionalism and quality (Bernstein, 1992), even though there is no academic consensus on this issue (Grabe, Zzsdehou, & Barnett, 2001). However, these tendencies, especially in the news coverage of violent conflicts such as wars and insurgencies, led communi-cation scholars to propose the concepts of war and peace journalism (Galtung & Ruge, 1965; Galtung, 1998; Kempf, 2002; Lynch & McGoldrick, 1997). At the heart of these suggestions was the belief that news media affect the developments of war and peace and this influence through coverage could be exploited for responsible reporting and peace building efforts.

Galtung (1998b) defined war journalism as the prevalent media practice of covering a conflict as if it was a two-party battle that would inevitably end with victory for one party and defeat for the other. This is akin to the model of sports journalism in which reporters focus on winners and losers in their coverage of sports events because the athletes are locked in win-or-lose games. Peace journalism, on the other hand, would shift focus away from a win-lose scenario. It would talk of ways to both transform the conflict into an issue that affects more than just two parties and provide an opportu-nity to resolve the conflict (Galtung, 1998b). Peace Journalism does not see the conflict and violence of war on the surface level but its focus is on the "ABC context of conflict: attitudes, behaviour and contradictions – including underlying patterns of structural and cultural violence" (Hackett, 2007). In the same vein, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) suggested that in peace journalism, the reporters and editors create opportunities for readers to consider non-violent responses to conflicts.

Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) believed that "news is about change" and journalists who are aware of conflict concepts will be able to report better on conflict issues and begin to view conflicts as not always negative but also constructive. To gain theoretical understanding of a conflict, it is often divided into stages, usually on a curve and two of the most crucial stages of a conflict are escalation and de-escalation. Escalation occurs

when the parties involved in a conflict begin to use "increasingly harsh contentious tactics" (Pruitt, 2001). Pruitt (2001) stated that escalation could consist of the reactions of one party instigated by the persistent annoyance caused by another party. Rubin, Pruitt and Kim (1994) considered escalation to be based on reciprocity of aggressive behaviour, such that if one actor behaves aggressively, the other responds in kind.

While escalation represents increasingly harsh tactics by the conflict parties, de-escalation refers to the stage when tensions are diffused. Kriesberg (1987) described de-escalation as a multidimensional phenomenon which would reduce the intensity of a conflict in one or more dimensions. It could also be a decrease in the extent of the conflict, including a contraction of conflict parties, and a general move towards the settlement of the conflict (Kriesberg, 1987). It is considered duty of everyone to not only prevent conflict escalation but also to divert it from destructive to a constructive path (Pearce & Littlejohn, 1997; Kriesberg, 1998). The accessibility of the journalists to the conflict scene make it possible for them to conduct background research of the conflict, the motivational factors of the actors, and the process of decision making (Carruthers, 2000; Dor, 2001). They can play a crucial role for both the escalation and de-escalation processes. This shows the face of peace journalism which is focused on democracy and participatory approach (Peleg, 2007).

Research on the escalation and de-escalation themes in conflict news coverage owes largely to the work of Austrian-born psychologist Wilhelm Kempf. Kempf (2003) explained that the controversy about war and peace journalism is mainly due to the nature of role journalism can play with reference to the aggressive interaction and construction of social reality in the conflict process. Kempf (2002a) argued that journalists' inclination towards violence as a measure of escalation, covering conflicts within a win-lose framework and closeness with elite sources, might lead news media to fuel conflict escalation through their coverage. He suggested "de-escalation-oriented conflict coverage" as an intermediary step in the move away from propaganda towards peace journalism. With de-escalation-oriented coverage, journalists would dismiss simplistic good-evil-type dichotomies in news (2002a, p.71).

There are six areas or escalation steps, as identified by Kempf (2002a, 2003), in which the perception of conflict gets distorted: Conceptualization of the conflict, valuation of rights and aims, evaluation of actions, emotional involvement, identification of others and overall direction. These areas could be used to check escalation or de-escalation orientation of news coverage and train journalists to follow the de-escalation approach.

In a study that measured audience responses towards escalation and de-escalation oriented news coverage, Kempf (2006) found out that the audience accepts de-escalation coverage "no less" than regular coverage (p. 7). Schaefer (2006) determined that escalation-oriented texts produce a higher acceptance of military measures taken in a conflict than de-escalation-oriented texts.

Thiel and Kempf (2014) subjected German readers to either articles about a Palestinian suicide attack or an Israeli military operation to check how they would respond to escalation or de-escalation oriented framing. The researchers found a direct effect and complex interaction, similar to cognitive dissonance, of the texts with the readers. This complex interaction was influenced by the readers' individual thought processes. On the basis of the findings, Thiel and Kempf (2014) argued that the propaganda function of coverage might be neutralized by the peace frame, although this would not be a simple exercise.

Ersoy (2010) looked at the way five Turkish and five Greek-Cypriot newspapers covered the Cyprus conflict and found out that Cypriot journalists do not seek solutions for the conflict themselves as they might have been if they were practicing de-escalation-oriented journalism rather the journalists wait for the decision-making elites for measures of conflict resolution.

Putnam and Shoemaker (2007) analysed 193 articles written about the Edwards Aquifer conflict in south-central Texas, which was at the center of an environmental disaster controversy. The researchers found out that the news reports labelled the issue as a "battle" and pitted the stakeholders against each other. There was also an increase in escalation coverage at the second of four major turning points in the controversy as the media reported on "non-negotiable issues" and "failed settlements" among other things (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007, p. 5). However, this rise in escalation/de-escalation-oriented coverage was found to follow developments in the conflict.

Even though researchers have started to employ the escalation/de-escalation-orientation framing in their analysis of conflict news coverage, the bulk of existing research usually includes analysis of war or peace journalism in conflict news. Analysis of news coverage of diverse internal and international conflicts in four Asian countries at the turn of the century revealed a dominance of war journalism features (Lee & Maslog, 2005).

Based on the selected op-eds, the present research provides an understanding of the conflict; conflict parties, their rights, intentions, and actions; the emotional involvement of the conflict; and how the conflict parties were socially identified in "us" versus "them" discourse in the articles.

The Method

The selection of op-eds for qualitative analysis was done on the basis of the results of quantitative data. The basic model for quantitative analysis was the modified coding categories used by Lee and Maslog (2005) and Lee, Maslog and Kim (2006) driven by Galtung's peace journalism theory (Galtung, 1986, 1998a). The model's indicators, based on war and peace journalism orientation, comprised of two premises: approach and language. Based on the initial scrutiny of the data, only eight indicators from the

approach themes were selected from Lee and Maslog's model (2005, 2006) and new coding categories of war preparation (in war journalism) and negotiation process (in peace journalism) were added in the coding criteria. There was no change in the language themes. The approach based criteria for war and peace journalism respectively included: (1) visible or invisible effects of war, (2) elite or people orientation, (3) differences or agreements, (4) focus on here and now or causes and effects, (5) good and bad dichotomy or no labelling, (6) two or multiple party involvement, (7) partisan or non-partisanship, (8) zero-sum or win-win approach, and (9) war preparation or negotiation process. The language-based criteria included (1) demonizing, (2) victimizing, and (3) emotive words. The presence of the particular indicator is counted as 1 each time it is revealed in the op-ed (Lee & Maslog, 2005).

A total of two war journalism and two peace journalism oriented op-eds which had maximum indicators showing their orientation were selected from *Dawn* and *The News* for qualitative analysis. These op-eds were written by four prominent experts respected for their expertise and analysis on terrorism, militancy and geostrategic politics.

The Case of Pakistani Tribal Areas: Conflict in Waziristan

The Pakistani Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA, tribal areas) are divided into administrative units called agencies and frontier regions. It has seven agencies (Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, North Waziristan and South Waziristan) and six Frontier Regions or FRs (Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Kohat, Lakki Marwat, Peshawar and Tank). In 2001, these areas got global attention in the wake of US invasion in Afghanistan (Nawaz, 2009). Due to their geostrategic importance, even in the past, these areas involved the interests of Britain, India, Afghanistan, Russia, China, Turkey and even France (Ahmed, 1978).

With the war in Afghanistan and the fall of Taliban regime, many former Taliban leaders were thought to have crossed the border into Pakistan and settled in the tribal areas, along with some of their foreign supporters. Troops were deployed to stop cross border insurgency and the military operations were started to counter militancy. However, these operations posed a big challenge for the Pakistani government (Cheema, 2008). The operations backfired when the security forces failed to score a decisive victory (Zissis & Bajoria, 2006). The difficult terrain and inaccessibility of these areas created a natural defence for the militants. Throughout history, the tribal areas have been known for their strong retaliation against any armed intervention (Caroe, 1958; Ahmed, 1978; Roe, 2010). The most affected agencies during the conflict were North and South Waziristan, collectively referred to as Waziristan. The armed conflict that started from these agencies aggravated violence across other tribal areas and the rest of the country.

The allegiances during the Waziristan conflict saw multiple shifts. There was bitterness among the local people and local militants against the military action by Pakistan

Army after the Wana Operation in 2004. Then, there was a fight among local and foreign militants known as the Waziri-Uzbek Fight in 2007 and the same year the War in Waziristan between Pakistan Army and local and foreign militants. The Waziri-Uzbek Fight and the subsequent War in Waziristan provided an interesting case for analysing the conflict dynamics of the tribal areas.

The Waziri-Uzbek Fight started on March 18, 2007, when local militant leader Maulvi Nazir accused the Uzbeks of killing an Al-Qaeda linked Arab, Saiful Adil. The local militants and tribesmen demanded the Uzbeks to leave, or to disarm. The fight, which lasted for 25 days, resulted in the deaths of foreign militants and local tribesmen. This fight reflected the rift between the militant groups and first gave rise to the debate of 'good' and 'bad' Taliban, a debate which is still a part of the mainstream discourse (Siddiqa, 2011; Nasir, 2015; Ricks, 2015; Johnson, 2016). However, the opportunity to cash this break was short-lived. The Lal Mosque (also known as Red Mosque) siege in Pakistan's capital Islamabad sparked the conflict again. The siege was followed by three consecutive suicide attacks and the ceasefire between the government and militants broke down. These events led to the war in Waziristan on July 24, 2007, which went on uninterrupted until August 24, 2007. Within four years the conflict reached Bajaur agency, which is more than 400 kilometers away from Waziristan and the conflict in Waziristan has had a strong impact on Pakistan through aggravated terrorist violence (South Asian Terrorism Portal, 2016).

The Selected Op-eds

For the event of Waziri-Uzbek Fight, the op-ed with war journalism orientation was selected from *The News:* "Time to Act" by Zaman Khan Afridi (2007), a local expert. The writer discussed active action against foreign militants in South Waziristan. The article mentioned that the local tribesmen had been clashing with foreign militants and had realized that the foreign militants were an obstacle to development. It considered military action against foreign militants to be appropriate. The hatred between the tribesmen and foreign militants was mentioned with the portrayal of foreign militants as aggressors. It highlighted the failure of the *Jirga* (a consultative assembly or council of tribal elders that discusses issues of common interest and passes out judgements) but also supported democracy and local development. This op-ed was of 1230 words and had 32 indicators related to war journalism and 14 indicators related to peace journalism. The quantitative analysis showed that although the author highlighted the causes and resultant consequences of the fight and discussed the negotiation process, the main focus remained on elite-oriented debate, labelling, partisan approach, visible effects of the fight and zero-sum approach for dealing with the conflict.

The peace journalism op-ed for the Waziri-Uzbek fight was from *Dawn*: "The Game is Up for Uzbeks" by Ismail Khan (2007). Khan is the Dawn's editor for news from Northern

Pakistan and an expert commentator on the politics and militancy issues in the tribal areas. During his long career, he has supervised the paper's coverage of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, the US invasion of Afghanistan, the subsequent militant attacks in the Khyber-Pakthunkhwa province and the military operations in the tribal areas. The conflict representation in Khan's opinion piece brought out differences between the Uzbek militants and the locals but was less confrontational in its evaluations of the actions of all militants. This op-ed was of 1199 words and had 25 peace journalism indicators and 12 war journalism indicators. The author mainly elaborated upon the causes and consequences of the fight to provide the context to the reader. The author did slightly discuss the visible effects of the fight, labelling, two-party orientation and partisan approach. However, he balanced the discussion by suggesting the importance of the negotiation process and highlighted areas of agreement.

For War in Waziristan, the op-ed with war journalism orientation was selected from *Dawn:* "Unceasing US Pressure" by Tariq Fatemi (2007). Fatemi is a career diplomat, who served as Pakistan's ambassador to the US, Jordan and Belgium among other countries. He is currently the special assistant for foreign affairs to the Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. Fatemi's article discussed the increasing US pressure on Pakistan to take steps against militants. It mentioned the US inclination to hunt terrorists in Pakistani territory and the Pakistani government's reaction to this approach. It also criticised the September 2006 accord and denied the common gains from the end of the war. This op-ed had a word count of 1824 words and had 37 war journalism indicators and 16 peace journalism indicators. Though the author highlighted causes and consequences of the war and few suggestions of win-win approach, the article's major emphasis was on stressing differences, elite orientation, partisanship and zero-sum approach.

The peace journalism op-ed for the same event was selected from *The News*: "Jirgas still the best option in Waziristan" by Rahimullah Yusufzai (2007). Yusufzai is a veteran journalist and analyst of FATA politics, history and militancy. This article was centred at stressing the importance of *jirgas*. It focused on unsuccessful negotiations regarding the conflict; the increasing clashes between militants and military; the importance given to a military solution by the US; and the problems for locals and the media to make its case for the effectiveness of the *jirgas*. The op-ed highlighted the negative impact of the use of military force. It empathized with victims on both sides of the conflict and tried to deconstruct the threat by presenting an unbiased assessment of militants' intentions and behaviour by discussing trust and cooperation. It avoided identifying with military leaders and talked about the *Iirga* members in terms of their role for peace in the area. The op-ed was of 1278 words having 27 peace journalism indicators and 13 war journalism indicators. The writer explained the context of the war by describing causes and consequences, multiple conflict party orientation, non-partisan approach and the importance of negotiation process for peace prospect. He provided both visible

and invisible effects of war and war preparation. Some emotive words and victimising language was used that indicates the war journalism orientation, nonetheless, the peace journalism indicators outweigh them.

The present study uses qualitative content analysis to provide an understanding of how the selected op-eds used escalation and de-escalation themes for contextualizing their argument. The qualitative checklist by Kempf (2002a) was used to evaluate how the conflict was conceptualized, how the rights, intentions and actions of the war parties were evaluated, which kinds of emotions related to representation of the conflict parties were reflected, what were the social identification patterns of conflict parties mentioned by the writers and how personal predicaments were reflected, and finally what was the overall direction of the articles.

The Escalation and De-Escalation Orientation Analysis

In order to understand the discussion of the escalation and de-escalation themes in the articles, it is important to first outline how the op-eds presented social construction and the role of the war parties.

In the war journalism op-ed on Waziri-Uzbek fight, Afridi (2007) divided conflict parties into internal and external actors. He presented foreign militants, local tribesmen/militants, Pakistani government, Afghanistan government and the *jirga* (a neutral third party) as conflict parties. The attitude of the external actors is depicted as hostile and conflict oriented. The foreign militants were said to be involved in murders of tribal elders and acting as obstacles to development while the local tribesmen were presented as patriotic and prone to a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In the peace journalism op-ed on the same event, Khan (2007) also identified five parties involved in the conflict. Three of these parties were actively involved in the fight, namely local (Waziri tribesmen) militants, foreign (Uzbek) militants and Taliban from Afghanistan. The other two were the government of Pakistan and the US forces. The writer mentioned a change in militant hierarchy, backed by Afghani Taliban, which created a local tribal rift and a consequent divide between local tribesmen and Uzbek fighters.

For the War in Waziristan, the conflict parties presented in Fatemi's op-ed (2007) were the government of Pakistan, the US government and establishment, Al-Qaeda militants and Taliban. This op-ed was mostly based on the statements used by the government of Pakistan and the US establishment. The conflict parties were divided into three major groups: 'terrorists', Pakistan and the US. The militants were described with labels such as "evil" and were alarming, reenergizing, enhancing their attacking capabilities, and regaining momentum. The op-ed mostly highlighted the US perspective on the issue and its resentment against the government of Pakistan for not taking enough action against militants.

The peace journalism op-ed by Yusufzai (2007) was also written in the backdrop of the War in Waziristan. The identified conflict parties in the op-ed were foreign militants, local militants, local tribesmen, US, Pakistani government and the *jirga* as a mediating third party for conflict resolution. The writer presented a critical overview of the role of the conflict parties. While mentioning militants scrapping a peace agreement with the government, he pointed out the violations by the Pakistani government. He presented the imposing role of the US government and the problems faced by the local tribesmen and journalists.

The six areas identified by Kempf's analysis model (Kempf, 2002a; Bläsi, Jaeger, Kempf, & Möckel, 2004) were evident in all op-eds, with war journalism op-eds typically having more escalation themes and peace journalism op-eds having more de-escalation themes. However, de-escalation themes were not entirely absent from war journalism op-eds and vice versa. Also, one peace journalism oriented op-ed (Khan, 2007) showed a balance between escalation and de-escalation themes for the "overall direction" dimension of the selected model, which includes elite versus people-oriented sourcing and devaluation or better understanding of the opponents, among other indicators. The following is a discussion on the way the escalation and de-escalation themes of the six areas of Kempf's analysis model were reflected in the analysed op-eds:

1. The Conceptualization of the Conflict

In the war journalism oriented op-ed (Afridi, 2007) related to the fight between Waziris and Uzbeks, the emphasis was mainly on antagonism. The writer refuted, questioned and downgraded peaceful alternatives. The conceptualization of the conflict was mainly zero-sum. The emphasis on military values and the use of military force for eradicating foreign militants was emphasized. The writer showed support for democracy and the awareness of local people to overcome hindrance of foreign militants in social, economic and cultural development. However, the obstacles to peace were portrayed as overwhelming. The op-ed started by mentioning a gunfight between local tribesmen and foreign militants. It focused on the number of people that got killed and captured. The Uzbek militants' act of launching "terrorism" inside and outside Pakistan was highlighted. The failure of *jirga* process was highlighted although the idea of engaging influential people such as Maliks (or tribal elders), clerics, and political figures into a *jirga* for negotiation process was mentioned around the end. The conceptualization of conflict in the peace journalism oriented op-ed by Khan (2007) concerning the same event was, also, mostly escalation oriented. The writer emphasized antagonism and described killings, strength of the militants, use of ammunition and prospects of the fight which may lead further to inter-tribal clashes. However, he also mentioned some de-escalation related aspects including the abandonment of dividing protagonists into two groups.

In the war journalism op-ed related to War in Waziristan, the conceptualization of the conflict by Fatemi (2007) was mainly zero-sum with strong emphasis on refutation, questioning and downgrading of peaceful alternatives. The obstacles to peace were emphasized even though the writer showed support for democracy. In the peace journalism op-ed on the same event, Yusufzai (2007) questioned the appropriateness of the use of military force and talks about the "collateral damage" as a result of the militants' attacks and military operations. He explained the sufferings of the people to highlight the negative effect of the use of force and also pointed out the pressure journalists in the tribal areas are facing from "militant groups, government intelligence agencies, tribal chiefs and criminal gangs" that made it difficult to report the situation from that area.

2. Evaluation of War Parties' Rights and Intentions

The evaluation of the rights and intentions of the war parties was not deeply explored in the articles. This dimension appeared most vividly in the peace journalism oriented article, related to the Waziri-Uzbek fight, where Khan (2007) presented a realistic self-critical evaluation of the war parties. He explained the government's misperception about the strength of militants and the lack of ingenuity in the course of events. Afridi's war journalism article (2007) on the said event was more focused on the war parties' actions than on their rights and intentions.

For the War in Waziristan, the war journalism-oriented op-ed by Fatemi (2007) showed more emphasis on the incompatibility of interests and a denial of common interests. He critically evaluated the intentions of militants by quoting different US officials. He showed scepticism about their underlying intentions and their lack of seriousness for maintaining peace. Yusufzai (2007), however, showed inclination towards realistic self-critical evaluation, respect of the rights and intentions of militants and the need for democratic steps. The writer mentioned that the media are only presenting a "sanitized version" of events by the government due to their lack of access to Waziristan. He talked about the federal government's violation of a ceasefire agreement when it redeployed troops at check points, the lack of interest by federal government and FATA secretariat to see the on-ground situation and the inability of the government to meet the challenge.

3. Evaluation of War Parties' Actions

Discussing the Waziri-Uzbek Fight, Afridi (2007) presented reports about the use of pressure and relentlessness on the part of the militants, the need for military action, escalation and an end to cooperative behaviour. The writer justified the stance of locals and the government of Pakistan. He condemned the actions of foreign militants by suggesting that "local tribesmen are tired of the excesses being committed by the foreigners mostly of Uzbek Islamic Movement". The foreign militants were presented

as the cause of deteriorating social and cultural norms in the area and as an obstacle to progress by causing social problems and unrest. In the peace journalism oriented op-ed by Khan (2007) written about the same event, the foreign militants' actions were given a less confrontational evaluation. The writer described how they came to Pakistan from Afghanistan and the welcome they received from the local Waziri tribe. He kept on explaining their group dynamics and the reasons for the clash between the local tribesmen and the foreign militants. These reasons included: realization by the Taliban and Waziris that Uzbeks were becoming a liability due to their alleged involvement in target killings, their alliance with ex-commander Maulvi Omar, the power structure of the tribal system, their reluctance in fighting against the US forces in Afghanistan, and their inclination towards fighting Pakistan. The writer presented self-critical evaluation of the actions by the government. He used an escalation-oriented theme by presenting reports about the use of pressure, relentlessness, military action and escalation.

In the war journalism oriented op-ed by Fatemi (2007) in the context of the War in Waziristan, the US was presented as the third party that was contributing to conflict escalation by exerting pressure rather than mediating. The writer claimed the US establishment reproached the then-Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf for the September 2006 peace accord that gave Al-Qaeda time to regroup. The statements related to using military force against militants were presented several times. The article showed mixed statements from the US establishment which at time presented Musharraf as a strong, trustworthy ally and at times he was mentioned as a "military dictator" who they feared was "playing on both sides of the street". The writer suggested that Musharraf was only considered useful by the US if he recognized the threat in their respect.

Yusufzai (2007) discussed actions of the war parties in detail. He discussed the news media's inaccessibility to Waziristan due to government and other factors, the government's violation of the peace agreement with the deployment of troops, and the government's inability to meet the challenge. The writer pointed out that during the peace period no high official from the FATA secretariat or federal government visited the area to review the accord and to monitor its progress. The writer asserted that the problem was not with arranging a *jirga* for conflict resolution but with the implementation of the *jirga*'s decisions, which was evident because the North Waziristan accord had been scrapped. He stressed the importance of proper monitoring of the peace treaties. The writer showed his support for cooperative behaviour and explored possibilities of common gain. On the escalation side, he wrote about the failure of peace agreements but he still supported the negotiation process. He presented the role of the US as pressurizing rather than mediating. The writer condemned militants' actions and reported against military action and relentlessness regarding negotiations.

4. Emotional Involvement in the Conflict

The analysis of the emotional involvement in the conflict provides us an insight into how these articles have used emotional connotations to contextualize their assessment. In his war journalism oriented op-ed, Afridi (2007) focused on the viciousness of the militants. The writer said that local people were looking for government's help to evacuate the area from the foreign militants. The presence of foreign militants was a "major obstacle" in development and they were the reason for social and economic problems, unrest, and closures of schools. Local people had divided opinion regarding foreign militants. On the contrary, several examples of empathy-laden emotional involvement were identified in the peace journalism oriented article by Khan (2007). The writer talked about the events after a peace accord was scrapped and said that the death toll is getting higher both among soldiers and tribal fighters and the violence spread to the areas which were previously unaffected. In another passage, the op-ed pointed out the sufferings of the local population due to attacks by militants, army operations, roadblocks, inflation due to short supplies, slow commercial activities, and problems with basic utilities such as electricity and the telephone system.

Fatemi (2007) quoted hard statements by the US establishment while discussing the War in Waziristan. The focus was on the mistrust and denial of possibilities for cooperation. Yusufzai (2007), however, showed empathy with victims of both sides and tried to deconstruct threats by presenting an unbiased assessment of militants' intentions and behaviour. The writer also put emphasis on cooperative experiences that can rebuild trust.

5. Social Identification and Personal Entanglement

In the analysis of the social identification and personal entanglement in the pretext of Waziri-Uzbek fight, Afridi (2007) used escalation-oriented aspects. The ideology of humanizing "our" leaders, "our" soldiers, "our" victims and "our" civilian population is used multiple times. The writer emphasised, "The ongoing clashes between the tribesmen and foreign militants, is a vivid indication of their patriotism...But with the passage of time they realised that those foreigners while exploiting their social and cultural norms started using the area for launching acts of terrorism inside and outside Pakistan". Similarly, the op-ed by Khan (2007) showed escalation-oriented aspects despite of its main orientation towards peace journalism. The writer tried to de-humanize militant leaders as 'unruly' and hardened enemy that killed about two hundred tribal leaders, intelligence operatives, journalists and government officials. The local sympathy turned into fear and resentment for Uzbeks and he expected that this would lead to taming of firepower of Uzbeks and tribal militants.

Yusufzai's (2007) article, however, showed de-escalation oriented aspects. The writer refrained from identification with escalation oriented leaders on all sides. He has also

pressed upon the use of peaceful means, *jirga*, for resolving the conflict, for example:

> "The government has to think of other options keeping in view the national interest. Bowing to US pressure would reinforce the general impression among the fiercely independent Pashtun tribes inhabiting Waziristan and other tribal areas that the military operations are being carried at the behest of America. That perception needs to be corrected but it can only happen if traditional methods such as *jirgas* are employed to resolve the conflict" (p. 6).

6. Overall Direction of Articles

The focus of both war journalism articles (Afridi, 2007; Fatemi, 2007) was on elite sources. The use of elite sources of information and the focus on presenting background reports for devaluating militants has contributed to the escalation-oriented themes. The peace journalism article by Khan (2007) was mainly elite oriented but also provided background information of the militants that contributed to a better understanding of their construction and aims and objectives. Yusufzai's article (2007) also provided background reports of militants that contribute to a better understanding of the militants. The writer had given voice to elite as well as common people.

Discussion and Conclusion

Diversity of opinion is the main construct of the op-eds selected for the qualitative analysis. Since the present study only focused on the four selected op-eds, its findings might not be generalized to larger media coverage of conflict events in FATA. However, it is important to note that these op-eds are the assessment of writers who hold authority in this subject. These articles provided extreme views about the militancy in Pakistan's tribal areas, especially there was a strong divide on the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the use of force for dealing with the militants. They identified the same conflict parties, but the conceptualization of the conflict had strong escalation and de-escalation oriented themes. Rights and intentions of the conflict parties were vague and the main focus remained on the actions of the conflict parties. The choice in these types of discourses then remains the same: a centre-aligned policy by the government and divided opinion among the masses.

It was noticed that in the four opinion articles, the use of abstract words and phrases almost always leaned towards escalation within the six dimensions studied above. However, where the abstract sentiments were followed closely with specific examples and situations, the narrative moved towards de-escalation for the six dimensions. For example, while trying to describe weakened government control in Waziristan, Yusufzai (2007) presents the political agents – the topmost government representative in the tribal areas – as "beleaguered", fearful, and "unable to wield power after gradual loss of authority". He follows up the abstract descriptions of apparently harassed and

weak political agents immediately with the specific example of Pirzada Khan, North Waziristan's political agent, who survived a suicide bomb attack on his office in which some of his staff members were killed. The writer further explained the lost glory of the political agent's office, a post for which he said civil servants used to offer bribes but which now they try to avoid. The shift from abstract to specific here widens the scope of the conflict, shedding light on the actors involved. It is not just the militants versus the military anymore but also the political agents, the bureaucrats that form the selection pool for the political agent's office, the staff that works for the political agent and between the lines, the innocent civilians who might get harmed by militant attacks launched on government buildings. Yusufzai's (2007) argument was that the lack of government monitoring, rather than the tribal alternative dispute resolution system itself, led to the failure of a peace accord, and by extension, better government support could lead to peace through the tribal *jirga*. Here, the specific example helps his argument for peace building and falls within the de-escalation orientation. In contrast, Afridi (2007) follows abstract descriptions with more abstraction to create an escalation-oriented two-party, good-versus-evil conflict. He describes the clashes between Waziri tribesmen and their Uzbek guests as a sign of the tribesmen's patriotism, suggesting that the tribesmen first welcomed the Uzbeks as "Muslim brothers" but later found them to be exploiting the local "social and cultural norms" and turned against them. Afridi's (2007) only description of the norm violations is "acts of terrorism" but he does not provide any specific details of either the patriotic and cultural sentiments or the violations of hospitality. Elsewhere in the article, he uses quotes from the provincial governor to suggest that the tribesmen consider the Uzbeks a hindrance to "progress" and this is again followed by vague mentions of peace and development without any explanation of what the tribesmen consider progress. The lack of specific information and analysis here gives an escalation orientation to particularly the conceptualization of the conflict, the actions of the conflict parties, and the social identification dimensions of the Kempf model (2002a). The abstractions and generalizations also appeared to divert the opinion piece from any discussion of local militants in the area and the draconian Frontier Crimes Regulations – a set of British-era laws that were used without amendment by the Pakistani government instead of its own constitution to govern the tribal areas up until 2011 and is considered to be a dominant cause of the socio-economic deprivation of FATA residents.

The escalation-oriented themes were prominent in the four opinion pieces where writers relied on previously published news reports, hearsay, and statements by elite sources. Information used from such sources seemed already slanted towards a two-party, zero-sum orientation of conflict, which benefited escalation rather than de-escalation themes. For example, statements such as "situation is said to be tense" and "both sides are reportedly entrenched in their positions" (Afridi, 2007), and "Frances Townsend squarely blamed the Musharraf regime" and "Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid called

on the US to use military force to destroy the terrorist safe houses" (Fatemi, 2007) borrowed the tones of escalation of their sources and relayed them forward, as if to compound the effect, without much insight. Just like the use of abstract themes, this reliance on published material over analysis also appeared to take away from "an all-sided view of the conflict" which Kempf (2001) considered to be a necessary tool for journalists contributing to de-escalation. On the other hand, authoritative writing based on personal insight and original reporting in the four op-ed articles provided a clearer, detailed picture of a multi-party conflict with hints at solutions. For example, "the plight of Waziristan isn't widely known due to the remoteness of the area" in Yusufzai (2007) not only became a point of entry for the readers to understand the variety of challenges to independent news coverage of the conflict but also informed the readers about the plight itself, through the mainstream press.

In the four analysed articles, the background or contextual information cuts both ways. Information that simply presented fatality figures or instances of violence often fell in the escalation-oriented themes for the action of the war parties. Afridi (2007) and Khan (2007) were both guilty of dramatic and sometimes gratuitous mentions of violence. But at the same time, the background information also helped shed light on the intentions of the war parties. For example, Khan (2007) uses in-depth original reporting to tease out the causes of the Waziri-Uzbek clashes. Similarly, even though Fatemi (2007) quoted aggressive statements from US officials to highlight the strains in the Pak-US relations and the flaws in US foreign policy, he eventually adopted a critical distance to the bellicose US statements, which was indicative of de-escalation oriented reporting (Kempf, 2003). He concluded by suggesting military action alone cannot work and a long-term solution would require support for democratic values, also a de-escalation oriented reporting indicator (Kempf, 2003), thereby contextualizing his use of the quoted statements.

The conclusion sections of the four op-eds analysed for this study also provided a point of inspection for their escalation and de-escalation orientation. It was found that three writers presented some form of recommendations to the conflict parties while one predicted the outcome of the current developments. Among the three writers who presented suggestions, only one (Afridi, 2007) recommended the use of force while the other two (Fatemi, 2007; Yusufzai, 2007) categorically stated that the military actions cannot be considered a long-term solution. The latter two writers recommended peace building and diplomatic measures such as support for democratic values, human rights and dispute resolution through negotiations. The first of the latter two articles was quantitatively categorized as a war journalism article and the second as peace journalism. However, the qualitative analysis suggests that through the concluding paragraphs, both articles showed a de-escalation orientation in the conceptualization of the conflict. This also highlights that conflict conceptualization continues throughout an opinion article and is not limited to the lead or introductory paragraphs.

These findings suggested that in the four opinion articles the use of language, authoritative writing based on original reporting, the presentation of background information, and the conclusion of an article contributed to the article's escalation or de-escalation orientation. Even though these findings might not be generalized, writers and editors can pay close attention to the effects of their writing on the conceptualization of conflict, evaluation of intentions and actions of war parties, and the social identification and emotional involvement presented in their articles.

By incorporating Kempf's model (2002a), future studies can explore the conflict dynamics by temporal analysis of the different milestone events as covered by newspapers and television channels. This might not only give an insight into media texts but, if coupled with the analysis of government policies, it can also provide a holistic view of the conflict in the tribal areas.

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