

Leadership Dysfunctionality and Trust Deficit Culture: the Retrospective Background for Small Arms Proliferation in Nigeria, 1985 – 1993

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Abstract

The paper is premised on leadership dysfunctionality and trust deficit culture of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida regime that encouraged small arms proliferation and abuse. The regime since Mid-1980s had left behind lofty ideals such as the issue of Nigeria's membership of the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), Structural Adjustment Programme, Corruption, Financial Fraudsters (419), and Annulment of 12th June 1993 Presidential Election cum overt support of sub-national interest. These lofty ideals made small arms attractive and communicated wrong values that encouraged the promotion of guns as symbols of acquiring wealth and power in the society. Failure of the state and its security agencies to guarantee protection for its citizens not only transformed security from public goods to private service but made small arms inevitable. Works on IBB regime had become prevalent but emphasis on its overt and covert support for arms proliferation in Nigeria, a gap this study intends to fill, is highly obscured. Primary and secondary sources such as journals, books, newspapers, interviews, ad-hoc observation and account were analyzed qualitatively using self-report techniques and social contract theory. The study submits that the increased incidence of armed conflict in Nigeria as a result of the IBB's harsh economic policy fueled the proliferation of arms and abuse. This, in turn, promoted the formation of desperate armed groups as a show of the citizens' demonstration of dissatisfaction of the policy.

Keywords: IBB regime, leadership, deceit, small arms, Nigeria,

Introduction

Providence had made available for Nigeria all that is needed to become a great nation but appeared to have bequeathed the country with leadership dysfunctionality and trust deficit culture. Leadership is a rational exercise of authority and commitment of institutional resources in the management of the problems and affairs of the society for general improvement of the quality of life and socio-economic growth (World Bank, 1991:25). True leadership seemed to be the master key to nations' growth and development as it guaranteed access to super riches and affluence for the given society.

The concept and application of leadership style in Nigeria since 1985 – 1993 had not only been found wanting but have succeeded in crushing the spirit of the ruled, leaving them indigent, stripped bare, and stranded in the wilderness (Alaku, 2016:38). The leadership dysfunctionality of Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida had consistently demonstrated its lack of vision, mission, and innovations to harness the God-given potentials and opportunities for nation's growth and development. However, it encouraged crime, underdevelopment, poverty, institutional dysfunctions, insecurity, arms abuse, political exclusion, economic marginalization, religious bigotry, ethnic pursuit, dictatorship, and sometimes annihilation, the hallmarks of dysfunctional leadership and trust deficit culture.

His mouth-watering maiden broadcast of August 1985 brought high expectations to Nigeria. But less than a year after its inception, the regime's volte-face on issue of human rights kept many wondering if his promises were mere political ploy to win the support of the people as the regime was seen to have been driven by sub-national interest (Omagu, 2013:36). Looting simply became free-for-all at all levels while economic planning ceased to be made a viable element of government services. Even the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) of IBB introduced in July 1986 which presumed to be the panacea of Nigeria's problem was an exercise in futility and a mockery of the entire process.

The concept of SAP was not basically people-oriented but neo-liberal economic blue print of IMF and World Bank imposed on Nigerians against their collective resolves. The regime, for lack of creativity and undemocratic, surrendered our economic and political sovereignty to these institutions by accepting the conditions to scrap the marketing board, devalue the naira, privatize and commercialize the public enterprise, abolish import licensing, adopt market-based exchange rate system, massive retrenchment of workers, and carry out restrictive and fiscal policy (Alaku, 2016:743).

However, no industrialized nation like America, Britain, China, Germany, Russia, and others, worthy of its sovereignty had agreed to scrap its marketing boards. Rather, they paid heavily to protect their domestic industries. Nigeria's obedience to the conditions of IMF/World Bank destroyed local industries (Chidume, et al 2014:31). SAP not only opened the gates for importation of all sorts of goods but encouraged the promotion of internal contradiction that changed the life pattern of Nigerians and invariably forced them to apply various means of resilient strategy for survival.

IBB's dominant style of governance in Nigeria especially the regime change of Nigeria's OIC observer status to full-fledged membership and the annulment of June 12th, 1993 election devoid of transparency, accountability, and responsiveness had undoubtedly created some trust deficit culture that enthroned instability, dysfunctional leadership, and small arms abuse. Government orchestrated policies of economic hardship, corruption, and political exclusion that increased the margin of inequality, poverty, unemployment, and other functional indicators evoked a feeling of frustration among the populace leading to aggressive use of smuggled arms and light weapons to compel accountability and responsiveness from the government.

People's demonstration of dissatisfaction of the policy became manifested through anti-regime violence such as the students' unrest, labour unrest, urban crises, food riots, child abuse and high rate of crime, corruption and proliferation of arms. According to Nwankwo (1990:25), the armed forces, police and other private security outfits like the National Guard were manipulated and used by the ruling junta to perpetuate their oppressive control. Callousness, insensitivity, extra-judicial killings of opponents, and other heinous forms of physical control were used to sustain the already decade and moribund society. Individuals who visibly showed disenchantment against the authority were imprisoned or made to suffer the mental trauma of isolation in confinement (ibid).

Although the regime elicited numerous publications (such as Ajayi, 2013; Nwankwo, 1990; Omagu, 2013; Danladi et al, 2016; Richard Sklar, 1986; Ogbeidi, 2012; Adewunni, 2019) but its dysfunctional leadership that resulted in covert and overt support for arms abuse has not received proper academic discourse. Since the inception of IBB regime in 1985, dysfunctional leadership and trust deficit culture had become common phenomena despite his lofty rhetoric of responsive governance. This period under study portrayed widespread human rights abuses, human carnage and ethnically-based attacks, grim reports of assassination and disappearance of opposition figures.

Government security agencies cum privately sponsored security outfits in the name of National Guard under the control of Al-Mustapha and Ismaila Gwarzo perpetrated these arms abuses and operated with impunity. The regime, on the other hand, unleashed on the populace an army of hoodlums that used arms for brazen theft and violence, a diversionary tactics to hold on to power. Therefore, the study shows that the regime's lack of policy implementation was synonymous with dysfunctional leadership and small arms proliferation of which the later manifested people's demonstration of dissatisfaction or an opportunity for personal wealth creation.

Methodology

This study adopts an interdisciplinary research approach which involved querying data and information across other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, religion, philosophy and political science to enable the researchers arrive at a more dependable account of the subject matter of the study. Though the regime used to serve as the case study appears belated but presents a retrospective background for insecurity and small arms abuse in the contemporary Nigerian society. The study also adopts the social contract theory as means of exploring the existing leadership dysfunctionality, trust deficit culture and small arms proliferation, an edifice unknowingly erected by IBB. This theory is more appropriately applied in a democratic dispensation but its emergence has many characteristics of military command structure which is solitary, nasty, brutish, and short (Piirimae, 2006:3 – 21). Primary and secondary sources of historical research such as journals, newspapers reports, interviews, and adhoc observations and accounts were analyzed using self-report technique to add flesh to the generated data.

The period, 1985 – 1993 marked another change of baton through coup d'état that enthroned Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida as the military president. His coming to power in 1985 was greeted with brass band and red-carpet reception as beacon of hope based on the outlined policies pronounced during the maiden broadcast. The 1993 end year period is significant because it marked the end of a regime whose lofty ideals were sacrificed on the altar of sub-national and international interests at the expense of the populace.

Theoretical Discourse

Leadership like most terms and concepts is grossly abused and distorted. Nigeria's public perception of leadership was tainted by traditional dogma and military mentality. Leadership dysfunctionality in Nigeria since independence had raised several questions as to whether the concept of leadership and its application were curses or blessings. The concept, dysfunctionality is derived from the word 'dysfunctional'. The Encarta Encyclopedia (2008) defines dysfunctionality as malfunction, a situation where a process, events or actions fails to proceed in its regular and logical manner. Abagen (2010:59) sees dysfunctionality as a situation where certain assigned duty was hindered from being carried out not only efficiently and effectively but also productively. Mohd Musa (2013:2) contends that leadership of this type benefits only a handful of nonentities who see the concept as means of self-investment. He went further to extrapolate that dysfunctional leadership refers to a nation sliding into a police state where everything was treated with suspicion thereby having no future for the citizens but wanton abuse of power (ibid:3). It also reflects the challenges or limited political participation and recycling of top government officials and politicians in the state.

IBB's regime dysfunctionality is a function of trust deficit culture as the failure of the government to perform its basic functions generated suspicion among the ruled and always bred conflicts and arms misuse. Trust deficit culture was predicated on mutual suspicion, real and imaginary threats of domination and the consequent conflicts in various ramifications (Abagen,

2010:164). Dysfunctionality in leadership values led to suspicion and poor appreciation of what the leader is; the values that go with it, and how to operate it. This situation had weakened constitutionality, social justice and equity, and also promoted effective opposition and retrenchment of good governance.

Dysfunctional leadership arose as a result of the inability of the ruling class to act positively to the benefits of the state and its citizen. Implicitly, it is the inability of the leaders to accept the responsibility of taking the destiny of this nation to a greater height rather than outsourcing the complex problems of the nation to the international community without first exploring all the domestic possibilities. The presence of exploitative pro-Western capitalist and unprogressive ones has reinforced dysfunctionality in the statecraft, thus making the exercise of good and genuine governance, at best cosmetic. Government poor performance created an environment conducive for the formation of ethnic militias, malevolent disposition, institutionalized corruption and distrust that promoted insecurity, small arms abuse, religious violence, repression, intimidation, and extra-judicial killings. The military government of IBB mastered the dynamics of the society and tried as much possible to use any instrument of violence available to force the opposition into perpetual retreat.

In examining the leadership dysfunctionality and trust deficit culture under the regime of IBB that promoted small arms misuse, the study adopts the social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes put forward in a work titled 'Leviathan' in 1651 (Hobbes, 1991:88-89). This theory provides valuable insight into understanding how the consequences of people's dissatisfaction of the government's inability to protect them have resulted in small arms proliferation. In other words, it provides a veritable platform upon which the study on dysfunctional leadership and trust deficit culture in Nigeria is grafted, leading to insecurity and arms abuse. The theory shows how the regime's inability to change from their sub-national interest and repression has thrown up non-state actors and irredentist groups that express their dissatisfaction of the regime.

The theory posits that citizens accepted to give up their rights to protect themselves to the state, on the understanding that it would provide adequate physical and social security for them (Obasi, 2006:81). In so doing, people transferred possession of arms to the state and its coercive agencies. However, they retained social ownership of the weapons enabling them to reclaim their rights of self-help whenever the state failed to fulfill its own part of the social contract. Given the above scenario, the state was supposed to maintain a monopoly on the instruments of violence, on behalf, of the citizens and guaranteed security to the citizens in return. The small arms proliferation in Nigeria is partly a reflection of this general failure of the social contract. Proliferation of small arms is a strong indication of dysfunctionality and people are increasingly repossessing their rights to bear arms in order to protect themselves or make a living.

As a surrogate of the capitalist countries, IBB regime exhibited a very low level of legitimacy and this further denuded the confidence of the disadvantaged groups in the capacity of the state

to protect their interest from the shy-lock multinational contractors. This lack of confidence in the state's impartiality strengthened the resolve of the ruling class not to relinquish or share power with the disadvantaged or ethnic group. Therefore, Nigeria exists as prebends parceled out to various sectional interests. The annulment of June 12, 1993 elections rest on the tripod of prebendalism where sub-national and international interests (multinational contractors of the capitalist countries) engage themselves in a fatal contest for increasing, allocating, and defending their share of the powers of the state (Mbah et al, 2017:179).

The primary objective of governance is to guarantee the security of lives and property of its citizens. This was pursued and achieved by the state through the provision of requisite infrastructure that provided quality and equitable socio-economic well-being for its citizens. Where a state failed or is failing to deliver on the core objective, the citizens would resort to self-help or create an alternative system that may run parallel and contrary to the government. The spate of insecurity arising from the proliferation of arms and their uses by organized armed groups for self-defense or criminal uses was a consequence of dissatisfaction of IBB's regime.

The failure of the Nigerian state under the IBB regime to provide socio-economic security appeared to have legitimized illegal possession and abuse of small arms in the polity. The enforcement of compliance contrary to legitimate power as witness in many Nigerian communities encouraged the proliferation of arms by aggrieved parties. They struggled against perceived oppression, pervasive sense of hopelessness, marginalization and alienation, and a deep seated resentment of the ostentatious consumption of the dominant class amidst widespread hunger, anger, poverty, and emotional abuse (Hansen, 2020:2). Even the selective access to security has made it more or less possible for a few individuals and groups to manipulate security agents. The fallout of the regime dysfunctionality was the determination by the aggrieved individuals and group to respond to threats of insecurity and oppression by taking up arms either as a means of self-defense or for purpose that portend negative consequences.

Trust Deficit Culture and Small Arms Proliferation: A Nexus

Dysfunctional leadership cannot be written without a bold reference to the role played by the military junta in Nigeria. Paradoxically, military rule had proven to be an aberration, dysfunctional to political development, and an epitome of trust deficit culture. It was an evil machination that triggered insecurity and arms misuse. The regime seemed to be a devastating virus that had completely broken down the system and centred its power on sub-national interests. The hijack of Nigeria to become member of the Organization of Islamic Conference by Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida on 13th January 1986 generated serious religious unrest. This was suppressed by the law enforcement agents, leaving 15 persons mostly students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, dead.

Though, IBB set up the John Shagaya Panel on 3rd February 1986 to review Nigeria's membership of the organization but it did not stop the military president from his systematic

elimination of the few Christians of the top military brass that were in the same key positions in his government. Beginning with Ebitu Ukiwe, his policy of elimination reached its climax when he ousted Gen. Domkat Bali and condemned Maj. Gen. Zamani Lekwot (retired) to death over Zango/Kataf conflict. This act of the Military President not only polarized the armed forces but set a booby trap for unbridled violence and terrorism which spurred each religious group to acquire, abuse, and misuse small arms.

Under SAP, unemployment rate soared, food prices increased significantly, and numerous fees for education and health were imposed. The harsh demand of SAP not only brought about increased pressure on government but also prompted the impoverished citizen to look other ways of survival through foul and faire means. Since the economy is the thrust and propelling factor for socio-political development, the level of insecurity in relation to small arms proliferation and abuse in Nigeria was determined by wrong implementation of the neo-liberal economic policy quite incongruent with our economic cultural pattern. Small arms proliferation and misuse were by-products of a system failure of the socio-economic institution, and a hungry man or unemployed person, being a frustrated man has no faith in justice or equity of economic arrangement but resort to inglorious life.

In mid-1980's, crime waves increased and the ranks of armed robbers involved in this kind of operation and arms supply permeated even the law enforcement agencies. The Deputy Superintendent of Police, Monday Osunbor with Anini and George Iyamu were tried and executed in July, 1987 for armed robbery case. Analysis from January, 1985 – 1987 shows that 2258 armed robbery cases were officially recorded with Lagos State leading by 917 cases, Bendel State 343, Ogun State 314, Anambra State 100, Imo State 73, Oyo State 72, Kwara State 60, Borno State 20 and Kaduna State 15 (African Guardian, 1987:13-14).

Again, outbreak of violence and extra-judicial killings also escalated in Mid-1980s as a result of harsh economic conditions that was glaringly noticed. Notable clashes amongst others include violent brawls between Muslim and non-Muslim students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria; Bayero University, Kano; University of Ibadan; University of Sokoto, (1986); Kaduna, Kafanchan, and Zaria debacles of 1987; Wukari Crisis, 1990; SAP Riots of 1989; Mkpani/Ugep 1987; Bauchi Riot 1991; Tiv/Jukun 1990; Kano Riot 1990; Katsina 1992; Kaduna Riots 1992; Jos Crisis 1992; Tiv/Jukun Massacre 1992; Lagos Crisis 1992; Ugep/Idom 1992; and Ogoni Crisis of 1991 (Agudiegwu and Alaku, 2017:82-3). The President's dispatch of law enforcement agents to suppress the demonstration left so many death tolls littered around the country.

Not only that, there were extra-judicial killings involving Dele Giwa, through a parcel bomb in 1986, 13 military officers wasted for alleged coup attempts in February 1986, and 42 military officers also massacred for unspecified reasons in September 1990 (ibid). This widespread violence that took place in various parts of the country was an indication of government not

fulfilling the principles of the social contract and this resulted in people's demand to reclaim their rights of arms' ownership for personal or collective protection

IBB regime encouraged the institutionalization of small arms abuse as the recipients of the ill-gotten wealth were allowed free rein to operate with impunity. During his regime, many retrenched staffers who had been conversant with the loopholes in the government business capitalized on it to sabotage the economic recovery programme. These groups of fraudsters, a.k.a 419 made huge sum of money both from the government and individuals within Nigeria and outside. The arrival of these 'nouveau riche' in any ceremony would be greeted with gun salute in the full glare of law enforcement agents. The attitude and actions of these 'nouveau riche' transformed the society into a gun culture because they were seen as valours.

In addition, these groups of fraudsters found their ways into politics invariably to protect their ill-gotten wealth and also to continue in the trade unperturbed. Their presence militarized politics and introduced violence as electoral tools to win elections. The militarized nature of politics in addition to the prevalence of armed groups provided easy marriage between politics and culture of violence. This led some political die-hards to engage themselves in the political process as the culture of armed violence was about access to nation's patrimony whether through committing crime, preying and playing on communal tension, stealing crude oil, and winning elections.

The abolition of the commodity marketing boards in 1987 led to poor quality control and fraudulent trading practices. They adversely affected the market reputation of Nigerian cocoa and engendered discontent among the cocoa farmers in Western Nigeria. To worsen the matter, the government's subsequent reintroduction of licenses for marketers of cocoa and improved inspection procedures threw away many farmers and traders who had no money for the government licenses, out of business. This negative development arising from cocoa business and other manifestations of discontent made sustained commitment to SAP difficult to maintain. In fact, the IBB economic policy of SAP was excruciating and disastrous, and spurred the "IBB MUST GO NATIONWIDE RIOTS" which many Nigerians lost their lives through small arms misuse.

Deregulation as essential component of SAP was slapped on Nigerians by the International Monetary Fund in 1985. It was introduced into the Nigerian state policy as an invasion by international capitalism in the name of neo-liberalism peddled as market reforms or in local parlance Public Private Partnership. This is whereby public assets were transferred to some selected private interest usually the top military brass, local funders, and foreign investors. The liberalization of crude oil lifting process threw away already existing guidelines for exploration and exploitation, and therefore, surrendered the lives of Nigerians to shy-lock dealers and great enemies of Nigeria's economic growth whose only interest was to maximize profit, not principle.

This system gave room for all manner of vices in the country which these dealers in the crude oil lifting process formed a ‘cabal’ that usually stall most state policies in the sector. These cabals, according to Onyekwere (2002:22) would not allow any attempt to run them out of business to succeed. All proposals brought through the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) for government to help out in the establishment of new and modern refineries never saw the light of the day because what the clique continued to drum in the ears of the president was that the projects were capital intensive (Channel TV, 2024).

Those who were sidelined from the legal lifting process of crude oil went aground with all instruments of protection to siphon the oil illegally. The illegal oil bunkering was under ‘the control of powerful cartels, well connected officials and armed groups’ (Amnesty international, 2005:21). They recruited and armed young men in many communities of the Delta region to guard illegal bunkering operations. This pattern of recruitment had not only militarized the communities and beyond but led to the rise of vigilante groups and small arms proliferation. The massive profits from oil thefts have spurred the influx of weapons into the Niger Delta region and Nigeria in general, and encouraged human rights abuses and insurrection.

The distribution pattern of poverty incidence in Nigeria confirmed the regional disparity and its consequences. This had condemned many young Nigerians into armed robbery, thuggery, cultism, ethnic militias, and zeal for arms acquisition. The aggregation of poverty and chronic youth unemployment seemed to have created a congenial environment for youngsters in Nigeria to engage in various forms of hooliganism and armed robbery as veritable livelihood strategies. Therefore, millions of Nigerians faced with despondency, frustration, joblessness, hunger, and wants have in desperation, found alternative means of survival since the government of IBB with his neo-liberal economic policy had failed woefully in his socio-political obligation to them.

The IBB’s protracted annulment of party primaries and the 1993 general elections engendered ethnic divide, small arms acquisition and misuse. The presidential election was annulled by President Babangida after Professor Humphery Nwosu, the chairman, National Electoral Commission (NEC), had released a substantial part of the results in about 20 states. The pall of suspense enveloped the nation as the instalmental release of subsequent results was suspended. For the few days the suspense lasted, tension grew to effervescent level. The bubble finally burst on 23rd June 1993 when the president announced to the bewildered nation that the entire presidential election had been annulled. The tension-soaked environment soon crystallized into anger and violent conflict. The annulment of June 12, 1993 election forced the O’dua People’s Congress that stood for the Yoruba interest to challenge the federal government of its credibility to scuttle the people’s will . While other ethnic groups saw it as a slight and therefore gave powerful support to OPC. Protest took over most parts of the country especially the western region and small arms were freely displayed and used in the politically motivated violence (Abayomi et al, 2005:104).

Conclusion

The study attempted to explain that dysfunctional leadership and trust deficit culture of IBB were synonymous with small arms proliferation in Nigeria since 1985. Leadership dysfunctionality and trust deficit culture were premised on permutation of military might, informal network, and intimidation, quite incongruent with the proclamation of his August 1985 maiden broadcast to the nation that strive for rule of law, transparency, equity, and accountability. The internal domestic contradiction of dysfunctional leadership arising from the Structural Adjustment Programme engendered trust deficit culture. Lack of trust on the regime created chances for violence since the state not only reduced or shrank the civil spaces in order to protect the interest of the ruling class but frustrated the efforts of the populace in their own system of economic survival strategy.

Owing to this increasing distrust as well as the corrupt and state-backed authoritarian character of the coercive agency, the regime, oftentimes, treated the Nigerian youths as criminals, a means to subjugate the masses and instill fear among the people. The regime left deep imprint of violent political culture and impunity for grab to shore up themselves in power. Even the social contract between the people and the state collapsed as a result of the IBB proven track records of bad governance, lack of accountability, as well as its consistent use of public resources to foster brutality, extra-judicial killings, arson, human rights breaches, small arms abuse and misuse, the hallmark of the contemporary civilian administration.

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