
Optimizing Enterprise Resource Capacities in Conflicted Business Environments: A Functional and Enterprise Systems Approach

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Abstract

It is a known fact that in conflict times managing enterprise resource-bases efficiently is a tougher challenge than in peace times. This is because the variables buffeting firms are erratic and can be unpredictable. The study focused on conflicted business environments of the Niger Delta and North East rejoin of Nigeria and the constraints operating firms face. The study appraised the benefits of deploying functional and enterprise systems, ES, as capacities to shore up the internal strength of firms to take up external environmental opportunities and inherent threats. The need to be highly creative in the application and use of Enterprise Systems, ES such as Computer-Aided Design (CAD), Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), electronic Customer Relationship Management (eCRM), etc, were appraised as drivers in optimizing firm capacities. This is to enable the creation of specific market-driven products that are critical with viable demand prospects as opposed to general products offered at peace times. Specific competitive models with special relevance to the optimization of internal resources at conflict times along with the Paris OECD Model for adapting and integrating enterprise efforts at local, regional and national levels were presented. To fast track, a quick return to peace and ambiance for economic development, the role the federal authorities can play to creatively engage peacebuilding strategies and UN suggested Models of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, DDR, in addition to tracking and eliminating root causes of conflict were suggested. The study recommended that enterprises in conflicted areas develop attractive resource management techniques; develop unique adaptive strategies, invent unique logistics and distribution systems, serve niche markets with demand/value prospects, among others to stay competitive and to survive.

Keywords: *Enterprise resources, functional arms of the business, enterprise systems, conflicted business environments, optimizing internal capacities*

INTRODUCTION

Conflict, as we see it in contemporary times in Nigeria, is like the proverbial ill-wind that blows no one any good. The government of any nation has the responsibility to prevent conflicts in society and ensure peace and ambiance reigns at all times for individuals and corporate citizens alike. This is in addition to the seamless improvements of entities within the societal superstructure that make the economic system thrive symbiotically (Ekakitie,

2018; Amadasun and Iyoha, 2012). The government needs to do this to enable enterprises to engage in a matrix of a dynamic input-process-output system of value-creating activities to result in the consummation of exchange. It is these activities that result in the exchange of values (products, services, commodities, ideas, etc) that turn the wheel of the economy (Eniola and Entebang, 2015; Ekanem and Iyoha 2015).

The quest for efficiency in resource allocation and usage is geared towards stimulating industrial growth and economic development; therefore the gamut of resource availability, efficiency and its application to economic entities of nations are at counter-distinction to environmental ambiance deficits (Iyoha and Igbatayo, 2008). As the saying goes: 'investible funds have no conscience, they go where their interests are best guaranteed and protected.' This underscores the reason why Nelson Mandela averred most philosophically that there is no substitute for peace. The conflict has never been beneficial to anyone - the aggressor nor the aggrieved.

To tolerate conflict and pretend it is not there or that it will fizzle out one way or the other is to live in self-delusion and play the Ostrich. The introduction of Sharia in Zamfara State during the administration of ex-President Obasanjo (1999 – 2007) was played down by the government of that time as a non-issue. The early agitation for environmental remediation from oil spills by Oil firms and for resource control by the Niger Delta people was likewise poorly handled via a consuming military onslaught by the federal government. Unlike the Sharia issue which was ignored and later burgeoned to the Islamist Sect *Boko Haram* in 2010, the Niger Delta case was met with brute force by the Nigerian Army resulting in the near annihilation of several villages in the region. A case of partiality was established against the government; leaving anger and suppressed reactions.

It was late Kofi Annan, former UN Secretary-General who opined that what causes conflict and wars is the humiliation or denial of one individual or group. That voice of reason was ignored in both cases in Nigeria. In the larger African continent, conflicts in Liberia, Rwanda, DR Congo, Libya, Uganda, Somalia, Angola, Senegal, Mali, etc., in the past three decades have destroyed business enterprises hitherto struggling to overcome productivity deficits, competitive anemia and global market strangulations (Ekanem and Iyoha 2015; Davidsson, Kirchhoff, Hatem and Gustausson, 2012). Other constraints of poor exchange rates and unstandardized commodities for foreign markets have been glaring dangers (Hassan, Shaukat, Nawaz and Nass, 2013). All these conspire to impart weak competitive capacities in most African enterprises' trade relations with foreign markets with advanced trade dynamics.

The emergence of armed conflict in Nigeria and indeed most African economies is akin to the proverbial 'self-inflicted injury' which both undermines indigenous firm capacity to optimize productivity and engage in efficient resource aggregation and allocation. Wars destroy the ability of firms to retain markets and sustain revenue generation; it creates tensions and undermines stakeholders' investments and expectations (Ibidunmi, Iyola,

Oandibidunni, 2014). This study intends to amplify the negative effects conflict has on resource efficiency management and usage to stimulate industrial growth and economic development. It also aims to point the pathway firms in conflicted environments like the Niger Delta and the North East can take to reinvent themselves via optimization of their functional capacities and enterprise systems and remain competitive and survive the times.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, attempts are made to firstly enunciate the conceptual meanings of variables implicated in the study title along with contextual clarification to give meaning to the study variables.

Conceptually, the term enterprise resources are used to connote an item, or asset of value that has the capacity (when correctly used) to yield a set of verifiable benefits that has an impact on enterprise performance. In management theory studies, a resource within the context of the functional lines of business include what many management scholars refer to as the 6Ms of management, these include money, man material, market, machine and method (Ekakitie and Oladipo, 2010; Pradham and Jena, 2017).

The effective use of these enterprise resources is cardinal to the survival of firms, whether at peace or conflict times. Like in the study of the initiation of the communication process, a firm must first organize itself within; recognize its capacities (weakness and strength) and think-out how it wants to apply its scarce resources before venturing into any physical business activity of competitive nature. This is internal self-appraisal - a needful generic strategy for effective action and efficient deployment of resources in any target market. The ability to increase the potency of each resource is technically referred to as optimization (Rugami, and Aosa, 2013; Amadasun and Iyoha, 2012).

To optimize a firm's resource-base is to bring its operational level to its sustainable zenith. The technical term in project management that defines this is 'full capacity' utilization. Indeed, the term capacity is a firm's innate cutting-edge ability (tangible and intangible) to cause transformation and sustain it competitively given the level of activities of other rival firms in the open market (Ekanem and Iyoha, 2015). The firm can apply cognitive and innovatively developed competencies over time to impart work productively. A firm's capacities can also mean its 'social connections' with critical and important stakeholders (customers, suppliers, creditors, shareholders, etc.). It can also be its general ability to 'use' them in a dynamic systemic fashion to meet its performance objectives.

Functional arms of businesses as documented in management theory have to do with enterprise functions of marketing, finance, personnel, production/work and in recent times, ICT (Dawodu, and Osomdu, 2013) Kumar, 2017; Ekakitie, 2010) has been added as a potent tool for aiding managerial work of directing, coordinating, motivating, etc., including measurement and feedback. Classical scholars and writers like (Nweke, Odo, and Anoke, 2017; Odumeru, 2013) have made a strong emphasis on them as general capacities of the

firm. These in addition to enterprise systems can impact a competitive tendency to survive, even in turbulent environments.

Enterprise systems, ES, are organizational innovations and techniques - some of them are technical – they can also come as programs that impose guides, accuracy and aid operational efficiency of enterprises and processes (Kumar, 2017; Choudhary, Sharma, and Mahalawat, 2013). ES as capacities is desired more by enterprises in conflicted business environments as they save so many headaches often providing useful guides when there are technical and decisional constraints.

The concept of conflict is also a needful of the appraisal. Conflict is disharmony, an infraction, disaffection between parties on account of an issue they disagree on. Conflicts arise out of misunderstanding, quarrels and physical engagements between parties (Ekakitie and Agbada, 2018; Ekakitie, 2018). Most times conflict can be provoked on account of contestation for scarce resources, perceptual denial of a right or property, lack of government development initiative, or any item of socioeconomic import (Ekakitie and Agbada, 2018; Odhe, 2014).

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study adopts theoretical and analytical techniques in x-raying the concepts and correlates of the study title. Use is also made of anecdotal and empirical narratives to support the arguments canvassed in the attempt to project the use of functional and enterprise resources strategies as survival roadmaps in a conflicted business environment. Supportive theories and models that align with enterprise capacity for survival are presented as viable techniques firms operating in conflicted business environments can gleanvaluable knowledge fromto survive the harsh operating conditions.

DISCUSSION

The Niger Delta Militancy

Currently, militancy is not new to Nigeria. As cited by Ekakitie (2018) conflict in the Niger Delta predates the discovery of crude oil resources in Oloibiri in 1958. The region has suffered expropriation even from the times of British pre-colonial rule - items of trade such as palm oil and rubber were major commodities with a crude exchange system akin to robbery. The British dictated both price and quantity to the detriment of the region's economy. This brought conflict which destroyed the productive capacities of the region by the British. In recent decades the wetlands suffered and have continued to suffer expropriation from the government of Nigeria in connivance with giant Oil corporations with devastating economic and environmental consequences. Accordingly, the struggle for resource control assumed a more virulent dimension. Wikipaedia (2010) captured it:

“Conflict in the Niger Delta arose in the early 1990s due to tensions between the foreign oil corporations and a number of the Niger Delta’s minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited, especially the Ogoni as well as the Ijaws....ethnic and political

unrest has continued throughout the 1990s and persists as of 2007 despite the conversion to democracy and the election of the Obasanjo government in 1999. Competition for oil wealth has fuelled violence between innumerable ethnic groups, causing militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups as well as Nigerian military..."

Perhaps a concise summary of the very propagative situation that led to the militancy as an option of resource control struggle is aptly captured by Oronto, (2003).

"...despite hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue accruable to Nigeria from Oil production, the inhabitants of the Niger Delta region remain in abject poverty."

A statistical angle was provided in the study of Iboba (2005) when he revealed that the unemployment level of 70% exists in the region, while the poverty level is as high as 80%. In his summation, he avers that the inhabitants are strangers to essential amenities such as pipe-borne water and electricity. According to him:

"...scenes of abject poverty compared to those found in refugee camps reflect on all facets of life in the area. It is paradoxical that with the enormous resources available in the region the people still live below the poverty level. The impoverishment of the region also causes unemployment that naturally makes the youths pliable to insurgent suggestions."

All these imply entrepreneurial initiative, investors and business development. It is a combination of these and other struggles for better conditions of living and of economic allocation from the federal government under a centralized 1999 Constitution that instigated instability and conflict in the Niger Delta region. The bombs and armed attacks did reign and anarchy was the watchword. The Niger Delta region is thus a conflicted business environment inflicting poverty and economic dislocation with several provocateurs. To date the environmental cleaning activity in Ogoniland, as promised by Vice President Osinbajo since 2016 has been entirely ignored by Gen. MohammeduBuhari, creating anxiety and tension in the region. These no doubt induce harsh investment environment and business operations.

Boko Harm Islamists

The origin of Boko Haram is traceable to the immediate years before 2009. Its literal meaning is *Western education is forbidden*. It is purely an Islamic sect led by late Mohammed Yusuf who was killed in 2009 by the Nigerian Police in circumstances not clear. Some quarters claimed he was killed extra-judicially to shut him up from revealing sponsors. According to Wikipedia (2018) *'The Boko Haram insurgency began in 2009 when the jihadist group started an armed rebellion against the government of Nigeria. The conflict takes place within the context of long-standing issues of religious violence between Nigeria's Muslim and Christian communities, and the insurgents' ultimate aim is to establish an Islamic state in the region.'*

Initially, the government of Nigeria (2007 – 2013) handled the groups' violent activities with levity and the group took time to recruit many jobless miscreants and indeed

Islamic scholars into its fold. Early pictures on their activities showed it had a measure of support from sections of the local communities and elements in government in Borno, Yobe, and the Adamawa States. Its initial strategies for announcing its activities included bombings of government infrastructure: public buildings, schools, business premises, worship centers, suicide bombings/killing of innocent citizens, kidnappingsetc., etc.

According to Wikipedia (2018)

"...after years of fighting, the insurgents became increasingly aggressive and started to seize large areas in northeastern Nigeria. The violence escalated dramatically in 2014, with 10,849 deaths, while Boko Haram drastically expanded its territories.⁴At the same time, the insurgency spread to neighboringCameroon, Chad, and Niger, thus becoming a major regional conflict. Meanwhile, Shekau (its leader) attempted to improve his international standing among Jihadists by tacitly aligning with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in March 2015, with Boko Haram becoming the "Islamic State's West Africa Province" (ISWAP)."

A documented schedule of calamities and economic wreck running into several pages inflicted by Boko Haram has captured in the document: 'Facts aboutBoko Haram' in the CNN Library Updated July 30, 2019, See CNN Library online (2019). The extent and destruction these have inflicted on the regional economy and its business environment are simply unbelievable.

Nweke (2014) noted the worrisome outcome of allowing Boko Haram to fester in his study:

"...the prediction of the break-up of Nigeria by 2015 is premised on existential situations accruing from the nation's political and multiethnic settings. If such prediction took cognizance of the possibility of insurgency based on the reality of ethnic struggles from different quarters of the country, it precluded the likelihood of terrorism. Initiated as a Muslim youth organization with the intent of revolt against Western tradition, Boko Haram, since inception, has graduated to an international terror sect with established links with Al-Qa`ida core and Al-Shabab. The quest of Nigeria national integration presupposes the reality of conflict within a commonwealth of multiethnic diversity."

This observation is indeed very worrisome, not just because of the effects in Northern Nigeria but on the continuity prospects of Nigeria putting into account the government seeming tolerance of insecurity that has spread like a disease across the entire landscape of Nigeria. In addition to this, the Global Terrorism Index (2018) ranks Nigeria as 3rd most terrorized after Iran and Afghanistan. These have combined to create dislocations and extreme poverty, so much so that Nigeria has been equally classified as the headquarters of extreme poverty in the world, just taking over from India. Nigeria is at the rock-bottom in most global indicators of growth and development (2014 – 2019). In this melee, it is difficult to see how firms can thrive in this conflicted region.

Optimizing the Functional Arms: A Relational Discourse

Conflicts destroy the normal flow of business activities and understate revenue profiles of the firm which imposes restraints on tax payments and engaging in social responsibility acts (Odalo, Njuguna, and Achoki, 2016; Barreto, 2014) in addition to providing society needed products and services for the socio-economic wellbeing of citizens (Vivero, 2016; Olenski, 2015). Organizational functions can be sharpened and improved in strength to enable them to attain 'performance power' more than ever before. The process of capacity tuning to reach the zenith of performance for each of the functional arms of business to perform and ensure market success is a challenge that is possible.

The capacity of firms to compete in any business environment is inherent in their resources (Stephen, 2016; Akinyele, and Fasogbon, (2010). These functional lines capacities and how to optimize them are briefly engaged below:

Finance is easily the live wire of any enterprise (Etuk, Etuk, and Baghebo, 2014; Ekakitie and Oladipo 2010). The level of funds available to the firm in conflict times and how to manage it efficiently to engage production and distribution efforts to reach specific markets can be very daunting. This capacity of finance also include abilities to source fund from lending bodies at a low-interest rate that is sustainable; it can also include the ability to source 'sustenance or bailout funds' from the government at low or no interest rate (Okonkwo, and Obidike, 2016; Ajayi, 2014). It may also include the ability to connect with external bodies to give operating grants, donations, etc. to ensure survival at conflict times. It may also include product subsidization to enables lower prices. Production and work System pertains to the machines, methods and techniques of conversions of raw or semi-processed inputs to final desired and designed physical products. In conflict times, this capacity can become challenging. An effective method to keep and optimize machine usage, its efficiency and performance are to engage strategies to prolong the useful life of the machine. To optimize machine productivity to large economies of scale there must be an alignment with the level of skills and competencies available at the material time.

It may be more profitable to hire skills or even train their staff to augment for machine skill deficit and the imperative of retooling to put machines in ready-state of production (Malaolu, and Ogbuabor, 2013). Personnel is the reservoir of skills and competencies that drive work processes and are the pride of the place that work persons occupy in the production and operations systems of firms that prompted Karl Marx and Engels (1968) to refer to the workman as the generalissimo of work. It means all activities of work are about workmen. At conflict times, enterprises have to down-size their level of staff engagement to align with production level needs and attendant cost implications. Thus only staff/personnel with direct work relevance to critical-path operations can be retained. Or if the business and its operational environment are so adverse the personnel can be engaged on a part-time basis or called upon only when special duties and orders are to be carried out. Studies by Massingham and Tam (2015) have supported this technique.

Managing work persons efficiently is crucial to firm survival and managers may have to train specific persons to engage the work of two to three persons to cut down cost and still optimize worker efforts (Kakui, and Gachunga, 2016) to meet the desired level of work and productivity. Work persons and their competences produce goods and services for markets; thus marketing and salespersons constitute the resource that brings value to bear on the firm via targeting the various demand centers and customers with needed products/services. At conflict times, Guerilla warfare strategies (Du Plessis, 2017; Bul-Godley, 2013, 2019; Ekakitie 2010; Grigsby, 2015) are adaptable. Sales person's efforts in these times can be optimized by getting an effective communications system to elicit specific points of distribution to reach demand centers and customers. As conflict shifts from place to place, so must deft sales persons shift and develop Octopus capacity to reach customers and hence recover revenue. Logistics and distribution techniques must align with safety concerns. In doing these relationships and technical devices that ramp up performance is necessary. Small wonder customer relations aided by ICT capacities enable the firm to optimally manage their resources at conflict times; the enterprise leaders must develop effective and efficient systems of managing their customer base. Customer Relationship Management, CRM, nhas been reported to be a potent tool in the management of key demand centers and customers of high net worth (Stephen, 2016; Grigsby, 2015). CRM techniques include methods of attracting, converting, retaining, managing customer core needs, privacy issues and measurement of its effectiveness (Ekakitie, 2012; Moran, 2016; Gagliano, 2014).

At conflict times, firm resources and tendencies to operationalize them may have to change to permit better and efficient application to need areas for optimal results. ICT backend operations are known to be very useful in this regard (Pansari and Kumar, 2017) and these often require top management support which itself must optimize its capacities to plan, implement and coordinate enterprise operations especially at conflict times.

In this regard, top management commitment and support are necessary; it is the radial system that exercises oversight duties over the rest of functional capacities. Enterprises at peace times hold top management commitment to organizational survival as a needful imperative (Yaya, 2016; Ibidunni, Ogunnaike, and Abiodun, 2017). Top management commitment has been reported to be a vital resource (Pradham, and Jena, 2017; Pansari, and Kumar, 2017) that radiates from the center because it is the trigger of all enterprise activities: vision, mission, objectives and guiding goals. To optimize this firm capacity, it must have quality, experience and competencies; also it must be 'determined' to optimize its capacities in planning, forecasting, coordinating, motivating, decision making, etc. It is the opinion of the researcher that top management commitment in driving the enterprise at conflict times is like a 'searchlight'. While it is pointing it at others to measure their performances, it must also do the same on its self. This allows for the optimization of top management capabilities in the conflicted business environment where the enterprise plies its trade.

Enterprise Systems (ES) Optimization: The Nexus

Enterprise systems are a collection of work applications; they are designed to aid performance and shore-up capacity to produce and compete in defined markets (Ndunga, Njati, and Rukangu, (2016) and Chase and Aquilano (2009). ES can be wide and varied; some are deployed to aid the Automated Manufacturing Planning and Control System (MP&CS). MP & CS is a computer propelled info system which provides planning guides and procedures in project management and job scheduling activities. It is used to provide accurate information, monitor production activities and service operations efficiently. It also has a costing and appraisal module which helps guide managers on cost efficiency decisions. Its potentials can optimize a lot of work tasks and save time and money. This has been reported to have synergy with the automated materials handling system (Ndunga, Njati, and Rukangu, 2016). Automated Materials Handling System (AMHS) performs automated inventory storage and retrieval task in the factory. It is also computer and logic-driven such that it can track, monitor work and project levels, loading and offloading of inventory and help manage warehouses and its complexities. Its capacity to guide managers on inventory reception and discharge is simply wonderful.

The AMHS has been observed in studies to save a lot of labor cost and drudgery and aid planning and management of inventory flow (Tracy, 2014; Muriithi, 2013). Thus material planning and how to optimize its entire operations cannot be overemphasized. Material Requirements Planning Systems can aid the enterprise as a master scheduler of a production plan. It is also a material management system; it can be optimized to create an efficient work schedule, identify specific critical-path routes and can predict end-state projections and the dates orders should be released on completion. The need to apply machines to intelligently aid these operations is imperative. Hence Robotics & Artificial Intelligence are currently gaining increased adoption to work. Robot is a reprogrammable machine with multiple functions that can move devices through specialized motions to perform any number of tasks. In recent times advanced countries and emerging technologies in Korea and Japan are beginning to deploy the capacity of robots to optimize work, especially highly specialized tasks. During the Tsunami holocaust in the Far East, robots were used extensively to accomplish tough tasks a man cannot do with superior efficiency. After COVID-19 Lockdowns, robots were showcased to aid in airport operations and clients' traffic management to curtail the spread of the pandemic.

Robotics is an emerging enterprise resource, investing in them can be a highly rewarding initiative in optimizing operations, especially at conflict times. Several intelligent machines handle certain critical professional tasks – some of these include computer-aided designs. *Computer-aided designs (CAD)* are enterprise systems akin to an artificial builder and designer of structures, product packages, line system operations and even critical path operations on the factory floor. They can be optimized to take care of structural engineering tasks, mechanical designs and implementation, etc. The capacity to create 3D, 4D and other dimensions of engineering designs and related tasks simply redefine efficiency in resource

usage, especially in industrial enterprises. Capacity to accomplish challenging tasks can have congruence from building rewarding customer relations with the aid of the internet and related mobile devices for overall delivery of customer satisfaction. In this wise, *Electronic Customer Relationship Management (e-CRM)* becomes a key ES for driving enterprise performance. Studies in this direction have indicated (Du Plessis, 2017; Odumeru, 2013) enterprise systems can increment the abilities of client service officers to interface with customers and other stake holders. It tracks information and aggregates customer database to relate more efficiently with diverse valued clients for profitable gains (Ndunga, Njati and Rukangu, 2016; Ekakitie, 2012).

Enterprise systems are wonder artificial creations designed to help CEOs to manage factory and operational activities better; more accurately and at a huge cost savings rate. They are simply the competitive capacities of the future. Conflicted regions in Nigeria can adapt some of these techniques to optimize their resources and operations and secure market success and survive.

Competitiveness & Enterprise Resources Optimization Strategies

In the attempt to survive inconflicted environments, organizational leaders can step up their competitive capabilities (Babafemi, 2015; Akinyele and Fasogbon, 2010) - this onus lies on them. In this direction, Grant (1991) adduced a 5-step procedural resource-based approach of optimization:

STEP 1: identify and classify the firm's resources in terms of strength and weakness

STEP 2: Combine the firm's strength into specific capabilities and core competencies

STEP 3: Appraise the profit potential of these capabilities and competencies in terms of their potential for sustainable competitive advantage and the ability to harvest the profits potential from their use. It must ask itself in these analyses if there are any distinctive competencies it possesses to overcome environmental constraints.

STEP 4: It should select the strategy that best exploits the firm's capacities and competencies relative to external opportunities

STEP 5: Identify resource gaps and invest in upgrading weaknesses.

Flowing from the above model, the optimization efforts should focus on the internal capacities first before engaging the external. Thus a capacity audit is necessary. Thompson and Strickland (2015; Ekakitie, 2010) gives a retinue of possible internal and external capacities along functional lines for consideration.

Production audit: Production and operations searchlight should focus on: processes of production, the capacity of plant or factory, production systems, inventory control dynamics, present skill levels of factory personnel, quality and quantity of produce manufactures.

Marketing audit: This should focus on:

- ⇒ Analyzing customers – their product/service needs, desires and wants
- ⇒ Customer purchase – their preferred brands and why they have such preferences, customer purchasing power, quantities at which they buy; what market segments are to be served
- ⇒ What promotion strategies are needful; what mixes are most appealing to the market. What is the public expectation of adverts and advertising agency reputation to resourcefully reach the target audience?
- ⇒ What distribution channels and methods of channel administration are the best and most rewarding?

Personnel audit: This should prompt us to ask the following questions:

- ⇒ What is our current quantity and quality of staff in the organization
- ⇒ What are our current needs of staffing, what are our future needs and how do we get them.
- ⇒ What is the effect of our motivation program to enable us to survive in the global competition
- ⇒ Is our labor union committed to our goals, etc.

Financial audit: This should answer the following set of queries

- ⇒ What are our past and current assets to liabilities ratios?
- ⇒ What is our current financial performance, how did we get here and what fund is needed to meet projected global objectives?
- ⇒ Where do we get investment funds from and how? What is the cost of capital in the global or local market?
- ⇒ What is our current dividend policy? Are the shareholders enthusiastic about our current global initiatives?

R&D Capabilities: Salient questions the marketing manager should ask are:

- ⇒ What is the capacity of our research team?
- ⇒ What is their level of innovation and idea crystallization within the national and global context?
- ⇒ What level of the fund is available for their work, what should it be?
- ⇒ What is their capacity for basic and applied research, new product development and pilot plant or prototype testing, etc.?

Aside from the competitive audit analyses model and patterns discussed above, the work of scholars like Bul-Godley (2013, 2019) titled *The Art of War* is worth appraising for firms in tough environments desiring to survive. The author presents a 13-point strategic

plan to mastering business strategy in the similitude of war. For want of space only Points 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10 and 13 will be showcased here (see Bul-Godley (2013, 2019) titled *The Art of War*): the cannons include: 1. The Laying of Plans, Calculations, and Estimations, 2. Waging War – The Challenge, 3. Attack by *Stratagem* or Planning Offensives, 6. Weak Points and Strong / Illusion versus Reality analysis, 7. Maneuvering and Dealing with Direct Conflict, 8. Variation in Tactics a.k.a The Innumerable Changes, 10. Terrain or situational Positioning and analysis, 13. The Use of Spies / Intelligence to outwit the competitor.

As (Lawal, Adegbuyi, Iyiola, Ayoade, and Taiwo, 2018; Ekakitie and Oladipo, 2010) rationalizes it, enterprise survival and continuity objective can sometimes be done at the expense of rival firms and often it takes the coloration of a 'bloodless war' which is very zero-sum.

FURTHER REVIEW OF THEORIES & MODELS

Two theories of strategic essence to enterprise survival and success are discussed in this study – the individual-opportunity nexus theory and the resource-based theory.

The Individual-Opportunity Nexus Theory: This theory contends that business opportunities exist in most environments of business and that individual managers would need to sharpen their tentacles to 'discover and exploit' them for growth and survival. Shane and Ventataraman (2002) conception and interpretation of the theory centers on the discovery of opportunities and subsequently exploiting them. But it does not mean that every individual or manager can identify opportunities. The assumptions of this theory are in three folds. Firstly, only those that have appropriate qualities and foresight will spot the opportunities in conflict times. As the authors put it: 'opportunities are objective, individuals are unique, and entrepreneurs are risk-bearing.'

The second assumption according to Shane (2000) is that entrepreneurship requires differences in people and they manifest in their various tendencies to see things perceptually (opportunities) from their abilities and competencies in decision making. Individuals are 'alert' to different degrees of stimuli and cues and one can be more sensitive than the other to their environmental emissions in unique ways attributable only to their perceptual abilities and sensibilities (Kirzner, 1994; Shane and Ventataraman (2002).

In their third assumption, the theory posits the existence of risk and uncertainties (features of the conflicted environment) as part and parcel of entrepreneurial ventures. In their study, Ekakitie and Egede (2018) stressed that the theory was inspired by 'the Kirznerian entrepreneurial discovery processes'.

The usefulness of this theory to this study is the allusion to the 'ability' of managers and actors to spot 'opportunities' in the environment. Again, the theory emphasizes the position and existence of risk and uncertainties in conflict times – managers must be alive to risk-bearing in this regard. Finally, managers should be 'alert' to opportunities and develop strategies in converting them to profit and making a market success out of them.

The Resource-Based Theory: The resource-based theory (RBT) asserts that performance difference across firms is a result of the different resources and capabilities they control (Barney 1991; Murray et al., 2011). Sustainable competitive advantages are derived from firm-specific resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991). Firm resources, which can be tangible or intangible, include all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm that enables the firm to conceive of and implement strategies that improve its efficiency and effectiveness (Barney, 1991).

RBT plays a critical role in strategic response research. Scholars frequently argue that strategic responses can be leveraged for competitive advantage and performance outcomes (Cadogan et al. 2009; Ruokonen and Saarenketo 2009). For example, competitive strategies have been linked to innovation capabilities and expert performance. However, some scholars argue that strategic capabilities have potential value in resource usage, which is not sufficient for value delivery (Lisboa et al. 2011; Murray et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, although RBT suggests that strategic capabilities help establish a competitive advantage in conflicted business environments to stay competitive and survive, it also requires a synergy of actors within and outside the firm. The essence of this theory to the study is to point out how firms can deploy their internal resources to gain an overriding competitive edge in conflict pruned business environments like the Niger Delta and the North East.

CONFLICTED ENVIRONMENTS, PEACEBUILDING & RESOURCE MANAGEMENT:

The Role of Government

Several theories of conflict and its management abound in the annals of management literature (Ekaktie, 2018; Wjetunge, 2016; Melisa, Bulent, and Meral, 2016; Ibiidunmi, Iyiola, OandIbidunni, 2014). Some proponents of conflict argue it has a beneficial impact on the industry and firm performance. But violent conflicts concerning that of the Niger Delta and North East region of Nigeria is beneficial to no one; if anything, it has set the economies of these regions several decades backward.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria stipulates that the overriding purpose of government existence is to ensure peace and security of its citizens and their properties. It would appear government has performed below par in this regard as over 45,000 (CNN Reports, 2019) lives have been lost and several innumerable persons permanently maimed and business and commercial activities almost none existent in the years (2010 – 20219); government needs a paradigm shift in its approach and role to securing an ambient environment for business to thrive. A combinational solution strategy in approaching stoppage of hostilities revolves around this roadmap to peace:

- 1) Engage the violent combatants tactically and get them to jointly agree with the government and its forces to declare a cease-fire which all must abide by.

- 2) Engage the leaders of the groups (or their representatives) in a peaceful and secure arena to dialogue truthfully on their demands and grievances – looking deeply into them, weighing their pros and cons.
- 3) Make necessary concessions (by both sides) by allowing tradeoffs and agreeing to remedy grievances and concessions. If, for instance, Boko Haram wants Sharia in the North East region, then its mechanics should be worked out for sharia practice and its actualization should be by *referendum* of the people of the North East. Concerning the Niger Delta, negotiations should equally allow a *referendum* on issues of True Federalism and Resource control and environmental remediation. The details of these two should be worked out.
- 4) Implement the referendum without government manipulations and it should be in the presence of UN observers and other world bodies. The outcome of the referendum shall carry a force of law and must be obeyed by all parties.
- 5) The President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Leaderships and members of Parliament at the national level along with State Governors of the concerned region, under the observation of the UN and its affiliate agencies shall have a joint responsibility to implement the verdict/outcome of the referendum and shall be signed it into law.

The next step that should follow is the UN template adduced by Barnette (2010) – the DDR – disarmament, demobilization and Reintegration approach. The component of the DDR approach is instructive as indicated below.

1 st Dimension	2 nd Dimension	3 rd Dimension	4 th Dimension
*Taking away weapons *Re-integrating former combatants into civilian society	*Rebuilding basic facilities, Transportation and communication Networks, utilities *Developing <u>rule of law</u> systems And public admiration *Building educational and health Infrastructure *Providing technical and capacity-Building assistance for institutions *Creating legitimate (<u>democratic, Accountability</u>) state institutions.	*Trauma counseling * <u>Transitional justice</u> and restoration *Community Dialogue *Building bridges Between different Communities *Increasing <u>human rights</u>	*Gender empowerment *Raising <u>environmental awareness</u> *Promoting <u>economic development</u> *Developing a <u>civil society and private</u> <u>The sector that can represent</u> diverse interests and challenge the state peacefully

Peace Building Commencement: It was the former Secretary-General of the UN, Boutros-Ghali that defines peacebuilding as a term used to describe actions to solidify peace and avoid a relapse into conflict. This definition is simple and clear. Indeed, Odeh (2014) sees it

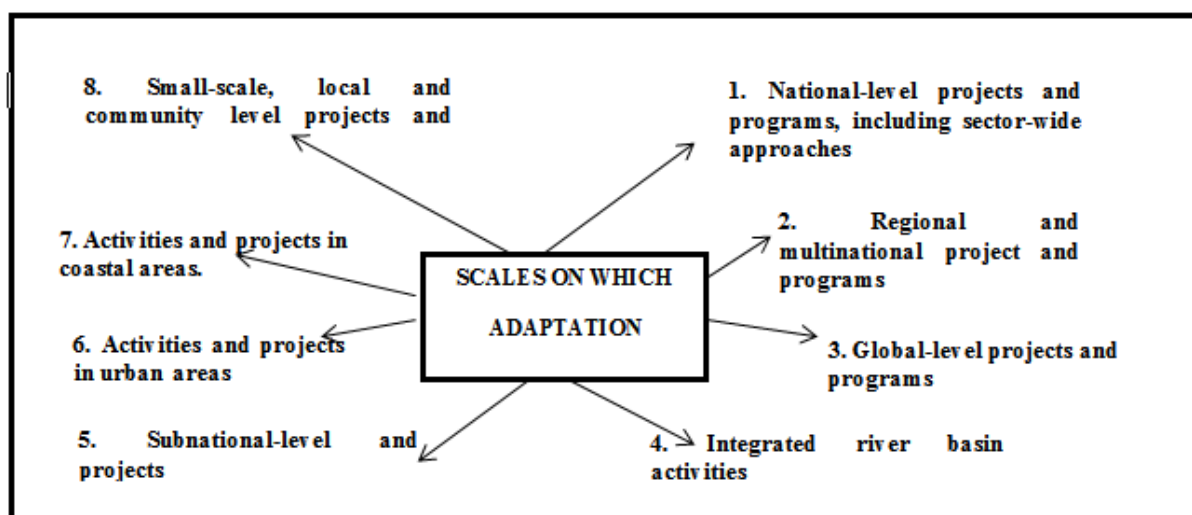
as outside interventions that are designed to prevent the start or resumption of violent conflict within a nation by creating a sustainable peace.

The literature on post-conflict activities is rich and very beneficial in terms of the processes and capacities to grow back destroyed societal superstructure, see Ekakitie (2018) and Ekakitie and Agbada (2018). Reintegration is a crucial component of that process. Several such models consist of three (3) critical dimensions as postulated by Kaimal (2007). These include:

- ⇒ Economic recovery dimension
- ⇒ Sequencing and prioritization of projects dimension and
- ⇒ Strategic frameworks dimensions

Several models and template of achieving the above are richly implicated in the UN-sanctioned Susan Woodward model, the Roland Paris Institutionalization before liberalization approach, the early recovery model and the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery approach; these are salient template the UN mainstreams - See Ekakitie's (2018) contributions on development initiatives and peacebuilding.

In the post-conflict development era several techniques that are adaptable to integrate and fast track various sections of the society, initiate and stimulate resource usage to return to steady-state abound. These should also include the actors. The OECD Paris model is herewith presented.



Source: OECD, 2009. Integrating change adaptation into development cooperation policy guidelines, Paris

As can be seen in the above figure, strategic approaches in project development at local, regional and national levels are clear. The model also provides for contributions and engagement of international development bodies and multinational business corporations to initiate projects that can impact the economy. All these are designed to bootstrap and kick start a return to an equilibrium state with its aggregate effects on industrial growth and development.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary: The study has taken a multidimensional assessment of the critical concepts implicated and their relatedness including consequences; it has discussed the emergence of conflict in the Niger Delta and the North East of Nigeria and how these have resulted in creating a difficult business environment for firms operating in the regions. No doubt the conflicts have constrained the efficient management of a firm's resources and to continue in business, firms have to adopt strategic survival options including unconventional ones.

Conclusion: The approaches the study suggested for firms to overcome such heinous environmental conditions were the optimization of functional and enterprise systems capacities in addition to adopting hitherto effective competitive strategies pioneered by renowned authors (Tasnim, Yahya, and Zainuddin, 2014; Taiwo, Falohun, 2016; Thompson and Strikeland, 2015) among others.

The study concludes that these strategic options are indeed winning formulas for the survival of persons and businesses especially in the regions under study. If taken seriously and applied with intelligent initiatives can be rewarding. Indeed, the government of the day has crucial responsibilities to bring an end to these crises that have spanned over a decade by adopting the strategic pathway to securing peace and stability as suggested in the study. The DDR and the OECD template of growing conflicted regions back to the economic vibrancy to enable efficient resource usage by firms at normal times are global. Their adoptions and implementation will be worthwhile for the regions under study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Develop attractive resource management techniques: this is a needful action plan which should be policy-driven. Such attractive resource management techniques can be accomplished by combining old and new techniques, evolving entirely new techniques.

Develop unique adaptive strategies: competitive strategies should not be restricted to textbooks and classroom teaching techniques. They should be allowed to evolve and be shaped by factors present in the environment. Here experience, competence and dexterity of the managers should evolve the best winning formulae to stay competitive given the environment.

Invent unique logistics and distribution systems: in conflict times, methods and techniques of distribution of products and services should be altered. The traditional methods should change and new techniques of conveying products/commodities evolved to beat not only competitors but also routes that have been compromised by parties at conflict.

Serve niche markets with value prospects: rather than create general products to serve the entire market segment, specific products and services can be designed to cater to new needs and wants. Smaller market segments can be targeted with products that have inelastic demand.

Increased use of enterprise systems: it is said that necessity is the mother of inventions. Most solutions to enterprise challenges are found in the internal and external environments. Enterprises with strong and innovative R&D units can invent ES that can add extra competency to ramp up productivity efficiency.

Engage development initiatives before agitations start: government must show responsibility by engaging in projects of developmental nature that are transformational and that impart industrial harmony, efficiency and productivity. Good governance is an antidote to agitation and conflict escalation.

CSOs & Governmental collaboration: a systemic collaboration between stakeholders, community-based organizations, civil society groups, etc., is needful to feel communal pulse and needs, especially in the area of development and enabling enterprise environment. It is a precursor to peace.

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