

# Instigationism And Conflict Entrepreneurship

[Jude Obuseh](#) / August 10, 2014

Every violent conflict has its beneficiaries. These beneficiaries are the people who hide behind iron masks to stoke the fire of violence; the secret players behind the scene; the evil hands hidden in velvet gloves waiting to pounce on any opportunity presented by war to make profit; the neutral shadow parties whose selfish interests must be satiated irrespective of whose ox is gored; unscrupulous businessmen whose unbridled quests for profit supersedes all other rational considerations – the war profiteers and instigators. This two sets of war mongers play mutually complementary roles in times of war; roles which ultimately defines and determines the dynamics and directions of most violent conflicts, at both their latent and manifest stages. The roles of the conflict entrepreneur and his instigationist counterpart in warfare form the fulcrum of this excursion. So, who are conflict entrepreneurs and instigators?

A conflict entrepreneur is any individual, group or organization that profits from violent conflicts through the sale of weapons, goods and services to both the parties at war, and to civilian non-combatants – the businessman profiteer who leverages on the opportunities created by violent conflicts to enrich himself. A conflict entrepreneur evokes two stereotypes in popular culture: First, you have the image of the rich businessman selling military hardware to warring parties, and, secondly, the quasi- criminal black marketer, selling commodities to common folk. The image of the conflict entrepreneur carries the implication of massive influence and power used to actively cause wars for personal gain, rather than merely passively profiting from them.

An instigator, within the context of this discourse, connotes an individual or group who stirs up violent conflicts to gain political, business and other private concessions. By stoking the fires of dissent, instigators seek to disrupt the peaceful relations among nations to feed their selfish desires. Labeled “Chicken-Hawks” by American commentators, these individuals provoke wars through their propagandistic, manipulative, conniving behaviour. Instigationists and entrepreneurs, as earlier noted, play complementary roles in causing and determining the dynamics and outcomes of wars. Instigators seek both power and profit, while entrepreneurs have their eyes only on the money.

Conflict entrepreneurs range from: Arms dealers, Commodity Dealers, Military Contractors, etc. Arms dealers make their profits by marketing their wares to parties at war. While some arms dealers operate independently, some others profit by cooperating with the authorities. For instance, during the Chaco War, Basil Zaharoff’s Vickers Company sold weapons to all the parties, while companies like Opel and IBM cooperated with the Third Reich during World War II. International arms dealers could either be well structured organizations or unstructured black market operators.

Commodity dealers also benefit or profit from violent conflicts. Wars usually lead to a shortage of essential commodities. This scarcity results in higher prices and equally higher revenues for the suppliers of goods and services. Apart from profits made by the regular commodity brokers, the role of black marketers is quite instructive here, for we must endeavour to make a distinction between war profiteers who gain by sapping military strength and those who gain by contributing

to the war. During WW II, stupendous profits were made by individuals selling rationed goods, such as cigarettes, butter, coffee and chocolate on the black market. In the US, dishonest military personnel given oversight over valuable property sometimes diverted rationed goods to the black market to make untaxed profits. Cases of individuals benefiting from wars also played out in Nigeria during the Civil War, the defunct Niger Delta Crisis, and the several foreign peace keeping missions (ECOMOG et al) the country has been involved in, where some Nigerian (civilian and military) businessmen made enormous profits from the supply of essential war time materials.

Military contractors constitute another group of war profiteers. Big war players like Northrop, General Dynamics, Raytheon, Grumman, Boeing and Lockheed, Nour USA Ltd, Custer Battles, Aegis Defense Services, Bechtel, CACI and Titan, to name but a few, have the potentials of profiting from actual wars, or the threat of wars. Old military materials has to be discarded due to age or is lost due to fighting, and new and different military material needed by the military to maintain strategic advantage over the military technologies of foreign nations which are hostile or may become hostile. Military contractors have very strong lobbies in the parliaments of countries with bellicose dispositions. The US is a classic case in point of countries where defense contractors influence war policies. Defense contractors are always happy whenever war rears its ugly head anywhere in the world. Defense contractor, Brent R Wilkes was reported to have been ecstatic when hearing that the US had declared war on Iraq because of the money-making opportunities the conflict provided for his company. He and some of his top executives were said to be really gung-ho about the war.

The political class also profit from violent conflict through the roles some of them play in times of conflicts. From supporting pro-war lobbies, to taking bribes and favours from corporations involved with the production of war equipment, politicians constitute some of the major beneficiaries from conflict situations. They occupy very significant positions in the war establishment. US Senator, Dianne Feinstein and her Husband, Richard Blum, made millions of dollars from Iraq and Afghanistan contracts through his company, Perini. Feinstein voted for the resolution giving President George Bush the authority to invade Iraq.

Instigationists and war profiteers are the invincible men behind most violent conflagrations the world over. They work hand-in-hand to benefit from the carnages of war; they are inseparable stakeholders whose interests supersede other concerns in their quest for concessions and profits. So many wars have been fought not because they were necessary, but because the egos of some politicians needed massaging, coupled with the fact that some greedy business men stood to benefit from them. For instance, the Spanish-American War was unnecessary. It was simply a war of conquest that turned America into an empire, cementing the political career of egomaniacal blowhard, Teddy Roosevelt, and enriching the directors of the military industrial complex in the process.

Again, the US had no business intervening in WW I, which qualifies as the most colossal disaster of the 20th century; if not of all centuries. Apart from the fact that the war provided plenty of power, glory, and wealth for the political class, it indirectly “strengthened the power of the communists in the (defunct) Soviet Union, and the rise of the Nazis in Germany” (emphasis mine), according to Jim Powell, in his classic “Wilson’s War”. Again, defense contractors became rich beyond their wildest dreams, civil servants became powerful economic power brokers, and the

intelligentsia began to see itself as a select breed of social engineers. What happened was that government was simply manipulated to create heaven on earth for the political class and their business friends.

What about America's entry into WW II, which was supposedly necessitated by the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbour? In his masterpiece on the real reason why the US entered WW II, titled "Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR and Pearl Harbour", Robert Stinnet points out that the US entered the War due mainly to the abysmal failure of FDR's economic stimulus programs aimed at checking the Great Depression. According to him, FDR's thinking was that entering the war would stimulate a huge government spending program that would help end the depression

or at least divert the public's attention from the woeful failures of his policies, and keep his reputation and legacy intact in the process. The unjust wars in Vietnam, which caused the senseless and needless death of 55,000 Americans and hundreds and thousands of Vietnamese; Korea, Iraq, which the CIA admits was based on a lie – that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction that threatened the US; and Afghanistan, offer contemporary cases of how the instigationist cabal has successively led the US into disastrous military campaigns, which were for nothing, as far as the average American taxpayer was concerned. Political hacks like William Kristol, Newt Gingrich, Mitt Romney, Herman Cain, Rick Santorum and Rick Perry, are classic examples of individuals who have defined the history of instigationism.

A similar scenario played out in Nigeria, during the dark years of the Civil War, when the greedy war mongers hurried the Federal Government into fighting an unnecessary war with the secessionist Republic of Biafra. Instead of continuing with dialogue – the non-adversarial conflict resolution method that would have yielded more dividends and prevented the bloody carnage that accompanied the ensuing war had it been sustained – certain individuals with ulterior motives manipulated Gowon into a catastrophic military action; a development that has continued to hunt Nigeria several years after the war officially ended. Many Nigerians became fabulously wealthy during and after the war, due largely to their criminal activities during those trying times. From stealing the country's resources, diverting relief materials provided by international humanitarian agencies for victims of the carnage, illegally acquiring the properties of fellow citizens who had hurriedly fled certain parts of the country, leaving their possessions behind, to so many other detestable crimes too numerous to mention, some of the wealthy Nigerians we have today became overnight millionaires by exploiting the war to their advantage. Also, in the aftermath of the war, some members of the political class became very influential power brokers due to their ignoble roles in the conflict, at the expense of the vanquished Biafrans – forget Gowon's contradictory post-war slogan: "No victor, No Vanquished".

Also, during the Niger Delta Crisis, cases were rife of community leaders and prominent politicians capitalizing on the situation to set up violent criminal groups without clear-cut mandates to disturb the peace and cash in on the ensuing confusion to ask for monetary concessions from the Federal Government and the transnational oil corporations operating in the region, under the sassy pretexts of helping provide security in the troubled area. These security rackets became major revenue earners for many prominent indigenes of the Delta region.

However, due to the growing conviction in certain quarters that making outrageous gains from violent conflicts is unethical, anti-profiteering measures have been put in place in the US and other countries. Thus, moves to prohibit excessive war profiteering, such as the imposition of an Excess Profit Tax receives much political support in times of war. But defining what constitutes “excessive” correctly is problematic. This conceptual challenge creates loopholes in such legislations which allows some form of profiteering to go on uncensored, while reducing the income of other war-related businesses to loss-making levels. The “War Profiteering preventive Act of 2007”, was intended to create criminal penalties for conflict entrepreneurs and others who exploit taxpayers funded efforts in theatres of war. War profiteering cases are often brought under the “Civil False Claims Act”, which was enacted in 1863 to check war profiteering during the American Civil War. Other countries have copied the American efforts in their attempts to check the unethical practice of earning excessive income from war. How far these efforts will go in checking war profiteering will be seen in the nearest future. Nigeria must endeavour to follow suit in this regard as many instances of illegal profiteering by some unscrupulous businessmen from the several violent conflicts that have reared their heads across the country have been left unaddressed, coupled with the fact that there are no concrete legislations – if any – to check the activities of conflict entrepreneurs in Nigeria.

Encouraging wars in order to profit from them constitutes the greatest crimes against humanity. Those who engage in such criminally detestable acts must be discouraged, using all legally practicable means available. Passing anti-profiteering legislations are certainly steps in the right direction. However, sterner measures, such as the actual prosecution and punishment of offenders, when found culpable, must be expedited to deter would-be perpetrators from plying their trade in the future. Conflict instigators and entrepreneurs are the actual war criminals, not just the active combatants who go against the rules of engagement; for without their satanic inputs, most wars would not occur.

Here is calling on all international, continental, sub-continental organizations, in conjunction with national governments, to begin to expedite more practical and far-reaching steps aimed at checking the greedy activities of individuals who gain from the pains of others. Global peace cannot be compromised, nor sacrificed to feed the selfish desires of heartless power-seeking politicians and their business collaborators. A stitch in time saves everything! God save the world!