

INTERNAL SECURITY CRISES AND THE STATE OF NIGERIA'S ECONOMY: TOAWARDS A WORKABLE SOLUTION

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Abstract

The territory called Nigeria today is beset with intense and complex rivalries between her regions, religions and ethnic compositions; a complexity that has triggered several crises and violent eruptions in the country with grave consequences on the nation's economy. This paper examined these various crises and violent eruptions in relation to the economic state of the country. These tasks were accomplished using secondary data sourced from national and international journals, textbooks and the internet search engine. The study is strictly an evaluative research analyzed from the platform of relative/vengeance theory. The study found that, the various crises and violent eruptions in the country grow out of past history of hatred and conflict with ever increasing thought and plans for vengeance by her divergent ethnic and religious groups as the penance or rationale behind crises and violent eruptions in the country. The study therefore, recommends patience among her citizens, holding people and organizations responsible for misconduct within the ambit of the law, peaceful and continuous dialogues/debates among others as viable pathways to curtail this phenomenon.

Keywords: Internal Security and the nation's economy.

INTRODUCTION

...war is destructive. There's no country that went to war that didn't suffer, not one. When we went to war, we destroyed everything we had. That's true (Ikejiani cited in Achebe, 2012).

Nigeria's story has been one long, unrelieved history of despair. What is today Nigeria was a plethora of various nationalities, with over 371 other ethnic groups which are usually lumped together as minorities. The birth of Nigeria as an independent state on 1st October, 1960 proved especially difficult. It was beset by intense and complex rivalries between its three regions, each of which was dominated by a major group with its own political party, a complexities that has led to several crises eruptions in the country. Nigeria has been rocked by one crisis after another since then. First the Nigerian census crisis of 1963 – 1964, which shocked the nation to her very foundation, then the federal election crisis of 1964, which was followed by the western Nigeria election crisis of 1965 which again threatened to split the country (Achebe, 2012; Alubo, 2012).

As it stands today in Nigeria, large scale crises and ethnic or religious conflicts have indeed led to displacement and mass movement of people, exacerbating the problems of poverty, exclusion and growing mistrust among different groups in society. According to the Economist (2001) over 80 major eruptions were recorded in various sections of the country in the first 55 months of civilian rule by December 2003. Ethnic and inter-communal conflicts have become so pervasive that there is hardly any part of the country that has not been affected. More telling still, more than 600 people were killed in civil unrests since 1999. Again, more than 2000 people died in Kaduna clashes in 2000, and over 1500 died in Jos crisis, a city in the centre of Nigeria in 2001 (Imobighe, 2003:14). The height of all these violence is the Boko Haram activities across the country, destroying several lives and properties as well as displacing millions of people from their original places of residence.

A further retrospect from historical records shows that, over 100,000 people have been killed through communal and sectarian violence since 1979 in Nigeria (Rycus, 2008). Approximately, more than 500,000 people have been displaced from their places of abode. There is no accurate data on where these people end up living, why they move to certain locations and not others, and the types of housing they occupy in their new locations including the impacts of such movement on the victims and their dwellings (Mcilwaine, 2006).

Nigeria's return to democratic rule in 1999 brought a number of expectations among the people (Maier, 2000). Years of military rule, political instability, policy reversals, weak economic growth, and endemic corruption have entrenched within the country; alarming level of poverty, inequality, and alienation among vast majority of its citizens. The return of democratic rule in the country, quite naturally, generated euphoria and great expectations, especially among those who felt alienated and disenfranchised in the country (Salau, 2009). Democracy, generally agreed, promotes stability and accountability in the political system. In retrospect, sixteen years plus after democratization in Nigeria, one wonders whether those expectations were after all misplaced. Sixteen years into democratic rule, economic growth continues to be stunted, distribution of wealth remained uneven and political stability elusive due to several crises eruptions within the country. In a simple language, in the last sixteen years, the level of poverty, unemployment, and inequality and divers killings have steadily increased (Ucha, 2010). Parallel to this development is the corresponding explosion in crime, especially its urban variant which includes prostitution, drug peddling, armed robbery, kidnappings, human trafficking, militia, thuggery, hooliganism, youth violence, and even terrorism.

Internal security crisis of any nature can threaten the quality of life, human rights, social, economic and political stability and sustainable development in any nation around the world. The lack of long-term solutions to social, economic and governance issues as well as the failure to promote inclusive policies targeting the most vulnerable groups is at the root of persistent increase in violence and crime (UN Habitat, 2005). Without a deliberate effort to address this situation, the prospects of sustainable development are severely limited.

According to Baylis (2014), security is freedom from threats to core values for groups and individuals. Therefore, internal security is the protection of citizen's lives and properties within a sovereign border. An opposite condition or state to this understanding is insecurity and therefore a crisis situation. A culture of threats emanating from every corner in Nigeria is an internal security issue because it threatens the freedom and safety of the citizens. Due to such threats emanating from various corners in the country, Uzodike and Maiagwa, (2012) have articulated the various conditions and features of a failed state as pertain to Nigeria, ranging from the Failed states index in which the country ranked 14th in 2011, Terrorism and political mapping (2010-2011), which ranked her fifth and Human Development Index Trend (2011), where Nigeria emerged 156 out of 186 countries. On these bases they assert that the chaotic and anarchic situation in the Nigeria of 2012 exemplifies the characteristic of a failing or weak state that is degenerating into full failure. Such full blown failure would have been averted today with the record success of the Nigeria Army in the ongoing war against the sects.

The economy of a nation on the other hand, is the result of millions of decisions we make every day about producing, earning, saving, investing and spending. A nation's

economy like Nigeria comprises the configuration of institutions that specify property relations within her society or channel and influences the distribution of goods and services (North, 1993). A nation's economy, its financial resources and management; also encompasses the value of all goods and services manufactured within a nation's boundary. The economy is an important aspect of social institution in any known society in the world. It tasks the nation to produce enough resources and distribute the same to ensure its survival.

Furthermore, Jain, (2012) agrees with these understandings, but he further stressed that this sector comprises: primary, secondary and tertiary sector. The primary sector refers to the part of the economy that deals with production of raw materials such as crude oil, timber, grain or cotton. The secondary sector is made up of mills and factories, turning or transforming raw materials into manufactured or finish goods, like fuel, lumber, flour, or fabric while the tertiary sector refers to services rather than goods, and includes distribution of manufactured goods, food and hospitality services, banking, sales and professional services like: architects, physicians, and attorneys. Although, the economy of an emerging nation like Nigeria is still dominated by primary products such as agricultural produce as well as minerals both of which are exported raw without any refining (Alubo, 2012). For such a staggering economy to be hit again and again by various crises eruptions in the country, her survival will always be a doubt.

The paper adopted the relational/vengeance perspective. Relational theory attempts to provide explanation for violent conflicts between groups by exploring sociological, political, economic, (religious) and historical relationships between such

groups. The belief is that cultural and value differences as well as group interests all influence relationships between individuals and groups in different ways. Thus, a number of conflicts grow out of a past history of conflict between groups that has led to the development of negative stereotypes, racial intolerance and discrimination, (Faleti, 2006). The differences in value invariably creates the “We” and ‘Others” dichotomy: The fact that ‘others’ are perceived as different makes us feel they are entitled to less or are inferior by reason of values. This disrupts the flow of communication between us and them and to that extent, twists perceptions that we have about each other. Okereke (2013) notes that people “attracted several descriptions where they operated based on the perceptions of the local population; in some communities, where it existed, the sect and its members were described as terrorists and persons with psychiatric challenges”.

The cogency of the relational/vengeance perspective is such that for a long time, it remained the plausible explanation for the terror campaign by Boko Haram and other internal crises as the “we” and “others” psychology grows, and has become a major factor in the citizens’ resolve to avenge its members through the violent campaign which signifies existence of division within the ethnic lines, all widen the scope of crisis and continuous violence targets, often blur the line between the “We” and ‘Others”, and so challenge this perspective.

HIGHLIGHTED CASES OF INTERNAL SECURITY CRISES IN NIGERIA AND THE GOVERNMENTS’ RESPONSES

Since May 29, 1999, Nigeria has been plagued by too many violent uprisings from ethnic militia to post-election crises; communal clashes, Boko Haram insurgency

and the current herdsmen attacks of communities. The Economist cited in Alubo, (2011) presented an estimate of victims in various crises eruptions between 1999 and 2001 thus:

... more than 600 people have been killed in civil unrest since 1999. The Muslim-Christian divide has usually defined the combatants. More than 2000 people died in clashes in Kaduna in February 2000, and hundreds more in Aba in the following month. In June this year [2001] hundreds died in similar clashes in Bauchi state, and more than 500 died in Jos, a city in centre of Nigeria, last month.

Between 17th and 20th January 2010, Muslim – Christian tensions turned violent in Jos, with at least 400 people killed and 18,000 displaced persons before the military restored order. On 16th March 2014, Fulani herders attacked three Christian villages and killed more than 100 civilians in Kano. The New York Times (2014) reported that Middle Belt violence is typically separated from Boko Haram activity, but analysts say there is a risk that the insurgent's will try to struck the conflict in central Nigeria.

The height of the crises began in 2010 with activity of the Boko Haram sect. They adopted targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and hostage-taking with an increasing global reach. Since the mid 2010, the group has targeted media outlets, journalist and schools, as well as kidnapped both locals and foreigners. From August 2011 to June 2012 Boko Haram violence significantly escalated, with the suicide bombing of a UN building and multiple attacks on security facilities, banks, and churches, resulting in high numbers of civilian casualties.

Recently, the lingering tension between nomads and traditional farming communities has taken a new dimension. The boldness with which itinerant cattle herders (by whatever named called and whatever ethnicity associated) have continued to

violently and regularly disrupt, kill, maim, rape and overrun settled farming communities is alarming. The blood has yet to dry on the recent mayhem in Benue, Taraba and Enugu state. Internal security challenges continue to escalate with the fight against Boko Haram insurgent's ongoing, kidnappings and hostage taking for ransom rise competition as side dishing.

The various government responses put in place to combating internal crises eruptions in Nigeria thus far includes: troops deployments to crises ridden areas, setting up of commissions of enquiry to look into the outbreak and their causes which has always been an attempts to improve the diversity of government; the establishment of programmes to address cases of unemployment and poverty, establishment of National Emergency Management (NEMA) which deals with medical recovery and relief in emergency responses which include: food, water, medical care, protection against abuse and violation of rights, as well as provision of temporary shelter and basic sanitation. Government responses also include collaborative initiatives with neighboring states and involvement of civil society and international development partners. Government has also strengthened community representation. This move was intended to accommodate diversity and build a more inclusive political system.

Furthermore, as a way of ameliorating the challenges of internal security crises in Nigeria, the government of Nigeria established an Inter-religious Council like that of Plateau state to foster and promote dialogues aimed at addressing the grievances of various sections of the nation. However, the proper operation of these agencies and the implementation of the recommendations of various commissions set up, has always been

hampered by the same political polarization that drives the conflicts and crises themselves hence the lingering of crises in Nigeria.

Finally, these efforts by the government have only resulted in violence management and not conflict resolution, as a panacea for long lasting peace. Perhaps, the commonest means by which the government of Nigeria can bring about peace in conflicting or violence prone areas is the militarization of the area. The Police and the Army are usually deployed to such areas to enforce peace. Subsequently, roadblocks are mounted and left so, for very long periods to ensure that peace is sustained (Saidu and Shafa, 2006).

IMPACT OF VARIOUS INTERNAL SECURITY CRISES ON THE NATION'S ECONOMY

Chronic crisis transforms social networks and relationship in ways that can erode trust and effective collective action. The climate of fear and distrust created by chronic violence can become so entrenched that it engenders additional violence, which then is justified as defence (Simpson, 1993). Crisis, or the fear of it, deters investment, stigmatizes neighbourhoods, erodes social cohesion, and limits access to employment and educational opportunities. On the individual level, residents in crime and violence hot spots may decrease or avoid investing in their own human capital, postpone starting small businesses, and stop practicing some forms of solidarity with neighbours for fear that these action would put them at greater risk of victimization. The resulting climate of insecurity also weakens governance by limiting mobility and creating fear and distrust among community members. Given the above effects, violence clearly is inherently disempowering for both the affected communities and the broader society.

Moreover, the cost of life and material resources lost to insecurity in the country since the past few years is unquantifiable. According to Human Rights Watch (2014), a security monitoring agency, between 2009 and 2012, about 2,800 lives had been lost to militia insurgency; within the first nine months in 2012, 815 people were killed in 275 suspected attacks, and more than 60 police stations were attacked in 10 northern states, excluding the bombed police headquarters in Abuja. Tens of dozen are still nursing various degrees of injuries. The data base of orphans and widows caused by the rampaging Boko Haram activities has grown vastly. Money from some international organizations and funds raised locally from governmental, non-governmental agencies, charitable organizations and individuals which is supposed to be channeled to human capital development has been deployed for the rehabilitation of families of the casualties and the renovation of properties destroyed. Yearly, unspecified millions of naira are being paid as ransom for the release of victims of kidnapers; not forgetting the Central Bank of Nigeria's ₦100 million cash donation, the ₦200 million donation from the combined effort of the opposition governors, and the \$50, 000 from the Christian Association of Nigeria, America chapter, to reduce the suffering of the victims of regional militia. The cost of insecurity in Nigeria could also be seen on the percentage of annual budget allocated to security agencies on yearly basis. Infrastructure and human capital development are almost foregone alternatives; hence, capital expenditure is struggling from the rear (Oguamanam, 2016).

As Nigeria struggles with the army of unemployed youth of about 24%, companies in their numbers are closing down operations in the north and relocating to other African countries for fear of loss of lives and properties. And the few remaining

companies operate on skeletal bases. For instance, a top management of a manufacturing company disclosed that their production plant in the North, which in recent past operated three times a week, now operates once a month because of fear of insecurity. Construction workers and expatriates providing specialized services on various projects in some states had fled the nation. This development has multiplied the number of unemployed youth roaming the street and has become an easy tool for further violence. This scenario has not only deepened the existing unemployment rate but also paints a gloomy picture of poverty. Education they say is the bedrock of social economic development (Afri-Dev., 2013). The Islamic militants have serially attacked students and facilities in educational institutions in different northern states of the country. Over time, a lot of schools have shut down their academic programmes. This has drastically impacted the teeming number of students seeking admission into academic institutions at all levels. For example, University of Maiduguri, one of the most affordable universities in Nigeria which is known for turning down admission of student because of quality and to avoid overcrowding of facility, now solicits for admission through deferent media outreach.

Also recently, a respondent survey shows that a lot of students have vowed never to participate in the compulsory one year National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) programme if posted to the northern part of the country. Those who were inadvertently posted to the north redeployed immediately after three weeks of mandatory camping. This development therefore defeats the core mandate of setting up the NYSC in 1973. The growth of foreign direct investment in the tourism sector had been adversely affected as some immigration departments of countries in Europe and America have issued

warnings to their citizens who wish to visit Nigeria to be aware of the security problem in the country. Not only did insecurity in the country affect foreign direct investment, it also affects business confidence as many companies lost confidence in establishing businesses in some parts of the country (Human Right Watch, 2015).

CONCLUSION

Underlying the various crises in Nigeria as an entity is a breakdown in trust between communities, and their polarization along lines of ethnicity and religion which grow with each incident of violence. This gulf has also been heightened by historical animosities which has a negative impact on the staggering economy of the nation as shown by all economic indices. The task of rebuilding trust and peaceful co-existence among her citizens will require multiple measures at all levels, but most of all, such reforms and rebuilding will require strong and effective leadership to addressing the challenges of internal security crisis in the country.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS (RECOMMENDATIONS)

This is not a time to bemoan all the challenges ahead. But a time to work at developing, nurturing, sustaining, and protecting our corporate coexistence; we must learn patience and not expect instant miracles. Building a nation is not a thing we can do in one regime, or even in a few years; it is a very long process. The Chinese had their chance to emerge as the leading nation in the world in the middle ages but were consumed by inter-ethnic political posturing and wars and had to wait another five hundred years for another chance. I know very well we don't want that to happen to Nigeria.

For most people the solution is straight forward: if you commit a crime, you should be brought to book. We must hold people responsible for misconduct and

persecute them accordingly if found guilty. As the Nobel Laureate, Soyinka cited in Oguamanam (2016) clearly stated, "For every crime, there is a punishment, for every violation, there must be restitution. In a country such as Nigeria, where there are no easy fixes, we must also examine the issues of accountability which has to be a strong component in our fight against any form of future violence and crises.

Furthermore, debate about a nation's future like Nigeria should not turn into an excuse for politicians to drink or feast on meals in Abuja or any city in Nigeria or an avenue to share the nation's resources by some very few. Such debate should continue for decades, in small forums, in our schools, offices, on the radio, television, in market places, in our newspapers, and on the streets until we get things right.

We must drop every form of ethnic and religious hatred and accept our differences and live together as one entity. It is crystal clear that we need to fight this new enemy with everything at our disposal. Most importantly, we need to identify leaders with the right kind of character, education, and background. Someone who understands what is at stake – where Nigeria had been, and, where it needs to go. For the second time in our short history we had to face the disturbing fact that Nigeria – as Achebe, (2012) will put it, needed to liberate itself anew, this time not from a foreign powers but from ourselves and our inherited hatred for one another.

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