

**VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY:
A CHALLENGE TO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND NATION-BUILDING
IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC 1999-2020**

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Abstract

The state of insecurity has increased in Nigeria since the wake of the Fourth Republic in 1999. The heightened state of insecurity in the country could be blamed partly on increased protestations across the country. Various parts of Nigeria are saddled with the problem of terrorism, insurgency, militarization, secession, herdsmen attack, cattle/farmers rustling, banditry, kidnapping and other sectional and religious agitations. All the enumerated problems could probably be linked to bad governance which in turn has given rise to youth restiveness as a result of unemployment, poor infrastructure, poor policies and corruption. Violence and insecurity constitute a major challenge to planning for economic development and nation-building. They contribute immensely to the waste of the scarce resources in Nigeria. They are harbingers of destruction of lives and property. This paper has therefore for its objective to explore the challenges posed by violence and insecurity on economic development and nation-building in Nigeria and their effect on the psyche of the people. Normative method approach and failed state theory are used to dissect the happenings caused by violence and insecurity in Nigeria since Fourth Republic (1999-2020) and to analyse its implications for economic development and nation-building. The paper made use of data collected mainly from secondary sources such as books, journals and internet reports. The findings reveal that violence and insecurity have indeed constituted serious impediment to economic growth and nation-building within the period covered by this work.

Keywords: Violence, Insecurity, Economic Development, Nation-Building, Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Introduction

The politics of Fourth Republic in Nigeria (1999-2020) has been volatile as it is related with violence and insecurity and various conflicts of different scope and dimensions. Notable conflicts and killings included but not limited to Odua Progress Congress (OPC) verses Hausa settlers conflict in Lagos in July 18, 1999; OPC versus Ibo traders at Alaba International Market Lagos, July 13, 1999; OPC versus Ijaw Youths, October 28, 1999; OPC versus Hausa yam traders in Lagos, Nov 25, 1999; Igbo versus Hausa in Aba and Owerri, February 2000; Jos conflicts between Muslims and Christians Sept 11, 2001 and 2004; Fulani versus Zakibiam in Benue State and Taraba States October 2001; Tarok versus Hausa Conflict in Wase Local Government Area Plateau State, 2002 and 2005 (Ezeogidi 2013). Others include the numerous Fulani herdsmen attacks in Kaduna in Adamawa state, August 2016 (TVC News online Aug 2,

2016), Fulani herdsmen attack in Belon in Benue State, May, 2018 (TVC News online February 20, 2020), Fulani Headsmen attack in Uwheru Community in Delta State, February 2020 and Fulani herdsmen attack in Mbanyiar community in Guma Local Government Area in Benue State on March 8, 2020 (Al Jazeera news online May 7, 2020). These conflicts have posed serious challenges to the country's economic development and inevitably slow down the country's nation-building process.

Prior to the Fourth Republic, there were certainly pockets of insecurity in Nigeria which were more spread out in the Niger Delta area. Nwuba (1997:204) opines there was unpleasant and inevitable restiveness in the region because it appears that the "blessing of the Nigerian nation and the world in general is turning to a curse or woes". Explaining further, Nwuba writes:

From the earliest time in recent history, the Niger Delta region of Nigeria has never been incorrigibly insular nor irrationally imperious to internal and external restiveness. Armed conflicts and traditional restiveness have become part of their custom or culture.

The above statement refers to the period when, activists like Ken Saro-Wiwa and company were considered threats to Nigeria State under Gen Sani Abacha whose regime tried and summarily executed them. Violence is however increasingly becoming more widespread in nearly all parts of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. From the southern forest region to the Mambilla plateau, down to the savannah regions of the North, insecurity, violence and conflicts have infested the many parts of our country as people witness increasing conflicts especially in Jos and its surroundings. Jos conflicts, Tarok versus Hausa conflicts mentioned above and others serve as classical example. Militarisation, secession, Herdsmen and Boko Haram attacks, kidnapping, armed banditry have become the order of the day. Every geographical region in Nigeria has its peculiarity.

In the East, it is secession as championed by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) and other similar bodies; in the far North, it is the Boko Haram attacks; in the North West, it is the kidnapers, armed bandits and cattle rustlers; in the North Central, it is the Fulani herdsmen; in the South West, the same herdsmen and kidnapers, and in the Niger Delta, it is the militarisation of the Youth. All these pose some major challenges to the economic development of Nigeria and constitute severe impediment to the country's nation building process in this Fourth Republic. If we take Mittee (2011:91-97) logic into consideration, it will be evident to us here that these acts of violence and insecurity take some negative tolls on Nigeria's economy. Mittee gave a practical example that between 2006 and 2008, kidnapers and hostage takers pocketed ransoms of over \$100 million (about N 15 billion). Also about 680,000 barrels per day (bpd) of oil was lost to oil theft, whilst 1.3 million bpd was shut in for six months in 2009.

This paper therefore investigates what violence and insecurity have done to the economic development of Nigeria in her nation-building process in the Fourth Republic. What are the implications in terms of human beings sacrificed, able-bodied youths maimed, manpower lost and millions of people dislocated from their homes? How have successive regimes handled the situation? Are there better options? These and more are some of the questions that guide the study.

State and Nature of Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria

Bala Usman once theorised that:

The most primary of the fabrics binding all human communities, throughout

the world, from the earliest Stone Age hunting and gathering bands, up to today, has been the provision, on a sustained basis, of the security of life, and of the means of life, to the members of the community.

In Nigeria, even before the coming of Europeans, there had been pockets of violence and conflicts, the climax of which was the 30-month Nigeria-Biafra war that led to an estimated death of three million Biafrans. According to Wikipedia, “during the two and half years of the war, there were about 100,000 overall military casualties while about 500,000 and three million Biafrans died of starvation.” Ezeh, 2012() also asserted that “the failure of political and diplomatic agreement led to the economic blockade of the south-eastern region mostly dominated by the Christian Igbo community... during which millions of Igbo people faced death by starvation and disease.” However, the conflicts of the past three decades seem to be more sophisticated, deadly and confusing. Every part of Nigeria is affected, unlike during the Nigeria-Biafra war when attack was mainly focused on the Biafran enclave. Usman enumerated 33 internecine conflicts in Nigeria from 1980 to 2004, the cost of which was mostly land struggle for farming and other purposes.

The intensity and volatility of conflicts and violence in Nigeria seem to be on the upsurge with the terrorist activities of Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern Nigeria. The activities of Boko Haram have left no one in doubt that they are terrorists' organisation operating in Nigeria. Their acts of violence have impinged on the security of Nigeria for a good numbers of years in this Fourth Republic. Shinkeiye (2004) defines security as the totality of actions and measures as well as legislative and operational procedures taken to ensure peace, stability and the overall well-being of a nation and its people. Francis on his part sees security as a feeling of safety from harm or danger and the defence, protection and preservations of core values. It simply has to do with survival and human existence. The above definitions are the direct opposite of insecurity characterised by violence that various parts of Nigeria are experiencing which has left much to be desired.

Osakwe (2011:1-24.) noted that “there had been records of deadly game of “kidnap and ransom” with increasing incidents of violent criminality. He laments on the prevalence of arching lawlessness and insecurity in the land” In his words:

Many parts of Nigeria show evidence, approximating this Hobbesian description. Whatever the proximate and remote causes, effective government must act to stop the impunity of violent criminality and the cycle of ethnic and religious butchery. When this condition is achieved that is the emergence from this degenerative “state of nature”, and then the work of constructing the modern state can begin, through the application of laws, and the implementation of rational policies and regulation.

Nation-building cannot be achieved in a state of insecurity because as Osakwe postulates, it is one of the biggest “non-tariff barriers to trade and investment. Insecurity will countervail and undermine all policies for growth, poverty reduction and development.” Nigerians are worried and in protestation to the prevailing state of insecurity in the country.

Achebe (2012:250) blamed the rise of terrorism in Nigeria on economic deprivation and corruption which in his words “produce and exacerbate financial and social inequities in a population, which in turn fuel political instability.” For Achebe, in the face of this scenario, “extremists of all kinds, particularly religious zealots and other political mischief makers, find a foothold to recruit supporters and sympathisers to help them launch terrorist attacks and wreak havoc in the lives of ordinary citizens”. In a nutshell, a major catalyst to insurgencies,

kidnappings, armed banditry, militarisation, secessionist agitations, riots and other violent behaviour in Nigeria is unemployment occasioned by bad leadership and unbridled corruption.

Implications of insecurity and violence in Nigeria

Arowosegbe (2005:25) has isolated insecurity of lives and property as some of the key challenges facing Nigeria in this Fourth Republic, especially from 1999-2014. Odey and Agba (2011:147-165) are also of the opinion that “insecurity is a cause for poverty in that it disrupts the socio-economic order in the society thereby keeping people out of their productive ventures hence poverty.” Orhero (2015) has argued that “expenditures on security are essential components of the development process.” If the resources that would have been put in the socio-economic development in terms of infrastructure, health, education and other projects have not been diverted to quantifiably out of ratio fund to quell violence and insecurity and provide for Internally Displaced Persons' Camps (IDP), more structures would have been developed. Orhero also noted that “insecurity is a drain on national resources at the expense of people's well-being”.

Boko Haram as, an insurgent organization, has indeed grossly depleted the economy of the North and the rest of the nation. Its continued violence has affected every sector of the economy in the country. The plunging of the economy into recession in 2016 could be said to have had some linkage to the violence and insecurity perpetrated by the activities of Boko Haram. Indeed, in Human Right Watch (HRW), Okereocha (2014) observed that the world investment report of the United Nation conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) estimated that Nigeria lost a huge sum of N1.33 trillion Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) due to the nefarious activity of Boko Haram. Similarly, the United Nations Humanitarian and Resident Co-ordinator in Nigeria, Kallon asserted that Boko Haram insurgency has claimed over 27,000 civilian lives since its beginning in 2009. He also noted that it was still raging and called for a prioritisation of prevention mechanism in terms of possible developments and humanitarian actions.

The implication of violence and insecurity in Nigeria are indeed many and varied. Dissecting it is dependent on the intellectual prism one looks at. To begin with, the people have been demoralised and their psyche bastardized. This does not augur well for nation building. Since violence has taken over the place of dialogue and negotiation, and statements of threats have been preferred to discussions and diplomacy, mistrust, suspicion and volatility have therefore become the order of the day. Consequently, fear, religious fanaticism and the destruction of lives property have overtaken every sector of the society especially in the North East. In addition, the Fulani Herdsmen attack mostly the Christian population of Central and Eastern Nigeria. Lamenting on the great loss suffered by Christians due to such attacks between 2018 and 2019, Mailafia (2019) stated:

The church of Christ in Nigeria is among the most persecuted in the world. In the North-East, some 2000 churches have been destroyed and more than 400 clergy killed. During the past year, 11 Catholic priests have been killed by faceless armed herdsmen militias in Enugu State. The latest victim is Father Paul Offu, who was gunned down on Thursday, August 1, 2019. ... Last week five pastors belonging to the Redeemed Church of Christ were abducted by kidnappers along the Sagamu-Benin-Ore Road on their way to a church conference in Mowe, Ogun state (Mailafia, 2019:31).

Who then is safe? The answer is that no one is safe. Open Door, an international Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) that documents the persecution of Christians around the world, claims that six thousand Christians were killed during the first half of 2018 in Nigeria alone. A greater number of this figure fled as refugees from the attacked zones and ultimately ended up as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the different camps scattered all over Nigeria. According to Mailafia (2019:31) “people who do such things are not only shameless cowards; they are strangers to both God and humanity. Their aim is to brutalize the society and to create an atmosphere of fear. Fear in its turn will generate bitter hatred. Bitterness and hatred bottled over a long period, will sooner or later, explode into widespread violence of all against all.” Furthermore, Aribisala (2019:40) has warned that, “there is a revolution already underway in Nigeria: the revolutionaries are armed-robbers, pen-robbers, “area-boys,” “yahoo-yahoo boys,” herdsmen, kidnappers and 419 scammers.” The people of Nigeria live and move indeed in constant fear of insecurity. Hence Aribisala (2019:40) further noted: “This revolutionary criminality has found its most profound expression in armed robbery and kidnappings. Everyone is now wary of travelling inter-city for fear of being kidnapped. If you fall into the trap of these hoodlums, the going rate is 5 million naira.”

The nature of the violence and security has also become widespread. Kidnapping, which used to be localised in certain areas of Eastern Nigeria, has become a national phenomenon. The Fulani herdsmen menace which operated mostly in Northern Nigeria has turned its direction southward. Gangsters and criminals are operating with carefree lance in almost all sectors of the federation. The Churches in the North-East have become death-trap as Boko Haram insurgence launches frequent attacks in these places of worship, claiming the lives of innocent people and destroying their property.

Resource Mismanagement and the Escalation of Violence in Nigeria since 1999

One of the major factors that escalate violence is government's inability to allocate resources equitably. The rich-get-richer and the poor-get-poorer syndrome seem to promote such poor allocation of resources and it is a big threat to nation-building in Nigeria. It fuels disequilibrium which is a catalyst for tension and violence in the country. Lakefema (2019:31) has submitted that “Nigeria has built a society where a handful have cornered the wealth of the country and privatised its resources. Where a Senator nets N14 million (\$38,356) monthly, and the worker on the National Minimum Wage earns N18,000 (\$50.57) monthly” How can there be peace and security in such state of disequilibrium and inequality?

The country's oil wealth could ordinarily provide adequate for all the children in Nigeria in standard schools even with free lunch meals, but the reverse is the case. 13.2 million Nigerian school children are out of school, and the standard of existing schools is grossly inadequate. The classrooms are over-crowded and some schools have no provision for what could be called classrooms. Indeed Lakemfa (2019:31) asks: “what magic will be done to make the children from this background not to be violent when they grow up? More so, with little or no means of legitimate livelihood!” It would therefore not out of place for one to agree also with Lakemfa (2019:31) that “Nigeria through conflict and violence has witnessed some depopulation beginning with its three year civil war from 1967 with an estimated two million soul. In the last decade, the Boko Haram terrorists have killed over 27,000 with an estimated two million displaced.”

The money spent by the Nigerian government in handling insecurity problem is indeed enormous. In the first six months of 2018 alone, not less than 1,300 Nigerians lost their lives

with over 300,000 people dislocated and lodged in the various IDP camps. These became dependent on the Nigerian government for their daily maintenance. Opukri and Etekpe, (2019:31) contend that in the 2012 budget, the federal government mapped out 21.91 per cent, that is, US \$5.58 billion to security agencies alone, while other pressing issues of governance like health and education were neglected. It is therefore not out of place for one to align with the view of Lakemfa that “due to mismanagement especially of its human and natural resources, poverty and hunger has grown so much in Nigeria that it has infamously become the world's poverty capital with 87 million living below \$2 a day.” Furthermore, Igbuozor writes that according to Global Peace Index, between 2011 and 2012, there was a notable fall in peace as Nigeria dropped four places 146 out of 150 countries in global peace ranking. This marked Nigeria as one of the least peaceful countries in West Africa.

Conclusion

Violence and insecurity have thrived in Nigeria for twenty one years without interruption in the Fourth Republic. However, it is not without skirmishes of probable disintegration orchestrated by agents and promoters of failed state theory as exemplified by terrorists and separate state agitators. But still the country has continued to survive. The resilience of the citizen in the face of such unabated violence and insecurity points to the fact that Nigeria could be a better place if only government would put in place positive mechanisms to address the situation. Equity in the allocation of the nation's wealth could be considered a major factor to be addressed to boost economic development and enhance nation-building. If the education and health sectors receive adequate funding by the government, this would also go a long way to promote quality education, healthy living and create more jobs to take the hoodlums out of street, thereby reducing violence and insecurity to the barest minimum. As this study has exposed, violence and insecurity have indeed posed enormous challenges and constituted grave impediment to the economic development and nation-building in Nigeria within the first two decades of the Fourth Republic. The solution to the problem may however call for a rethink of the present system of operation of governance which seems to have failed the people. It is for this reason that the paper makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

The paper recommends that for violence and insecurity to be reduced and eventually eliminated in Nigeria, Nigeria needs to be restructured in order to have strong institutions with independence from the presidency. The National Assembly which is the legislative arm of government should be independent of the executive. Also, the judiciary should be independent of the two other arms of government. On this note, the paper is advocating for strong practice of separation of powers. And there should be constitutionalism and Rule of Law. The law of the land must be respected by all, irrespective of position or authority. There should not be impunity in legal process of the nation. Also, the law enforcement agents must not be selective in the application of laws. If offenders are brought to book accordingly, violence and insecurity would have been nipped in the bud.

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