THE QUEST FOR PEACE AND SECURITY IN IMO STATE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

A time there was in Nigeria when Imo state was adjudged the most peaceful and secured state in Nigeria. At a point, things started falling apart even before the present administration, to the extent that today insecurity in Imo State has assumed an intractable proportion and has become a major cause for concern to the residents. The situation is such that politicians have now turned it into a major campaign issue. Whereas the government in power claims that the insecurity in Imo State is politically contrived by the opposition parties, the opposition parties on their part accuse the government of being responsible. Against the above background, this article aims to outline some of the general causes of lack of peace and security and the negative impact on the life and property of the citizens, as well as the socio-economic development of the state. In undertaking the above task, the doctrinal methodology is adopted and the analysis is predicated on the theories of collective security system and the sociological theory of law as an instrument of social engineering. In analyzing the issues, the article advanced the recognition that the security and welfare of the citizens is the primary purpose of government. It went further to deconstruct the concept of government and argued that the ultimate responsibility for the security of the life and property of the citizens is that of both the government as agent of the people and the people themselves as the principal. The paper concluded with the proposition that it has become imperative to collectively and dispassionately interrogate the causes of the current wave of insecurity in the State and recommended some applicable kinetic and non-kinetic salutary measures.

Key words: Peace; Security; Collective Security; Democratic Governance

Introduction

The condition of peace and justice can be said to be the best height any nation or state could attain and that they are sacrosanct to the enjoyment of the human rights of the people and the achievement of their socio-economic development. Hence, peace and security lies at the epicenter of the society itself being the fabric and glue, which holds the society together as a united people.[1] Therefore, in any democratic society, both the government and the governed must seek peace and justice as the foundation for stability and development and must not turn blind eyes to insecurity, politicize it or resort to blame game in analyzing the scourge. Thus, it must be recognized that insecurity and conflict are endemic in society and in fact, predate every government. Hence, the constitutional mandate that the security and the welfare of the people is the primary purpose of government.[2] This is indeed, why government was instituted amongst men in society, as the social contract theory depicts. Therefore, any country or state which completely falls short of the achievement this democratic mandate can then be properly described as a failed state.

Against the above background, the overall aim of this paper is to reaffirm the overarching importance of peace and security as the foundation of socio-economic development and the debilitating effects of insecurity on the political economy of any State. The objectives are: to stimulate discussion on the need for peace and security as a veritable foundation for the peoples' freedom and the achievement of sustainable socio-economic development; to highlight some of

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[1] Kingson C. Uwandu, "Is there still hope for the Nigerian dream?" The Guardian, 05 October 2020: https://guardian.ng/opinion/is-there-still-hope-for-the-nigerian-dream/ (accessed 20 November 2o22).

[2] See Section 14 (2) (b) of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999.

the major factors that fuel the disturbance of peace and security; the various measures to fight insecurity; and the obligation of the stakeholders to take necessary measures aimed at maintaining peace and security for social stability and sustainable development.

In analyzing the above issues, the paper is outlined in sections as follows: Section 1 is this introduction while Section 2 briefly explains the key concepts. Section 3 deals with the general causes of insecurity and strategies for combating same. Section 4 deals with the deconstruction of the concept of government and the obligation of critical stakeholders in combating insecurity while section 5 is the closing remarks with some salutary measures.

Explanation of Key Concepts

Peace
The concept of peace has the personal, the social, the political, the institutional, and the ecological aspects. In all the aspects it describes a state of tranquility, security, order and stability within a community or society. It can also be used to depict the absence of war, chaos, anormie or violence or disorder in any system. In the social sense, the word is commonly used to describe the state of social order in which there is effective management of conflict and criminality to guarantee the enjoyment of their basic rights so that they can go about their legitimate businesses unmolested and in the atmosphere of freedom. In its religious connotation, it is more than a state of tranquillity. It is a fruit of the Spirit which passes all understanding and which can be enjoyed even in the face of hardship while alive or "resting in peace", but only with the right relationship with God or with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Security
The concept of security has many dimensions ranging from national security, state security, social security, personal or individual security etcetera. In the context of this article, security is taken to mean a state of harmony or order within a state or community provided for by law or custom, a breach of which attracts sanction at the instance of the state or community. The opposite of security is insecurity which in our context focuses on physical insecurity which results from insurgency, terrorism, banditry, armed robbery and other violent crimes which kill, maim and threaten the lives of the people.[3] The maintenance of peace and security is so critical to human existence that the United Nations Organization made it its primary purpose. It is therefore necessary to maintain and sustain peace by collectively taking necessary measures to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence or resurgence of conflicts and disputes. In this paper, peace and security is treated as a cliché.

Collective Security
Collective security is an International Relations theory or practice by which states pledge to defend one another in order to deter aggression or to target a transgressor if international order has been breached. Collective security can also be explained in terms of the principle captured in the phrase that "an attack on one is an attack on all". This theory is relevant to this presentation in that it justifies the need for all stakeholders in the maintenance of peace and security of the state to collaborate in combating insecurity in the state hence, a perpetrator of insecurity in the state is an aggressor against all.

Democratic Governance
A democratic society in the context of this article is generally taken to depict a nation, country, state, community or any body politic for that matter where the governance system is adjudged

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[3] See Article 2 of the United Nations Charter (1945).

democratic and where constitutionalism is practiced. Put differently, in a democratic society, the system of governance is constitutionally designed to promote democratic governance principles. This begs the question as to the meaning of the concept of democratic governance. Unfortunately, democratic governance is not easy to define because it means different things to different people, packed with a number of different variables and dimensions arising from its political, cultural and ideological variants. Therefore an understanding of the concept of democratic governance must begin with the definition of the concept of democracy.

It cannot be gainsaid, that democracy is a word which most of us are familiar with, but as a concept, it remains misunderstood, used and misused and even abused. In fact, it is a catch word which has become a banner with which opposing political opponents go to war. It is such that oligarchs, single-party regimes, dictators and military coup leaders alike assert popular support by claiming the mantle of democracy. However, despite its challenges democracy continues to blossom throughout the world and remains acclaimed as the best form of government that can propel socio-economic development which can only be possible in the atmosphere of peace and security of lives and property of the citizens.

In the popularly celebrated, immortal, generally accepted and referred to with relish and memorable words of President Abraham Lincoln[4] of the United States of America, democracy is "a government of the people by the people and for the people". By this definition, it is obvious that the "people" is the author, subject and object of democracy. Hence the hallmark of democracy (representative democracy model as against direct democracy) is rule by consent of the people expressed in free fair and credible election of their representatives in government.[5] Thus, democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule and individual rights including that of the minorities and vulnerable groups. The key elements which make it the most preferred form of government today include participation, accountability, conflict-resolution and justice delivery by the institutionalization of freedom under the rule of law in conformity with the ideals set forth in the national constitution.

A number of democratic principles can be gleaned from various international instruments, principles and declarations most of which have been domesticated and entrenched in the national constitutions of democratic governments. These principles are formulated to protect and promote the political and civil rights of the citizens and they are indicated in the observance of the following principles:
1. *Participation and Inclusion:* Participation and inclusion are achieved where the mechanism exists for all people to take part in and influence decisions made by the government and state that affect their lives (i.e. through elections, open government at local and national levels, parliamentary process, access to independent media, etc).
2. *Accountability and Responsiveness:* Accountability and responsiveness are promoted by ensuring that law makers, government officials, and institutions are held accountable for what they do, and for how they do it.
3. *Rule-Based:* In a democratic society, all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the state itself, are accountable to laws, that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated. It requires measures to adhere to the principles of

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4   Abraham Lincoln, a one-time president of the United States of America, in his famous speech called *the Gettysburg Address a "monumental act"* (19 November 1863). available at: <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline. org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>, accessed 5 May 2017.
5   See OE Nwebo *Political Parties and Promotion of Constitutionalism and Democratic Governance in Nigeria: The Challenge of Internal Democracy* Owerri: Imo State University Press (1921) 17.

the supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.

4. *Transparency:* Transparency involves the right of the public to know what public institutions are doing and how public policies and programs are being implemented through access to official information and an independent and effective media.

5. *Equity, Non Discrimination and Inclusiveness:* Government policies and laws should take account of the needs, views and aspiration of the people in society, with particular efforts being made not to discriminate against minority, marginalized and indigenous groups. Since all people are of equal value, they are entitled to equal treatment under the law, as well as equitable access to opportunities, services and resources.

6. *Gender Equality:* Policies, system laws and institutions should deal equitably with both women and men. Due to diversities of political and cultural contexts and country capabilities, these global goals or indication may be too simplistic and unworkable.[6]

In light of the foregoing, it can be concluded that democratic governance is a system of governance in which the above principles obtain and that where they observed, peace and security will endure.

General Causes and Strategies for Combating Insecurity

It is important to ensure that peace and security prevails in a country or a state for a number of reasons. First, peace and security guarantees the protection of the environment from both internal and external threats and reduces crime to the barest minimum. Where there is peace and security, the human rights of the citizens are protected and enjoyed including the right to life, property and the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the constitution. Development is accelerated when people can freely go about their legitimate aspirations unmolested. Peace and security promotes tourism and investment especially from neighboring states and countries. The existence of peace and security removes fear, trauma and anxiety associated with insecurity. A sustainable peace is achieved by addressing the root causes, reconciling grievances and preventing escalation.

General Causes of Insecurity in Society

In explaining the causes and strategies for combating insecurity it is instructive to bear in mind that conflict and its attendant insecurity is endemic in society, complex and of different nature, dimensions and environment specific. The above must therefore be taken into consideration while identifying the causes and strategizing for its combat. However, generally speaking, the following causes can be highlighted:

- ❖ Bad governance
- ❖ Trust deficit on the part of the citizens
- ❖ Deficit of constitutionalism and rule of law
- ❖ Social inequity and injustice in the management of the common wealth
- ❖ Corruption in high places and their ostentatious life styles.
- ❖ Mass poverty and frustration of the masses
- ❖ Alienation of the less privileged
- ❖ Moral decadence
- ❖ Mass illiteracy and ignorance

Strategies for Combating Insecurity

As regards the restoration and maintenance of peace and security, it must be noted, that these involve multifaceted approaches including kinetic as well as non-kinetic measures. The option to adopt will depend on the understanding of the nature of the existing insecurity. This is as to whether

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6   https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy (accessed 11 September 2023).

the insecurity is politically, ideologically or criminally motivated or contrived. It is submitted, that whichever is the case, the solution requires the coming together as a people, rubbing of minds, mutual understanding, negotiation and even compromises where necessary to ensure that peace reigns in our state.

Kinetic and non-kinetic Methods

The non-kinetic strategy involves the participation of the government, security agents, religious leaders, traditional institutions, the media and indeed all critical stakeholders. It involves the rubbing of minds and the identification of the underlying causes of insecurity and how to address them peacefully. The kinetic approach alone will neither be successful or sustainable without the non-kinetic strategies. Thus, the issues of poverty, unemployment, hunger, frustrations with the corrupt system, drug addiction moral decadence and other drivers of crime must be seriously addressed with a view to correcting and rehabilitating the misguided repentant perpetrators.

The above is in contrast with the kinetic approach which involves the use of force or the coercive instruments of state to deal with criminal elements at the risk of loss of life and collateral damages in the course of enforcing the law. Thus, a combination of both the kinetic and non-kinetic methods are recommended in fighting insecurity especially in cases motivated by ideological or religious beliefs and even economic interests. In some cases, the stick and carrot method may yield the desired result, depending on the nature and circumstances.

At this juncture, it is instructive to note that democracy has the potential to promote peace and security especially if it delivers on its good governance mandate, by the provision of democracy dividends. Thus, democratic governance system is indicated by the following features:
- ❖ Promotion of the rule of law and constitutionalism in the management of state affairs.
- ❖ Cultivation and promotion of the culture of conformity with the requirements of the law and its processes by both the government officials and the governed.
- ❖ Combating corruption, discrimination, inequity and social injustice in the distribution of social goods.
- ❖ Provision of social infrastructure/amenities.
- ❖ Empowerment of the women, the youth and the vulnerable groups.
- ❖ Education of the people especially, civic education of the young people
- ❖ Ethical re-orientation

Community Policing

It cannot be overstressed that the concept of community policing has been acknowledged as having the potentials to yield positive results as an effective crime control strategy. However, the strategy is not being effectively operationalized in the communities beyond rhetorics. It must be noted, that community policing involves the establishment of structures and relationships of trust and confidence between the state's security agents and members of the community. To this effect, the following must be established:
- ❖ The communities must be provided with functional and well-equipped police stations and personnel ready to effectively respond to identified threats real time.
- ❖ Establishment of community watch is essential to act as local informants with capacity to take actions in cases of emergences before the arrival of security personnel.
- ❖ Lighting and mounting of surveillance cameras around and critical structures environments.
- ❖ There must be synergy and cooperation between state security agencies members of the community such that members of the communities are encouraged to report suspects or suspicious movements or activities around their vicinities.

❖ Members of the community must be assured that credible information supplied to the security agents are treated with the strictest confidence and not used against them.
❖ Knowledge of the environment and legitimate members of the community and neighbourhood must be encouraged.
❖ There must be effective monitoring of all uncompleted or illegal structures that can provide cover and flash points or crime hot sports for illegal anti-social activities.
❖ The relationship between the security agents and members of the community must be friendly and civil, such that the security officials must know that they are there to serve the community while the members of the community must know that they are there to provide the required support.

Responsibilities of stakeholders in the Promotion of Peace and Security
It is instructive to note that stakeholders on the issue of promotion of peace and security in society are the government, the security agencies and the citizens as a whole including members of the opposition, traditional and religious leaders, residents, civil society organizations and the press. Therefore, the success or failure of the government is the responsibility all stakeholders and not that of one stakeholder alone. Thus, for democracy to succeed in guaranteeing peace, security and development, citizens must be active and not passive in combating insecurity, must be tolerant of each other and not antagonistic, must be supportive and not destructive of government, bearing in mind that the government belongs to all citizens.

The above point connects with the challenge of unhealthy politics otherwise referred to as politics with bitterness in Imo State. This challenge arises from the misconceived concept of "the government" and "the opposition". It is therefore apposite, to explain the two concepts for the purpose of understanding their ideal role in politics and governance as advocated in this article. Thus, the concept of the government is used to describe a group of people with the constitutional authority to govern a country or a state by making decisions and executing same on behalf of the people. In a constitutional democracy, government is constituted by the members of the political party or group that form and run the government of the day based on their victory at the end of election. On the other hand, the opposition is composed of members of the political party or a coalition of parties that lost in the contest for the control of government and therefore strictly speaking not in government, but remains part of government in the general sense providing constructive opposing view-points on governance issues when necessary. Thus, in our context, the opposition does not mean enemies of the government but partners in progress with different political views, ideas and approaches to governance.

However, it must be noted, that in contextualizing the use of the concepts of "the government" and "the opposition", it cannot be gainsaid, that election remains the hallmark of democracy. In this connection and in the context of political power struggle, it is apposite to note, that in a democratic governance system, once elections are over and all the grievances settled in accordance with the provisions of the constitution, both the winners constituting the government of the day and the losers constituting the opposition must acknowledge and accept that the competition is over for that tenure. The government must realize that it is the government of all the stakeholders and not government for its group alone. Therefore, the government is expected to carry the citizens along in the scheme of things without undue discrimination in terms party leaning. It must be benevolent in victory and open its doors for the participation by all the stakeholders. Both, as good citizens, must acknowledge that all parties (ruling party as well as the opposition party) have their respective roles to play in promoting good governance, particularly in ensuring that there is peace, security and development of the state. This is a shared commitment arising from citizenship, requiring them to work together in order to solve the common problems of the state.

Thus, the opposition must be loyal to the state, the government of the day and the democratic processes even as it opposes specific anti-peoples policies constructively. Political opponents may not like each other, but they must tolerate each other in the interest of the development and progress of the state. In other words, the opposition must acknowledge and respect the acquired right of the people in government to govern in accordance with the provisions of the country's constitution while those in government must acknowledge the right of the opposition to constructively criticize government's policies with a view to proffering better alternative in the interest of the citizens.

After all, democratic election is not a competition for a right to own private property or the common wealth, but a competition for an opportunity to serve the state better. In other words, except one has an ulterior motive different from service, if you do not succeed in your bid to be elected to serve, it is incumbent upon the losers to remain patriotic and suggest better policies or ideas for government's consideration while waiting patiently for the next general election in the spirit of "Obuntu".[7] Thus, whether in government or out of government, all parties must work harmoniously to ensure that peace and security of the State is sustained so that there will be a surviving State and people to govern in future.

The foregoing underscores the necessity to draw attention to the challenges of insecurity and the need for all critical stakeholders to come together as one people to analyze the situation with clear, unbiased and patriotic mind. The analyses must interrogate both the remote and immediate causes of insecurity and identification of underlying grievances against the system and in appropriate circumstances negotiate for truce and possibly a change of tactic that will be less injurious, less destructive and not counter-productive. The strategy must be inclusive and necessarily involve the cooperation and collaboration of all critical stakeholders including the government, the security agencies, the traditional Rulers, the clergy, the elders, the youths and others.

Negotiation for Peace and Security in the State
In interrogating the strategies for combating insecurity in the State, the question may arise as to whether it is rational to negotiate for peace with criminal elements. In other words, can negotiation with criminal elements be properly classified as falling within the class of non-kinetic method of fighting insecurity that should be legitimately adopted?

In addressing the above question, it is apposite to appreciate the fact that insecurity as earlier alluded to, has different natures, aspects, causes and dimensions. These variations must be taken into consideration in determining whether or when it will be expedient to adopt the negotiation strategy. For the avoidance of doubt, the notable variants of criminal elements or perpetrators of state insecurity including terrorists, kidnappers, armed bandits and other criminal elements.

Negotiation is a strategic discussion between two parties to resolve an issue in a way that both find acceptable.[8] In other words, negotiation is a discussion or dialogue between two or more parties with the aim of resolving their points of differences. The objective is to arrive at outcomes that will be to their respective advantage thereby avoiding escalation.

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[7]   The Ubuntu philosophy captures Mandela's greatest gift to his people of South Africa by promoting the recognition that we are all bound together in ways that are invisible to the eye and that we are bound together as one people of humanity and therefore, we must share with and care for each other in the spirit of compassion and love. It reminds us that 'I am what I am because of who we all are'. This principle implies that there must be politics without bitterness such that political opponents should see themselves as brothers whose aim is to improve on the security and welfare of the people they are aspiring to govern, not as enemies but, rather as partners in the progress of the state and its peoples.

[8]   https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/negotiation.asp (accessed 12 September 2023).

The negotiation method is adopted by people to peacefully settle their differences by reaching a compromise or agreement without litigation or argument. It involves two methods that is, the collaborative (integrative) and competitive (distributive) which involve bargaining to satisfy individual needs. The overall objective of negotiation is to achieve a win-win situation by way of agreement instead of victory of one party and loss of the other party. Thus, the key to a successful negotiation is to achieve peace by shifting the situation to a "win-win" even if it looks like a "win-loss" situation. Win-loss arises only when everything else fails.

In case of any dispute or disagreement, invariably, the aim of the parties is to achieve the best possible outcome for their position (or perhaps an organisation they represent). However, the principles of fairness, seeking mutual benefit and maintaining a relationship are the keys to a successful outcome. This remains the case irrespective of the type of negotiation as to whether it is in the context of international affairs, the legal system, government, industrial disputes or domestic relationships.[9]

In the context of insecurity or disputes arising from terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and various forms of criminality, controversy arises as to whether negotiation is a legitimate strategy for combating insecurity and achieving peace. It is important to note, that people get involved in negotiation as a result of conflict of interests or needs as a result of which the parties involved are compelled to seek for peaceful solution instead of giving in or breaking off contact at the risk of total loss or damage.

For decades, politicians in the US and the UK have regularly stated that they do not negotiate with terrorists. The argument is that it is both legally and morally indefensible and impractical, in that to do so is likely to encourage more terrorism and legitimize terrorist aims and activities. In other words, paying ransoms, for instance, helps terrorist groups maintain control over territory, pay their members thereby providing the incentive for and fueling further terrorism, kidnapping and hostage-taking. However, both the US and the UK can be said to have negotiated with designated terrorist groups when hostages were not directly involved. Some other Western governments are known to have at one time or the other negotiated with terrorist groups. For instance, in 2014, countries including France and Spain were reported to have paid millions of euros in ransom to bring home journalists and aid workers captured by Islamic State (ISIS) in Syria. On the other hand, some experienced negotiators believe that governments absolutely should negotiate with terrorists in that by refusing to engage with terrorists, governments will be putting the lives of the victims at risk. For instance, in 2002, the group that kidnapped US journalist Daniel Pearl in Karachi initially demanded better conditions for detainees at Guantánamo Bay, the release of Pakistani prisoners and the delivery of military equipment to Pakistan. When the ransom was not forthcoming, Khalid Sheik Mohammed of Al-Qaeda exploited the situation, having Daniel Pearl murdered for propaganda ends.

The official position of the Nigerian government is that it does not negotiate with criminal elements, especially terrorists. However, body language and the way and manner the release of certain kidnap victims were secured speaks otherwise despite denials. For in Meanwhile, security experts believe in most cases where students were kidnapped, the government negotiated with the terror groups and paid ransom even though they always denied such transaction. For instance, on December 11, 2020, more than 300 boys were abducted from their boarding school in the town of Kankara, Katsina State. Boko Haram claimed responsibility and the boys were released after six days following reported negotiation with the authorities. But the government typically denied any ransom was paid. The way and manner the piecemeal release of the Chibok girls are being secured

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9   https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/negotiation.html