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VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA : THE BANE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract:

Violence breeds insecurity in Nigeria. Lack of security of lives and property of the citizenry is a severe hindrance to meaningful development. A climate of fear will frighten domestic and foreign investors. At the heart of many of these conflicts is access to resources and control over the distribution of benefits. This struggle for resources has led to a broad sense of insecurity, opportunism, and the pursuit of self- help strategies across the country. Some of the causes of violence include god fatherism, poverty, unemployment, money and politics, corruption, small arms proliferation, the rise of armed groups, religious based violence and election fraud. These issues represent dividing lines in communities that have led to heightened tensions between and within groups. This paper will therefore examine the root causes of violence vis-à-vis insecurity, its effects and proffer strategies that will make Nigeria a safe place to live.

Introduction:

Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal development or deprivation.¹³⁰

It was stressed that at the heart of many of these conflicts is access to resources and control over the distribution of benefits. This struggle for resources has led to a broad sense of insecurity, opportunism, and the pursuit of self- help strategies across the country. Many Nigerians argue that the real reason for the violence isn't ethnic or

¹³⁰ WHO, World Report on Violence and Health. Geneva. 2005.

religious differences but the scramble for land, scarce resources and political clout. Poverty, joblessness and corrupt politics drive extremists from both sides to commit horrendous atrocities. Although the nation rakes in billions of dollars in oil revenue annually, the majority of Nigerians live with less than a dollar a day. For example, in Plateau State, where Jos is located, Muslim cattle herders from the north and Christian farmers from the south vie for control of the fertile plains. That poor distribution of wealth has also sparked conflict in Nigeria's oil-rich southern Delta region, where militants lobbying for a greater share of oil revenue regularly blow up pipelines and kidnap foreign oil workers.¹³¹

Some of the major security problems currently confronting the nation have been identified to include: political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organised crimes. These problems individually and collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and development of the country.¹³²

Causes of insecurity:

There are several reasons put forward by scholars regarding the spate of violence and insecurity in Nigeria. Some of the causes of violence includes god fatherism, poverty, money and politics, small arms proliferation, the rise of armed groups, religious based violence, election fraud, oil gas exploration and production in Niger delta is a very strong indicator of insecurity. These issues represent dividing lines in communities that have led to heightened tensions between and within groups.

It has been observed that there have been cases of multi-ethnic vices such as allegiance to ethnic-group, intra-cultural and inter-ethnic antagonism, hostility, aggression, bitterness, hatred, mistrust in the country, which have not augured well for the building of a virile Nigerian nation. Rather than harnessing our diversities towards viable nation building, we have become slaves to our ethnic origin to which our allegiance is largely focused at the detriment of nation building. Interfaced with religion, ethnicity is a potent reality in the Nigerian federal equation.¹³³

¹³¹ Handley (2010), Violence in Nigeria.

¹³² Abdulsalami, A. The Challenges of Security in Nigeria. In The Challenges of Dawodu.com. Newswatch, Nigeria. ,2005.

¹³³ Jekayinfa. A.A., Implication of Competitive Ethnicity in the process of Nation Building in Nigeria. Nigerian Journal of Social Sciences. Vol. iv,2002.

Ethnic and religious issues are part of the most recurring issues in Nigeria's politics today. The issues have permeated the landscape since the colonial period up till date. There seems to be no solution in sight to the conflicts of ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance. The dominance and minority ethnic groups treat each other with suspicion and the different religious world view clash at the slightest provocation.¹³⁴

Poverty and unemployment is one of the factors responsible for insecurity. The majority of youth are jobless, with no means of livelihood, they are impoverished, and mercenary politics becomes the way out. The politicians capitalize on this and recruit the youth who not only constitute the pillar of society but also the most vulnerable to the self-inflicted poverty, as their thugs and touts to penetrate violence.¹³⁵

In Nigeria, politics is conceived as an investment. The politicians having invested colossally on campaigns and other political activities, coupled with the existing system of winner takes all, would want to win at all cost. And the need to employ the use of thugs and touts to destabilize and rig elections becomes inevitable especially when such politicians are not popular candidate.¹³⁶

The emphasis of Nigeria political leaders in governance has always been on development actualization without *ensuring or entrenching its needs like national consciousness, justice, accountability, transparency, equity, security, peace etc.* into the system. The military adventures in politics, political/electoral violence, and insecurity have been the major factors that undermine Nigeria development actualization till date. However, the essence of every country's national interest is to provide for its citizenry and makes life more meaningful to them. This can only be achieved where the leader is discipline, visionary; courageous that leads the country into its greatness. Nigeria despite its abundance natural resources remains underdeveloped due to lack of good leadership roles. In Nigeria today, leaders are much more interested on how to be self sufficient and self sustained without considering the country's sustainability as a whole, which has directly or indirectly built self consciousness and centeredness, corrupt practices, ethnic

¹³⁴ Chikezie, C. and Ikemitan, S., Insecurity as a Threat to National Development. In Pilot Daily Newspaper 8 March, 2011.

¹³⁵ Howell, R. Political Thuggery in Vogue. Chicago, 2004.

¹³⁶ Ibid.,

marginalization, hatred, disunity, insecurity, lack of development, etc. to the social system.¹³⁷

The climate of uncertainty in Nigeria recently took a wider dimension as the mounting spate of bombings and violence has introduced suicide bombings; a dangerous trend that had remain alien in the nation's index of social crimes..Since bombing began to assume alarming proportion in various parts of the country, innocent citizens have increasingly become targets of bomb attacks by terrorists. It has seemingly become a regular trend; multiple blasts rocking the nation, living in their trail tears and blood from victims and their relations. Incidentally, while the merchants of death appear to be having their way, no one has so far been tried and convicted on the matter.¹³⁸

The failure of the security cluster in Nigeria to make use of its intelligence network to decode the security challenge the Boko Haram and all such sects poses to the peace and security of the nation leaves much to be desired. The country's Early Warning System Mechanism in preventing such deadly conflicts from erupting needs to be developed. An eruption, the type that was witnessed in the northern states recently could not have happened without extensive planning. That the intelligence sector and the conflict prevention mechanism of the country failed to pick up the tell tale signs is indicative of failure of the state structure.¹³⁹

Electoral fraud poses a major challenge to democracy in Nigeria and by implication, poses threat to the security of the nation. Electoral fraud desecrates the sanctity of democracy and weakens its capacity as an instrument for the mobilization of national, human and material resources for the development of the people and the state.¹⁴⁰

Nigeria politics since independence has been characterized by thuggery and violence. Nigeria politics manifest in acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, harassment, maiming and killing. Politicians recruited, trained and empowered thugs to harass, intimidate and victimize perceived political opponents and opposing views against their political ambition. The use of thuggery has been responsible for low participation of women in politics.¹⁴¹

¹³⁷ Adedoyin, A., Development and Security in Nigeria Democratic Dispensation. Nigeria, 2011.

¹³⁸ AllAfrica.com, Nigeria: Insecurity- Bane of Investments in The Country. In *Daily Independent*, 2 July 2011.

¹³⁹ Okolo,B.The State of Insecurity in Nigeria. In Nigeria world.com.2009.

¹⁴⁰ Abdulsalami, A.The Challenges of Security in Nigeria. In The Challenges of Dawodu.com. *NewsWatch*, Nigeria,2005.

¹⁴¹ Obasanjo,O.,42nd Nigeria Independence Anniversary National Broadcast in *Tell Magazine*. No.41,October 14,2002.

Thuggery is an act characterized by rudeness, hooliganism, touting, intimidation and harassment. It is the behaviour that contradicts peace, harmony and coexistence among groups. Political thuggery is an illegitimate and violent means of seeking political power with a view to subverting national opinion for parochial ends through self imposition.¹⁴²

Small arms proliferation in Nigeria is not only due to its strained economic and social situation, but also to the high rate of trafficking and smuggling of small arms into the country. The high rate of criminality, the development of secret cults, the emergence of private security, the electoral and political violence demonstrate but also feed the culture of violence, which is strongly related.¹⁴³

The problem of small arms proliferation is not only complex, it is sophisticated, global as well as a lucrative business. He noted that near total neglect suffered by most Nigerian security institutions, including the Nigerian Police, in the past two decades had in no small way weakened and incapacitated them so much that they lack the capacity to perform their roles effectively.¹⁴⁴ It was also found that the problem of official arms sometimes find their way into criminal hands by acts of omission or commission by those in official possession of them. The arms were stolen, borrowed or sold by government officials and security agencies.¹⁴⁵

Effects of Violence on National Development

The effects of corruption on a nation's economy are damaging. A nation inundated with corruption cannot be viable economically; neither can the system generate enough support/ affection required for the survival of democratic system. This is a situation in Nigeria where corruption has become part and parcel of the political culture. Corruption has indeed robbed Nigerians the benefit of economic development because scarce available resources that should have been deployed to execute development project have gone into private foreign accounts.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Lawal, T. (2010), Political Thuggery and Violence in Nigeria: The Bane of Women Participation in *Politics*.2011.

¹⁴³ Agboton-Johnson, C..etal.Small Arms Control in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. Monitoring the Implementation of Small Arms Controls (MISAC). West Africa Series No.2. 2006.

¹⁴⁴ Okeshola,B.F. Poverty and Crime in Nigeria in Nigeria: Theoretical Issues. *Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts (ZAJOLA) Vol.1.No.1, April 2007.*

¹⁴⁵ Batagarawa, in Global Policy Forum, USA. 2003.

¹⁴⁶ Ogundiya, J.S., Corruption: The Bane of Democratic Stability in Nigeria Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 2(4): 233-241.

Corruption is widespread in Nigeria, not because the people are different from other parts of the world, but because the conditions are ripe for it. There are many reasons why this is so. The motivation to earn income from among the populace is relatively stronger; exacerbated by poverty, unemployment and low wages. In many developing countries Nigeria inclusive, accountability is generally weak. Political competition and civil liberties are often restricted. Laws and principles of ethics in governance are poorly developed and the legal institutions charged with enforcing them are ill-prepared.^{147,148}

The incidence of June 2011 bombing of the Nigeria Police Force Headquarters as well as September bombing of United Nations building in Abuja has been seen by many as a daring assault not only on the nation's intelligence but as pointer to the fact that no one is safe.¹⁴⁹

The general state of insecurity in Nigeria presently lends credence to the report that kidnapping is an offshoot of the Niger Delta crisis. This insurgency has thrown a huge cloak of insecurity not just over the entire south-south geopolitical zone, but also the southeast, and southwest. Kidnapping gangs have made the two zones their haven. No person is spared in this new wave of crime that seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes. However, the security challenge this poses to the state of Nigeria is better understood against existing evidence that even government officials and traditional rulers are not spared.

This has led to some of these officials relocating their families outside the geopolitical zone or outside the country. What the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing the safety and security of its people. This would, therefore, impact on the human security of the people as the situation promotes fear, while at the same time limiting the peoples' ability to develop economically. The state's capacity to attract investors becomes limited as a result of the insecurity.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Shehu, A., Corruption, Rule of Law and Sustainable Development. Journal of Economic and Financial Crime Commission. April - June Vol.1, No.1.2006.

¹⁴⁸ Okeshola, B.F., "Corruption as Impediment to Implementation of Anti-Money Laundering Standards in Nigeria".

¹⁴⁹ AllAfrica.com, Nigeria: Insecurity- Bane of Investments in The Country. In Daily Independent, 2 July 2011.

¹⁵⁰ Okolo, B. The State of Insecurity in Nigeria. In Nigeria world.com. 2009.

The use of thugs in Nigerian politics has not only led to waste of human resource, but it has also resulted in the dearth of able- bodied men who may be useful in the future of Nigeria, and low participation of women in politics.¹⁵¹

It was observed that the crimes that are committed in Nigeria are borne out of the socio-economic problems facing the country, especially corruption. These include inequity and unequal distribution of resources among the citizens and subgroups including widespread poverty. Although no society is devoid of crime, the view is that Nigeria can reduce and alter the character of the crimes, which are being committed if fundamental socio-economic problems (corruption in particular), facing the country are seriously addressed and effectively tackled.¹⁵²

Conclusion and Recommendations:

Today, the biggest challenge confronting our country is the issue of insecurity. The spate of bombings currently being witnessed, especially in the northern parts of the country, is doing a lot of damage to the nation.

Lack of security of lives and property of the citizenry is a severe hindrance to any meaningful development. A climate of fear will frighten both domestic and foreign investors.

- There is the need for responsible authorities in the country to promote policies, which will reduce the level of poverty and ensure equity in the distribution of resources among the citizens. This can be attained when fiscal policies, which will promote full employment, are fully enforced. Also, an improvement in the income of people will dissuade majority of them from seeking legitimate goals through inappropriate means.
- There is the need to focus on economic development in Nigeria. It must be consciously planned for and adequately financed by governments democratically put in power by the people. In this regard, rapid economic growth and social welfare must be seen as sides of the same coin, one must not be sacrificed for the sake of others.
- There should be no cessation in the pursuit and prosecution of the elite who have committed large scale corruption against the nation in the past, and their ill-gotten

¹⁵¹ Obasanjo, O, 42nd Nigeria Independence Anniversary National Broadcast in Tell Magazine. No.41, October 14, 2002.

¹⁵² Okeshola, B.F., Poverty and Crime in Nigeria in Nigeria: The retical Issues. Zaria Journal of Liberal Arts (ZAJOLA), Vol.1, No.1, April 2007.

assets seized to serve as an additional deterrent.

- There is a need to redirect the energies of our youths from crime, cultism and other vices towards more useful pursuits and other practical endeavours, which teach the dignity of labour, integrity and national services.
- The government must address the issue of economic and social problem associated with poverty, corruption, illiteracy, youth unemployment and marginalization.
- Nigerians should be educated and enlightened on the need to develop and promote the culture of peace because small arms bring devastation, exacerbate conflict, spark refugees flow, undermine the rule of law and spawn a culture of violence and impunity.
- There is the need for security agencies at the borders to cooperate with each other and be equipped with modern communication and transportation facilities in order to enhance their cooperation.
- There is the need to identify risk factors that are causal or contributory to the establishment and continued dominance of local armed groups.

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