

Insecurity: Major Challenges to Democratic Development in Nigeria

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The security situation in Nigeria appears to be elusive and in surmountable. The government at all levels has not done enough to combat the persisting security threat in every state of the country. The persisting security challenges in Nigeria and the inability of the security apparatus of the government to guarantee safety and security in the country raised question whether security can be ascertained in Nigeria. The situation in Nigeria since independence has been threatening the peaceful existence of people's ethnic group who have been living together despite their differences. A climate of fear which frightens domestic and foreign investments and high level of poverty across the country has resulted into various reactions like ethnic sentiments, religious bigotry and violence. The intolerance to some extent has led to the acquisition of fire arms among ethnics, political and religious groups for defense. Nigerian politics since independence have been characterized by thuggery and violence. The Niger-Delta Militia, Boko Haram and Odua People's Congress and Fulani Herdsmen are some of the reaction against insecurity of lives and properties in the land and this persistent situation has made the country unstable and threatening to lives and properties. The intention of this paper is to explain the causes of violence and suggest possible ways of resolving this traumatic situation.

Keywords:

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Background to the Study

Election is one of the cardinal features of democratic politics. It is therefore very important to note that democratic system and government can only be meaningful and entrenched through electoral process. Political violence over election has been the phenomenon occurrence in Nigerian democratic environment. In Nigeria, more often election period are times of battles, violence and conflict because of the frauds that mar the legitimacy of political system thereby eroding stability in the political system. Democracy in Nigeria, especially the conduct of election has always been characterized by pessimism, uncertainty and fears, for the safety of people's lives and property. Conflict ridden situations have historically featured in all election conducted in Nigeria.

Issues surrounding the electioneering processes potentially relate to violence and violation of the rights of individuals. Thus, rather than serve as a means and a process of exercising legitimate political right, elections in Nigeria have since independence, turned out to be a serving political liability causing serious political turmoil and threatening the survival of unified Nigeria with unprecedented political thuggery and uncontrolled violence characterized by wanton destruction of lives and property.

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

The crisis of insecurity in Nigeria could be traced back to the economic crisis in the early 1980's during the falling of commodity prices. OPEC price increases, privatization, economic liberation, deregulation, currency devaluation, cold war, politics and Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP).

Notable among the Militia groups were: The Ogoni Movement (OM), Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) Oodua People Congress (OPC), Arewa Youth Consultative Forum, Egbesu Boys of Africa (EBA) and other reactionary groups who adopted terrorist tactics to tight the government.

Another cause of insecurity in Nigeria are cases of multi- ethnic vices such as allegiance to ethnic groups, intra- cultural and intra- antagonism, hostility, mistrust in the country which have not augured well for the building of a virile Nigeria nation. Rather than harnessing our diversities towards viable nation building we have become slave to our ethnic origin to which our allegiance is largely focused at the detriment of nation building.

Ethnic and religion issues are part of the most recurring issues in Nigeria. Today, we see the emergence of the Boko-Haram in Borno and Yobe States. The group later, due to their criminality and terrorist activities is a threat to Nigeria and other neighboring countries. Ethnic rivalries are abound but the recent is incessant killing between the Fulani Herdsmen and the farmers is among insurmountable security threat. The confrontation and clashes which has led thousand dead, maimed and homeless is presently embarrassing the Federal Government with accusation round the country. The dominance of minority ethnic groups treat each other with suspicious and the different religious world view clashes still in progress.

Pervasive material inequalities and unfairness, greater awareness of disparities in life is a major root cause of insecurity in Nigeria. This is a rooted general perception of inequality and unfairness which has resulted in grievance by a large number of people. A large number of the Nigerian population according to Ezeola (2011) has frustrated and have made Nigerians youths to express dissatisfaction with the system of governance and failure to provide needs and employment for teemy youths who are waiting hopelessly for employment. Poverty and unemployment is another factor responsible for insecurity. As a result of unemployment and poverty among Nigerians especially the youths, they are adversely attracted to violent crime.

Adagba O. (2012), Nwagboso (2012) argued that the failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address challenges of poverty, unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities is one of the major causes of insecurity in the country. The politicians capitalize on this poverty situation to recruit youths who not only constitute the pillar of society but also the most valuable to the self inflicted poverty as their thugs and touts to perpetrate violence. 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 threat to the peace and security of the nation leaves much to be desired. The countries early warning system mechanisms in preventing such deadly conflict from eruption were not monitored and this eventually snowballed to serious crisis.

Nigeria politics since independence has been characterized by thuggery and violence. This eventually manifest in acrimony, assault, assassination, intimidation, maiming and killing. Strikingly rich politicians recruited trained and empowered thugs to harass and intimidate perceived political opponents. The security operatives are also prevented from arresting and prosecution of some of these criminals because they are working to suppress their opponents. This has given these hoodhums power to pervert security and justice. Weak security system which result from inadequate equipment for the security arm of government both in weaponry and training. Poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel.

In may cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the situation in a way to prevent them from occurring. Some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious, or communal sentiment and are easily swallowed by their personal interest to serve their people rather than the nation. The porosity of Nigeria borders have serious implication on the country. Small arms and light weapons proliferation and the availability of these weapons have enables militant group and criminal groups to have access to arms.

Jekayinfa (2012) the porosity of the Nigerian borders has made it possible for unwarranted inflix of migrants from neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad and Benin to perpetrate crimes.

Kuffor (2012) in his view as a foreign observer identifies the sources of insecurity in Nigeria as political conflict, unbalanced development that involves horizontal inequalities, religious and ethnic distrust and leadership failure.

Oluwarotimi (2012) says that corruption is the wall that stands in the wheel of progress, the red tape that stops an idea from becoming reality.

Causes of Recurrent Electoral Violence in Nigeria

Electoral violence in Nigeria manifest in the three electoral stages: pre- election, during election and post- election. Since 1954 electoral violence has manifested in the breakdown of electoral process as revealed. In double or multiple registration, deliberate late arrivals of election materials by electoral officers, snatching of ballot boxes, destruction or hijacking of electoral materials, harassment, intimidation of armed groups falsification of results, delay in announcing results with no satisfactory explanation, killing or assassination of political opponents. All these have jeopardized Nigeria democracy and good governance.

A large number of Nigerians have lost their lives, many other displaced with properties worth billions of naira destroyed. The Impact of these thus turned the political climate into hostility, instability and uncertainty. Intra and inter conflicts directly and indirectly related to power struggles have generated into party into indiscipline, lawlessness. The consequence has produced fierce struggle and violence which have continued to pose serious threat to the survival of democracy and good governance in the country.

Causes of Violence in Nigeria can be Attributed to:

1. Poverty and unemployment: Poverty is a state of being extremely poor. It is a situation whereby an individual cannot meet the basic needs of life. Such a person is more likely to participate in violence than a rich person.
2. Nigerian political culture has been defiled by armed violence since the take off of democracy. The transition and subsequent democratic setting met with violence bred atmospheres. National security of lives and property has been a low ebb. This gave room to militant vigilante groups who acquired arms which they gradually transferred into use during election breeding fertile ground in which electoral violence thrives.
3. Ethno-political cleavages have continued to remain one of the silent determinants of political violence in election related issues since electoral contest is thus characterized by competition. The Nigerian factor of continues harassment, threat, and intimidation of the opposition parties or 'enemies' within the ruling party, perhaps gives everybody an open ended license to display physical and brute force to either protect or safeguard ones areas of political control in order to exert absolute monopoly over political outcome and loyalty.
4. Ineffectiveness of security outfits and culture impurity. The main role of security operatives who are constitutionally entrusted with the protection of lives and property usually work against peace during election because of their ineffectiveness especially the police.

5. The role of electoral officers. The activities of electoral officers, civil servant and other technocrats who are entrusted with the role of carrying out transition and enthroning democracy also trigger electoral violence.
6. Weak penalties. The criminal or penal code of a nation spells out crimes and penalties or punishment of violations of the code. Penalties or punishments are intended to achieve corrective, retribution and deterrence. In Nigeria, there is no specific legislations against certain electoral offences, only for associated acts like arson, assault and murder.
7. Lack of genuine interest to serve. The politicians who are the chief actors in enthroning democracy and good governance do not have the genuine interest to serve the people of Nigeria. They are interested in getting their share of the "National cake". They want the position by all means. Being declared a winner in an election will give opportunity to launder money.
8. Ignorance and lack of formal education contribute to faulting electoral process which could lead to violence. Many educated Nigerians can sell their votes for a measure of rice, beans etc. Some of these items are used by politicians to bribe people for votes.
9. Negative roles of tradition and religious leaders. Some traditional and religious leaders are collaborators of electoral violence. They succumb to ethnic or religious sentiments in determining the political aspirant they will give their support. They use their influence to mobilize and persuade their members to support their favoured aspirants based on preconceived bias.

Implication of Electoral Violence

Jega, A. (2007)..... Elections in Nigeria have historically been conflict ridden. The campaigns preceding elections are invariably marked by pettiness, intolerance and violence. Already: there are several reported incidences of intra-party as well as inter-party, violence conflict including abductions and assassination. Election and their outcome have often been neither free, nor fair characterized by violation of the process (both inadvertent and will full) corrupt conduct by officials, rigging of result and so on. Again, reports indicate that incidences of these were pervasive during the party primaries and that some candidates are busy scheming to ensure a favourable outcome for themselves by hook or by crook in the oncoming elections.

Electoral violence has serious unwholesome implications for democracy, respect for human rights and good governance. It has affected the entire credibility of the democratic system, human security and lives and property. Electoral violence breeds insecurity as it is often characterized by loss of lives and properties as was the case during the November 2008 political violence in Jos, Nigeria, over 500 people were killed, thousands displaced and properties worth billions of naira were burnt.

Conclusion

Electoral violence robs Nigeria present and future credible leadership. The system poses a threat to responsible individuals and scares away responsible participants. It is axiomatic that development cannot occur in the absence of peace and security. The economy suffers

in an atmosphere of insecurity and political instability. This is because investors are scared due to lack of security for their investments. Peaceful co-existence and flourishing socio- economic tie between different ethnic, religious and commercial groups are eroded and bitter armed confrontation within and between political, religious and ethnic communities became the order of the day.

Recommendations

1. With the nature of structural under development in Nigeria, the exploitative nature of Nigerian leadership and the extreme level of poverty among Nigerians, human and natural resources to reconstruct or restructure and promote the Nigerian economy in all forms. This will involve genuine peoples participation, politics of social equality and the nature of conduct of electioneering campaigns.
2. The media and civil society groups should pressurize Nigeria government to ensure that accountability, social justice, transparency, rule of law, gender equality and process are strictly adhered to by our political leaders. The international community should pressurize Nigeria to intensify the anti-corruption fight by trying further assistance and co-operation to the fight.
3. There is urgent need to decentralize the control of the police in order to enhance responsible and there should be capacity building for the police and other security agencies.

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