

HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AND SECURITY DYNAMICS IN NIGERIA FROM PRE-COLONIAL TO POST-COLONIAL ERAS

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Abstract

The rising level of insecurity globally has thrust discourses around insecurity to the front-burner of global scholarship. Growing concerns over hard economic realities have also played a significant role in forging this trend. It is becoming more apparent that insecurity negatively impinges on socio-economic development, and that to arrest the latter the former must be dealt with. However, violence and insecurity in general can be understood more from historical perspective. More importantly, a better and fuller grasp of how violence and other manifestations of insecurity have shaped human relations, as well as how they have been managed over time is only possible through historical study. This paper therefore examines the history of violence and security dynamics in Nigeria from the Pre-colonial to the Post-Colonial eras. A historical method is adopted for the study. Secondary sources on the subject matter are utilized, and these are analyzed qualitatively using a discursive and narrative approaches. The paper finds that the undue use of force in managing violence has proved counter-productive, and that better strategies short of force is necessary in better stemming the tides of violence and insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords Violence, Security Dynamics, Nigeria, Pre-Colonial, Post-Colonial

Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a tremendous rise in the level of violence. This has reflected in the scholarly attention that security studies have garnered within the same century. The security of lives and properties has always been of immense importance to governments all over the world, but events in the 21st century which have led to the globalization of violence in the form of international terrorism have made it even more necessary. Scholarly discourses around security have grown tremendously making security issues to be thrust to the front-burner of global scholarship.

Nigeria has only not been left out of this ugly trend. It has particularly witnessed and suffered a long history of violence. Nigeria has recorded many cases of insecurity and political violence on a large scale. The country is ranked 147th out of 163 countries on the 2020 Global Peace Index. The Institute for Economics and Peace has stated that the country continues to face challenges with safety, security, and ongoing conflict. The country has likewise been ranked by the same institute as the third most terrorized country between 2015 and 2019. The country thus has a high feature rate of violence.

Nigeria equally has a high vulnerability or propensity to violence due to a lot of factors. Nigeria's over 120 million people belong to more than 250 distinct ethno-linguistic groups. With the advent of Islam and Christianity, they were split between Muslims and Christians, while there were also significant numbers of people who followed traditional African religions. Various historical and other factors have continued to spur conflict between these various peoples, especially in modern times. Ethnic politics, fight over national cake, secession calls as a result of feeling of marginalization have all acted as catalysts for violence in Nigeria.

In the pre-colonial era many of the peoples who now make up Nigeria related primarily through trade, including trade across the Sahara. Colonialism brought more reasons for divisions and gave more impetus to the growth of violence. Apart from introducing a new religion which contrasted with both Islamism and traditional religious beliefs, brought the the imposition of artificial boundaries between formerly co-existing communities, thereby emphasizing differences. Moreover, the amalgamation of completely different people into one administrative umbrella and the bringing in of more dangerous arms all helped to fuel violence in Nigeria. Globalization has also lent a helping hand to violence. Global terrorism and its financing have exacerbated the situation.

Above all, economic hardness cannot be disconnected from the high level of violence in the country. Harsh economic realities such as high level of poverty, unemployment among others imposed by inept and corrupt

leadership have particularly added a unique flavour and colouration to violence in the African continent. Violence has become an escape route out of poverty for some and an avenue for eking out a means of livelihood. This has further exacerbated the already ugly situation. In sum, there are three categorized into the causes of violence in Nigeria can be placed; these are Social, Economic, and Political.

The social causes include ethnic and religious differences as well as illiteracy and its consequences, including ignorance. These social differences generate tensions leading to violence if not well managed. The economic causes range from poverty and unemployment to corruption and overall mismanaged economy. Clearly, there is a correlation between a poor or mismanaged economy and rising unemployment just as there is a correlation between rising unemployment and poverty levels, on the one hand, and the rise in the level of violence, on the other hand. Politicians are largely responsible for the political causes of violence, by breeding thugs and arming them for election rigging and election disruption especially when they perceived that they are or might be losing. Like many governments of the world, Nigeria has been overwhelmed by the level of violence and insecurity and has seen partnership with the private sector very necessary in combating the menace. While neighbourhood policing has been encouraged and the involvement of vigilantes, private security firms such as Shield, Halogen Security, Eliezer Group, Damon Guards, Eyespy Security Service Limited, Kingsguard Private Security Company, Proton Security Company, McDon Security among others have also been set up to complement the efforts of the government. These companies have offered consultancy services, complemented official government security officers in many ways. The coming onboard of private firms providing security services therefore enlivening and broadening the security sector in Nigeria's economy only shows the phenomenal rise in violence that the world, especially African countries have witnessed.

Various scholars have written on violence and insecurity in Nigeria. Most of the works can be grouped into two - those who focus on the cause of violence and insecurity and those who focus on the effects or consequences. E.E. Osaghae's "A History of Identities, Violence and Stability in Nigeria,"ⁱ xrays the cause of violence and instability in Nigeria, hinging it on the existence of loyalty to multi identities within the Nigerian identity. PU Ibekwe's work, "Crime, Insecurity and Violence in Nigeria,"ⁱⁱ also focused on the causes of insecurity and violence, arguing mainly that systemic corruption and poor security infrastructures are the perpetrators of these social menaces.ⁱⁱ Toeing the same path, Gibert Enyidah-OkeyOrdu (2017)ⁱⁱⁱ explains the reasons for violent crimes in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Olabode Agunbiade (2024)^{iv} focused on how insecurity adversely affects Nigeria's socio-economic development. O. Anyanwu's work on "Violence and Insecurity in Nigeria: the Bane of National Development,"^v emphasized on the deleterious effect of violence and insecurity on national development in Nigeria. The current study is unique like few others as it focuses on the measures taken so far by the government to address the issues of violence and insecurity. Apart from being solution-conscious, the present study covers more spatial grounds from the pre-colonial to the post-colonial eras. It thus provides a more balanced and generic understanding of the issues under discussion unlike most of the existing works.

The rest of this paper is divided into six sections. In the first, a conceptual clarification of violence is done. The second focuses on violence and security dynamics in the precolonial era. The third focuses on the history of violence and security dynamics in the colonial era while the fourth focuses on a historical account of the major outbreaks of violence in the post-colonial era. In the fifth section a highlight and assessment of the measures taken so far to address issues of violence and insecurity is done while conclusive remarks are made in the last section.

Conceptual Clarification

Violence is a very complex concept, there is no unanimously agreed upon definition by scholars. It is often understood differently by different people in different contexts, such as those from different countries, cultures, or belief systems. It is, however, necessary to attempt a definition of violence to have a better grasp of the subject matter for proper comprehension. In its 2002 World Report on Violence and Health, the World Health Organisation proposed a definition of violence that has since become a working term for many International organizations working in the field. According to WHO, violence is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or action, against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, or deprivation."^{vi} It is clear from the definition above that violent actions are not only actions that directly cause harm and damage but also actions having the likelihood to do so.

It is also important to note that for an action to be violent, it needs a victim or a group of victims.^{vii} Violence can therefore be grouped into three main categories which are self-directed violence, interpersonal violence and collective violence. These categories respectively refer to violence that a person inflicts upon himself, violence inflicted by another individual or by a small group of individuals, and violence inflicted by larger groups such as states, organized political groups, militia groups and terrorist organizations.^{viii}

The Cambridge dictionary defines violence as an extremely forceful actions that are intended to hurt people or are likely to cause damage. Meriam-Webster Dictionary defines it as the use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage. Various factors can motivate violent actions by people. Thus, there are various brands of violence such as political violence - violence motivated by political reasons or objectives. There could also be religious, ethno-psychological violence among others.

Violence has also been seen as the intentional or unintentional use of force whether physical or psychological, threatened or actual, against an individual, oneself, or against a group of people, a community, or a government. Clearly evident from this definition is that violence can be directed to individuals, oneself or a group of people. In this study, violence is conceived to mean not any harmful action directed at oneself e.g. for suicidal reasons, but harms directed at individuals and groups of people either by individuals or by groups.

Violence can also be either targeted or indiscriminate, motivated by certain aims, including political, religious, social, economic, ethnic, racial, or gender-related among others to directly or indirectly inflict harm, injury or death, and can be unintentional. As an intentional act it refers to extremely forceful actions carried out with the aim to hurt people and cause damages. As an unintentional act, violence results through unconscious actions that injure or harm other people or oneself. In the context of this paper, violence is taken to mean consciously and deliberately taken harmful actions against an individual or group of people.

Violence and Security Dynamics in Precolonial Nigeria

Precolonial Nigerian states and societies experienced violence and certain measures were taken to ensure security then. Although the security dynamics took more of non-military form, yet there were also military dimensions especially in centrally and highly organized communities and states. There were non-political violence and politically-related violent crimes in precolonial Nigeria.

In the pre-colonial era, there were cases of violence not related to politics. Sometimes, inter-group or inter-community conflicts led to the closure of trade paths, hindering the smooth flow of goods and services. Marauders and raiders sometimes also operated along trade routes, robbing and inflicting harms on travelers and thereby making the routes insecure. It also brought a level of economic uncertainty, making it difficult for business owners to carry out their business trips. Merchants faced the risk of theft and attacks on the way to these markets, affecting both supply chains and consumer access to essential goods.

Trade relations also brought commercial exchanges, movements and migratory patterns that enlivened violence. Europeans contact with the people of the southern - coastal and forest regions of Nigeria in the 16th century brought about the frequent capture and sale of slaves which increased violence in that region. With this came the early introduction of basic Christian teachings which to a large extent differed from the traditional religious beliefs.

It was also through trade with North Africa that Islam was introduced to parts of northern Nigeria more than 1,000 years ago. A turning point in Nigerian history came in 1804 when a Fulani preacher, Othman dan Fodio crossed into Northern Nigeria and began a holy war that resulted in the subjugation of the old Hausa city states of northern Nigeria. Having conquered the Hausa, the Fulani adopted their language and merged with their ruling classes to create a Hausa-Fulani ethnic group under the rule of what is now the Sokoto Caliphate. With the precedence of Dan Fodio's Jihad, religion became a very strong factor in Nigeria's violence profile and security dynamics.

Politically-related violence was also rife in the pre-colonial era. These included externally and internally generated ones. Externally generated ones were caused more by fight over control of resources located between states and for trade routes. Oyo for instance had to wage wars with Dahomey over control of the seaport for export trade and with Borgu and Nupe over control of the trade route for the importation of horses.^{ix} Idah and Nupe also individually threatened the security of Benin over fight for the control of the trade with the North.^x

Apart from external threats to security or externally generated violence, there were also internal threats. Within the states, there were violent reactions challenging the authority of the rulers and the drive for independence in the constituent provinces. In the 17th century, the rift between the Iyase and the town chiefs on the one hand and the palace chiefs on the other, threatened the existence of Benin. This situation continued even in the opening years of the 18th century when Akenzua I was the Oba. Violence became heightened in the early 19th century when revolutionary developments led to the emergence of large states integrating many groups to become even larger. Examples include the Uthman Danfodi Jihad wars and its ripple wars leading to the formation of the Sokoto Caliphate in Northern Nigeria, wars among the Yoruba people for superiority leading to the supremacy of the Oyo Empire among others. These developments also led to insurrections and attempts to counter them. Oyo empire, for instance, also faced challenges to the authority of the Kings. In 1823 for instance, Benin had to constantly

suppress insurrectionist uprising in Akure one of her vassal states. There were also threats of subversion to the authority of the Oba from the aristocrats.

In terms of the dynamics that efforts at ensuring security took, there were both military and non-military strategies. For military strategies, religious, economic and diplomatic means were adopted. Religiously, an aura of respectability and divinity was woven around the rulers. Kings and emperors of the pre-colonial era were regarded as representatives of God on earth. Early Arab visitors to Bornu for instance regarded the primordial religion of the people as King's worship.^{xi} In Oyo for instance, the *Alaafin* was regarded as *Ekeji Orisha*, meaning God's deputy. Although this did not entirely stop cases of insurrection, it helped to reduce them. Vassal leaders were required to continue to swear oath of allegiance to the kings as a way of keeping them in check. Disobedience to the kings or threat to their rule were regarded as sacrilege because of this respectability aura woven around the them.

The kings also married from regions that could have been sources of insecurity to them. They particularly married daughters of leading chiefs to cement relationship and reduce conflicts and insecurity. Also, it was the practice in many parts of Africa to detain the princes of the conquered states to guarantee good behaviour and seamless relationships with their parents. Some Idah princes were, for instance, sent to the court of the Oba of Benin under the guise of instructing them in the art of governance.^{xii}

African states also tried to tackle insecurity through the establishment of a commercial monopoly over the slave trade in their areas of jurisdiction.^{xiii} This attempt which the colonial merchants could not bear and allow was made to ensure that the economic basis of the security of their states was protected. Uncontrolled trade in slaves led to indiscriminate hunt for slaves which heightened insecurity.

Alliances were also negotiated among African states in the past at various times, depending on their interests at particular times to enhance their security. This was the case of the use of diplomacy. There were alliances engaged in within the African states. For instance, there were shifting alliances among the Yoruba states during the 19th century Yoruba wars. The Egba allied with the Ijaiye against the Ibadan.^{xiv} There were also alliances with foreign powers against their neighbours to achieve state or leaders interest.

Apart from these, in pre-colonial Igboland, to ensure the safety of travelers and of merchants in particular, various measures were developed and adopted. Moreover, Igbo laws, custom and morality forbade the unleashing of violence in the form of molestation, kidnapping, enslavement or even killing of fellow clansmen. This meant that a trader could travel in safety within his clan^{xv}. This took care of the safety of most of the regional or short distance traders.

Between one clan and another, a ritual brotherhood was also established by means of the *Igbandu* blood pact. Under this arrangement, the leading representatives of the clans or village-groups concerned met at their common place, usually where they shared a boundary and after performing series of prescribed rituals, drew out blood from their veins into a container and mixed it. Then they would dip pieces of the kolanut they had used to verbally enter into a covenant and dipped in the blood and ate. This ceremony, it was believed bound the parties concerned in a blood union. They were thereafter bound to treat each other as clansmen. By this means, the outward-looking Igbo communities could extend the area within which their citizens could travel for business and other activities in safety. Also, travelling merchants who practiced crafts that were in hot demand such as the Nri, Awka, Aro, Abriba and Nkwere were allowed free communication through feuding communities.

Although non-military means were used to curb violence and by implication tackle problems of insecurity, military options of doing so could also be historically accounted for. In pre-colonial Igboland, there were certain band of raiders who were at the service of people who could pay. Although they were armed militants who raided towns for selfish goals and for war spoils, however, more often than not, they were hired and engaged by men of one town to protect them by raiding enemy towns. Examples of these warrior-bands included the Abams on the eastern side of the Niger, Ndi-Ekumeku on the Western side [between Asaba and Benin]. These bands were like secret societies and had large membership which partly contributed to their power and dependability as protectors.^{xvi}

The Abams were controlled by the Aros, and were like their fighting mercenaries. Any town having a dispute with another and needed the service of the Abams to fight them had to apply through the Aro agents.^{xvii} Before operation was carried out the Abams were paid a sum of money in advance and in addition, the lands of all the captives became their property. Their major weapon was cutlass. Although the activities of these warrior bands increased insecurity on one hand, on the other hand, it helped in a way to ensure the security of lives and properties of the people that called for their service.

Violence and Security Dynamics in the Colonial Era

Colonization began in the 19th century, when the industrial revolution in Europe spurred interest in agricultural and mineral commodities in the African interior. Along with the colonialists came Christian missionaries who converted large parts of southern Nigeria. In 1914, northern and southern Nigeria, which had been governed by the British as two distinct colonies, were merged to create the colony of Nigeria. It was in this colonial era that many of the rivalries that were to later explode in conflicts were fostered. The British had forged an alliance with the Sokoto Caliphate, which controlled vast areas of northern Nigeria using the emirate system that devolved powers to traditional and religious leaders or emirs. This system, known as "indirect rule", secured the allegiance of the Caliphate to the British empire which, in return, allowed the Caliphate to keep its authority over its subject peoples. Under colonial rule this authority was even extended over other ethnic nationalities in northern Nigeria which had successfully resisted Sokoto hegemony prior to colonial conquest.

Meanwhile in southern Nigeria, the British had a more difficult time. The Yoruba of southwest Nigeria, one of the three biggest ethnic groups in the country (the others are the Hausa-Fulani and the Igbo in the southeast) had a centralized system of government which suited indirect rule. But the Igbo had a decentralized system so the British imposed handpicked loyalists chiefs on the people. The system of creating chieftainships and imposing collaborators as chiefs was also done in the many smaller ethnic groups in other parts of southern Nigeria. The numerous ethnic minorities in the north were placed under the control of the Sokoto Caliphate. To weaken the south, which had embraced western education and begun to agitate for independence, the British split it into two regions, leaving the north intact as one region. This lopsidedness gave the north bigger numbers and ensured its political dominance under the parliamentary system of government inherited at independence.

During the colonial era, external forces combined with internal factors to compound the problem of violence. However, the colonial government did not allow these dissatisfaction to be fully expressed in the form of violence. It established an army which it used to quell rebellions and carried out military campaigns across the country to impose artificial peace.

Thus, the main instrument used to maintain peace and security was the instrument of the military. Unlike in the pre-colonial era when different methods short of military were used to maintain security, the colonial era relied heavily on military apparatus.

Violence in the Post-Independent Era

The Nigeria that became independent from Britain in 1960 was a time bomb waiting to explode. By 1962, the Tiv of central Nigeria revolted against their perceived domination by the northern regional government controlled by Sokoto princes. Violence exploded in western Nigeria following federal elections in 1964 and regional elections a year later when it was perceived that the Northern People's Congress, which was in control of the central government, had rigged the elections for its preferred candidates. Election has thus been a major source of violence in post-colonial Nigeria.

Ironically, the military that is supposed to maintain peace and security have contributed to the history of violence in the country. One of the immediate causes of the war among others was the first military coup. It was the belief of the Northern military men and politicians that the 15th January coup of 1966 was a calculated plot by the Igbo to annihilate their politicians. The non trial of the coup plotters by the Ironsi's administration also exacerbated the hatred of the Igbo by the Northerners. They claimed that the Easterners during the 1966 coup d'état instigated the Northern Generals to kill their own people because people from the Eastern extraction escaped the bloody coup. This coup was followed by the second Military coup of 29 July, 1966 which claimed the life of the former Head of State Major General Aguiyi Ironsi, a high ranking Igbo General who was the then Head of State. The Easterners believed this to be a Northern arrangement to retaliate the injustice of the 1966 coup. At this point the crisis was heightening and the political tensions was rising very fast.^{xviii}

This crisis plunged the country into a civil war. For nearly three years, between July 1967 and January 1970, a civil war dragged on between the Nigerian government and secessionist forces representing the Republic of Biafra. The death toll was at least over a million people and, according to some estimates, there were about 100,000 military casualties and between 500,000 and two million Biafran civilians died from starvation and other causes during the war. The war started as a rivalry among major ethnic groups within the army. The military coup of January, 1966 that led to the assassination of former Prime Minister Tafawa Balewa and Sardauna of Sokoto, Ahmadu Bello, was interpreted as a war against northerners. It triggered a counter-coup as well as anti-Igbo riots in Northern Nigeria, which led to the death of about 30,000 people and the displacement of others. The secession was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Chukwuemeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, who declared Biafra's independence in May 1967, while the Nigerian government was headed by Lieutenant-Colonel Yakubu Gowon.

The defeat of Biafra in 1970 at the end of a brutal civil war in which more than one million people died, was followed yet by years of military rule - broken only by a four-year spell of democracy and ended by elections in 1999. Military rule suppressed long brewing grievances among the various ethnic groups, but by the 1990s restiveness had begun to boil over in the Niger Delta. With the end of military rule, the discontent that had built up over the years came to the surface. In the last four years Nigeria has experienced its worst violence since the civil war, and more than 10,000 people are estimated to have died as a result.

Many have continued to advocate for the independence of Biafra till today. Separatist organisation, Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), was formed by Nnamdi Kanu in 2012, and has continued to make the demand despite having been proscribed by a court order in 2017. Similarly, the less-confrontational Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) was established in 1999 for the same purpose.^{xxix}

The maitatsine riot is another event that took place in history of violence in Nigeria from 1980-1985. These riots are considered the “first major wave of religiously-inspired violence” in northern Nigeria. The movement of Maitatsine was led by Muhammadu Marwa, a Cameroonian who lived in Kano but who opposed the Nigerian state. His extreme ideologies are echoes by the present-day Boko Haram. He was also notable for his vociferous condemnation of Western culture, education, and technology, and was known to refer to anyone who sent their children to a state school as an ‘infidel. Thousands of people died during the riots which broke out in different states. The first one started on December 18, 1980, in Kano State and led to the killing of 4,177 people, including Marwa. Another riot broke out in October, 1982, in Bulumkutu, Borno State, and caused the death of 3,350 people. Between 500 and 1,000 people died in Yola, capital of then Gongola State, in 1984, and the next year, about 100 people lost their lives in a similar incident in Gombe, Bauchi State. Musa Mekaniki who succeeded Marwa as the movement’s leader, fled to Cameroon and was arrested in 2004.^{xxx}

The Niger Delta crisis is another case of violence in the country. The activities of militants in the Niger Delta have rendered the region very unsafe for decades. The United States government currently warned its citizens against travelling to the coastal areas of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, Delta, and Rivers “due to crime, civil unrest, kidnapping, and maritime crime”. UK citizens are told to avoid all travels to the riverine areas of the five states and to only travel to the non-riverine areas of Delta, Bayelsa and Rivers if it is essential.

Conflict in the region is against the backdrop of the uneven distribution of wealth from oil exploration and environmental degradation that has caused inhabitants to lose their sources of livelihood. The competition for resources is agreeably one of the causes of violence in Nigeria including the Niger Delta crisis.^{xxxi} There have been clamour for greater share of oil revenues. The Niger Delta region have not always been happy with the revenue allocation given to them since oil resources are mostly found in the region which is occupied by the minority ethnic group. The poor revenue allocation formula was perceived by the Delta ethnic minorities as a ploy orchestrated by the three major Nigerian ethnic groups to exploit them. This sense of injustice and exploitation have been described by most Delta commentators to be what is called ‘internal colonialism’ arrangement, was aggravated by the fact that decisions to centralize oil resources were taken and imposed by federal military regimes representing dominant social forces.^{xxxii}

The crisis features frequent incidents of kidnapping, piracy, and economic sabotage through attacks on oil exploration facilities. Numerous militias sprang up, including the Mujahid Asari-Dokubo-led Niger Delta People’s Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV) led by Ateke Tom. Other major ones were the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF). In 2009, under the presidency of Umaru Musa Yar’Adua, the Federal Government started an amnesty programme for militants that required them to surrender their arms in return for economic empowerment, including training. The programme, which has recorded some successes, caused a sharp decline in violence and kidnappings in the region. However, in 2016, new militias, including the Niger Delta Avengers and Niger Delta Greenland Justice Mandate, emerged and threatened to blow up oil pipelines.

Also, the farmer-herder crisis which blew open in 2010 has not only resulted in the loss of lives of people but has also affected Nigeria’s economy resulting in food scarcity. Some of the triggers include climate change and desert encroachment, reduction in available grazing land, less space for farming. In northern Nigeria, environmental degradation, especially desertification, has pushed mostly nomadic communities southwards in search of pasture. As they enter lands controlled by settled farming communities, violent conflict often erupts. Some of the worst violence recorded in Nigeria in recent years has been between so-called indigenes and settler communities, especially in the northern and central regions. Rivalry between Muslims and Christians has also ignited violence in Nigeria, especially with regard to the adoption of strict Shari’a (Islamic law) by states in the predominantly Muslim north. Some Christians, who are in the majority in the south, have perceived this as a threat of Islamisation,

and in flash points such as Kaduna in the north and Jos in central Nigeria this has been a source of Christian-Muslim violence.

The International Crisis Group described the conflict as “Nigeria’s gravest security challenge” in 2018. A research by Amnesty International, stated that at least 3,641 people were killed as a result of the crisis between January, 2016 and October, 2018. The most affected states included Benue, Adamawa, Plateau, Zamfara, Taraba, Kaduna, and Nasarawa.^{xxiii} The report pointed out that in all these communities, farmers’s problems began due to the destruction of their crops caused by the herders’ animals grazing on their farmlands, while in other communities, the reasons for the attacks were unclear. The Fulani also argue that the fault is from the farmers as they blame them for trying to chase them out of their communities by rustling their cattle and attacking them.

In addition is the Boko haram insurgency that has ravaged Nigeria from 2009 till date. More commonly referred to as Boko Haram, the Jamā’at Ahl as-Sunnah liDa’wah wa’l-Jihād emerged in 2002 under the leadership of Mohammed Yusuf, an Islamic cleric in Maiduguri, Borno State. In 2009, with the killing of Yusuf while in police custody, the mantle of leadership passed to his deputy, Abubakar Shekau, and the group’s mode of operation soon became more violent. The Boko Haram insurgency has caused the death of over 37,500 people and displacement of 2.5 million in the Lake Chad Basin. It was ranked by the Global Terrorism Index of 2019 as the fourth deadliest terrorist group in the world after Taliban, the Islamic State (IS), and the Khorasan Chapter of IS.

While the Nigerian government has repeatedly claimed to have technically defeated the terror group, it still launches attacks against civilians and continues to exercise control over some villages and pockets of territory. The regional dimension the activities of the terror group has taken has perhaps made it difficult to tame it. . In August, 2016, a faction of Boko Haram, the Islamic State of West Africa Province (ISWAP) broke off after Shekau refused to recognize the leadership of Abu Musab al-Barnawi, who was appointed by the Islamic State after the former pledged allegiance to it. Apart from this, the government has not demonstrate sufficient will power to crush the terror group.

According to sociologist Ekenna Nwafor, most of the violent conflicts that have rocked Nigeria over the years and intensified in recent times are “part of the consequences of a failed development process”. If Nigeria had realized the potential of its huge human and material resources, much of the discontent that has resulted in violent conflicts would have been avoided. “Years of misrule, massive corruption and squandering of development opportunities by successive governments have not only pauperized large segments of the population,” he said. “They have also left frayed nerves, forcing frustrated Nigerians to bare fangs against erstwhile peaceful neighbours at the individual and communal levels.”

Security Dynamics in the Post-Independent Era - An Assessment of Measures Taken so Far

National security has been a major issue for the Nigerian government, but with the increase of violence, more practical measures have been taken to address this concern. The government has used financing as an instrument to fight insecurity. Huge allocations have been made to security in the national budget. Also, legal instrument has been used. In order to ameliorate the incidence of crime, the federal government has embarked on the criminalization of terrorism by passing the Anti-Terrorism Act in 2011, fundamental surveillance as well as investigation of criminal related offenses. Heightening of physical security measures around the country aimed at deterring or disrupting potential attacks, strengthening of security agencies through the provision of security facilities have also been used as strategies to address the issue. The government has also adopted the development and broadcast of security tips in mass media.^{xxiv}

Three Nigerian states have taken an innovative approach to augment efforts by the overwhelmed federal government. Since 2016, governors in Plateau, Kaduna and Adamawa states established peace agencies and commissions to address communal conflicts and the roots of insurgency. These peacebuilding bodies help local governments set up community-level responses to public grievances and conflicts. These include peace committees, peace education, and local systems to monitor threats and to provide early responses to prevent violence. The peace-building agencies also help communities with the development of mechanisms for mediation and restorative justice. The Plateau Peace Building Agency and the Kaduna Peace Commission have paid special attention to farmer-herder disputes in their states, working with local and international civic organizations to conduct community dialogues and to train local activists in peacemaking skills. Given that some of these disputes cross the states’ shared border, the two agencies have worked together on several of these processes. The agencies have established peace committees in local governments and provide training and assistance to build local authorities’ capacity to manage conflicts at their roots. Adamawa’s peace agency worked with traditional rulers across the state, many of whom hold extensive influence in their communities, to create an early warning and response system against violent conflicts. This network helped prevent violence during the 2019 elections. The

Plateau and Kaduna agencies also worked to prevent election violence and are developing early response networks.^{xxv}

Various efforts, beginning even before independence, have been made by the Federal Government to end the conflicts in the Niger Delta region. In 1957, the government established the Willink Commission to look into the problems of the minorities, and this Commission acknowledged the utter neglect of the region and, among other proposals, recommended the creation of the Niger Delta Development Board (NDDDB). This Board could not achieve its aims for many reasons, one of which was the fact that its headquarters were located in Lagos, far from the problem area. With the creation of twelve states in 1967 and the establishment of the Niger Delta River Basin Authority (NDRBA), the NNDB became obsolete.

In the second republic, a 1.5% Federation Account for the development of the Niger Delta region was set up for the oil producing areas, but because of the constraint of operating from its secretariat in Lagos it was not able to achieve its purpose. In spite of recurrent failures, and in order to show its commitment to ending the crisis and ensuring the development of the area, the Federal Government established some other Commissions such as the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC) which was in operation from 1992 to 1999. OMPADEC was set up by the Ibrahim Babangida Administration under the chairmanship of Chief Albert Horsefall. Like its predecessors, it failed to achieve its mandate owing to official profligacy, corruption, excessive political interference and lack of transparency.

After this, the Niger Delta Environmental Survey was set up in 1995, followed by the Niger Delta Development Commission, established in 2000 by President Olusegun Obasanjo with a vision 'to offer a lasting solution to socio-economic difficulties of the Niger Delta Region' and a mission 'to facilitate the rapid, even and sustainable development of the Niger Delta into a region that is economically prosperous, socially stable, ecologically regenerative and politically peaceful' (Niger Delta Development Commission 2000:103). The government also put in place other mechanisms such as the Task Force on Pipeline Vandalisation (April 2000) operated by the Nigeria Police Force in collaboration with the NNPC (Niger Delta Development Commission 2001). Similar task forces were also set up by the navy, army and State Security Service (SSS) in various states of the Niger Delta. In Delta state, the government passed a law in August 2001 banning militant groups blamed for the disruption of oil activities in the state. The Special Security Committee on Oil Producing Areas was also set up by the Federal Government in November 2001 to address the prevailing situation in the oil producing areas. Other efforts include the convening of the first Niger Delta peace conference in Abuja in 2007, a Joint Task Force (JTF) in 2008, and a Technical Committee made up of stakeholders and the Niger Delta ministry in 2008.^{xxvi}

The Federal Government in 2009 proposed an amnesty programme which witnessed a large number of militants surrendering their arms in return for training by the government. Under the programme, many repentant militants were trained within and outside the country and during the period, relative peace returned to the region. However, this has been short-lived as there has been the emergence of new militant groups such as the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Red Egbesu Water Lions, Joint Niger Delta Liberation Force (JNDLF), Niger Delta Red Squad (NDRS) and the Adaka Boro Avengers in 2016. These new groups have continued from where the former militant groups left off with renewed bombing of oil installations and abduction of oil workers. Several lives have been lost including those of militants and security operatives, and insecurity has become the order of the day once again in the Niger Delta. Apart from death that has occurred as a result of confrontation with the militants, security operations have failed due to the risks involved.

The Amnesty Programme involved granting of national and unconditional pardon to all armed militants in the Niger Delta region who in turn were to surrender their arms and ammunition, sign an undertaking not to return to the creeks and continue with the struggle and also sign the military re-unification forms. Amnesty followed the recommendations contained in the 2008 report by the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC) initially established by the Federal Government, and chaired by MOSOP president Ledum Mitee, to assess initiatives taken in the region and provide for a comprehensive report and recommendations. The 45-member committee was inaugurated on 8 September 2008 to collate and review all past reports in the Niger Delta, appraise their recommendations and make other proposals that will help the Federal Government achieve sustainable development, peace, human and environmental security in the Niger Delta Region (Mitee 2009). The amnesty programme included a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process. While total peace has not returned to the region as a result of the rise in new group, it safe to say that there is a reduction in violence a more measures are put in place to maintain peace and security.^{xxvii}

There have also been measures taken by the Nigerian government to combat insurgency and terrorism in Nigeria. Since the inception of terrorism and insurgency in Nigeria, the government has developed various strategies

towards curbing the activities of Boko Haram. First is the use of brute military force against groups and deployment of over 8000 troops into the affected parts of Nigeria. Second is the acquisition and development of more sophisticated, adequate and appropriate military hardware and the approval by the African Union and the violations of a broad-based international coalition to collaborate with our military. Third is the approval given by the international bodies that give authority to neighbouring countries (Chad, Niger and Cameroon) to lawfully deploy troops on Nigeria soil. Nigerian military also operate beyond borders to hunt fleeing terrorist, thus removing their safe have. Fourth is the declaration of state of emergency in the three most affected norther states, namely Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe. Fifth is that government encourages both public and media support to provide intelligence regarding terrorist groups or their activities.^{xxviii}

Conclusion

In Nigeria, successive administrations have managed conflicts and crises in different but unconstructive ways. An uncalculated and reckless display of force is bound to be unproductive, especially when that force lacks strength, might and tact. The military power of the country is supposed to be used logically. There are instances where it can produce result, but there are also instances where becomes counter-productive - especially when dealing with terror groups that possess more sophisticated weapons and connections, or with mere citizens protests that require dialogue. In such situations, dialogue or peaceful conflict resolution will serve better.

Abacha's administration used police and military to resolve Ife-Modakeke crises in 1997, but all to no avail until peaceful intervention of United States Agency for International Development/ Office of International initiatives (USAID/OTI). Soldiers were also drafted in 1999 to quell the Arogbo Ijaw-Ugbollaje crises by Obasanjo's administration. The same administration, in its bids to settle and resolve Niger- Delta crises used Military Joint Task Force (JTF) with the ideological slogan: Operation Restore Hope' in order to win legitimacy.

Also, in most of the tribal and religious clashes, soldiers had been drafted to such areas in order to quench crises and restore peace, little or no attention was paid to restore permanent peace between and among the concerned groups after temporary peace was restored.^{xxix} The administration of Late Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar-Adua employed an alternative dispute resolution mechanism to resolve the Niger – Delta crises, the crises that had become phenomenal albatross around the neck of Nigeria. He created Niger- Delta Ministry and granted amnesty to the Niger – Delta Militants. This greatly yielded a lot of results and peace-building in the region. President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's administration used the Military Joint Task Force (JTF) to quench the Boko Haram crises in the North – East of Nigeria from 2009 to 2014, but all to no avail. Also, Buhari's administration from 2015 to 2019 battled with Boko Haram and the herders – crop farmers clashes with the use of soldiers and police and all the intervention strategies employed have yielded next to no results.

Apart from escalating conflict, the undue reliance on force for resolving incidences of violence is very expensive. The Boko Haram, which is the major terrorist group that has given the country sleepless nights has remained active even though their violent activities have reduced. The government cannot boast of having won the war. If the government must use force, it must use it logically and **decisively**. The idea of hit and run, hit and pet hit and still accept the terrorists as **our brothers** makes no sense. Again, the government must study the strength and connections of the Boko Haram to be in the know as to its own ability to use military or employ dialogue. Knowing when to use dialogue and when to use **Dane gun** is essential.

Endnotes

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