

TERRORISM, INSURGENCY, AGITATION AND THE SURVIVAL OF FEDERALISM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study dwelt on terrorism, insurgency, agitation and the survival of federalism in Nigeria. The relative deprivation theory was adopted herein. The study sought to ascertain if insurgency and agitations have any significant impact on the security challenges, determine if there is a nexus between ethnic chauvinism and the Nigerian federalism, and also examine the implications of ethnic conflicts on Nigerian federalism. To achieve these objectives, secondary sources of data collection method was used. The findings revealed that insurgency and agitations have significant impact on the security challenges. Also established was that there is a nexus between ethnic chauvinism and the rising spate of agitations on Nigerian federalism. The study however, recommended that government should improve on boarder management to curtail terrorist influx into Nigeria. There is need for proper restructuring of Nigeria into a federation that will guarantee equality of all ethnic groups. Government should also endeavor to resolve the major problems of ethnic, religious, socio economic and political crises bedeviling Nigeria. Finally, this study adopted a descriptive design as its analysis.

Keywords: Terrorism, Insurgency, Agitation, Federalism, Ethnicity.

Introduction

Nigerian federation has long been confronted by increased violent conflicts, terrorism, insurgency, agitations and criminality which have come in the form of armed robbery, kidnapping, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, human trafficking and militancy, among other acts of criminality that generally undermine national security and the survival of federalism in the country. The violent activities of civilians-with arms against the Nigerian State have included radicalized religion and regional youth groups, prominent among which are the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), O'Odia Peoples' Congress (OPC), the Arewa People's Congress (APC), Bakassi Boys, Egbesu Boys, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and more recently, Boko Haram, IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra led by Nnamdi Kanu), Ansaru, Kala-kato; Ombatse among others (Onuoha, 2012).

The rise of these groups has had significant influence on the numbers of ethnic and religious conflicts Nigeria has witnessed. The exact number of ethno-religious conflicts that have occurred in the country is not known due to lack of adequate statistics and records on this subject matter. However, Onuoha (2012) has averred that about 40% of ethno-religious crisis has occurred in Nigeria's fourth Republic. There has particularly been an increase between 2012-2022 (ten years) in the occurrences of terrorist attacks in the country with governments' insignificant success in curbing the menace.

Terrorism and insurgency share common features and are often viewed same by many. They are usually placed on board by known and unknown agitators which posses treat to the survival of federalism in Nigeria. Notwithstanding, insurgency is opined by the United States Department of Defense (2007) as an organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive

means and armed with conflict (cited in Hellesen, 2008). This definition suggests that insurgent groups employ unlawful means towards achieving an end, which could be political, religious, social or even ideological.

It is usually associated with the activities of a fringe and ideologically misguided sub-group of a larger religion or political movement. In this regard, Shabayany (2012) observes that it 'is a fanatical war waged by a puritan few against the massive army of innocent people of different religions, class and gender.' In contemporary social discourse, the concept of terrorism has been used to denote forms of unconventional, illegitimate violence targeted by a group at the state, society or any section of the population thereof.

Methodologically, this study adopted descriptive design. Documentary materials like textbooks, journals, magazine, internet, government gazettes and other relevant written literatures were used to generate findings. The study dwelt on terrorism, insurgency agitations and the survival of federalism in Nigeria. Theoretically, this study adopted the Relative Deprivation Theory. The theory was propounded by Gurr (1970) as part of efforts to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. The theory argues that "when expectations outstrip achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration is generated. Thus, the collective frustration turns to anger and violence (Dollard, et al., 1939), quoted in Nwagboso (2012). The theory presents the idea of relative deprivation as a perceived disparity between value expectation and capabilities. Using the relative deprivation, theory, the historical antecedents of conflicts, agitations and frequent rise of individuals and groups against the Nigerian state to so many years of economic and political deprivation against the Nigerian people and government at all levels can be traced.

Conceptual Discourse

Terrorism:

According to Ekaterina (2008), terrorism is a sort of violence that uses one-sided violent approach against civilians. It also engages uneven violent confrontation against a stronger adversary, which could be a state or a group of states. Chomsky (2001) defines terrorism as "The use of coercive means aimed at populations in an effort to achieve political, religious or even other aims". The US State department of defense, defines terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub-national groups for clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience" (cited in Ishiaku 2013). The United Nation (1992) defines terrorism as "an anxiety-inspiring method of repeated violent action, employed by semi-clandestine individual, group or state actors, for idiosyncratic, criminal or political reasons, and whereby-in contrast to assassination-the direct targets of violence are not the main targets (cited in Sequel, 2007). For Lesser (1999), international terrorism can be referred to as an act in which terrorists cross national borders to penetrate attacks within the territory of other states. The targets of attacks could be embassies, individuals, schools, government parastatals, security institutions, international organizations and etcetera.

Insurgency:

Insurgency is an ambiguous concept. The United State Department of Defense (2007) defines it as organized movement that has the aim of overthrowing a constituted government through subversive

means and armed conflict. This definition suggests that insurgent groups employ unlawful means towards achieving an end, which could be political, religious, social or even ideological. The goal of insurgency is to confront and overthrow an existing government for the control of power, resources or for power sharing (Siegel, 2007).

An Overview of the Travails of Federalism in Nigeria

The argument that current political crisis in Nigeria is a reflection of the faulty amalgamation in 1914 by the colonial administration which laid the foundation for the faltering federalism could hardly be ignored in any political discourse of Nigeria's political crisis. Though, federalism as a political arrangement is seen to be the ideal form of government in ethnically diverse countries but Nigeria been a cliffhanger and heterogeneous federation, anchored on precarious grudging ethnic accommodation, thriving on unabated certainty and tensed expectation is an exception. The dilemma of the Nigerian state lies in a pretentious and faulty federal system. Suberu (2001) argues that at the heart of Nigerians predicament is the development of an intensely dysfunctional system of centralized ethno-distributive federalism. Federalism has not been a particularly workable option in Nigeria. This is not as a result of federalism as an integrative mechanism, but because of its operations that are anti-ethical to federal principles.

Ethnic problems in the Nigerian federalism are numerous. The most basic of these problems is ethnic violence and agitations among various ethnic groups. Firstly, federal structure in Nigeria created certain ethnic problems that are permanent. The division of Nigeria with unequal parts made the north a near absolute decider of joint deliberations. This arrangement violated the principle of equality of states in a federation, such that the north becomes the pillar around which the other regions revolved (Saliu, 1999). This situation according to him proved the validity of mill's law of federal instability, which asserts that no federation can be stable when one part of the federation constitutes a permanent majority in joint deliberations. Other major sources of tension in the Nigerian federalism include;

1. Federal character and its applications
2. Growing polarization of the nation along ethnic, state and religious lines ignoring factors of national unity
3. Increased religious intolerance and fanaticism
4. Rising increase of militia groups with socio-political and religious objectives. As earlier mentioned, phenomenon of ethnicity and religious intolerance have led to incessant recurrence of ethno-religious conflicts

Table 1. Major Militia Groups and their Agitations

S/N	Groups and their Background	Agitations
1.	Niger Delta Militancy: Niger Delta area. They include, Niger delta people volunteer force, movement for the emancipation of Niger delta.	Outstanding issues of resources control and allocation, poverty alleviation and environmental security of the region
2.	Boko Haram: Islamic set of Muslim dominated Bauchi and Borno states spreading to other states	Strange commitment of non-conformist standards of social organization that is driven by proclivity in religious convictions, political aspirations and social practices, to make Nigeria, an Islamic state
3.	Biafra And IPOB: Easter Nigeria Agitators for Self-Government. It Is a Secessionist Separatist agitation for a Sovereign State of Biafra in Eastem Nigeria.	Self-Government, Self-Rule And Independence of the Biafra State from Nigeria which the regards as the zoo.
4.	Odudua Peoples Congress (OPC) Agitators. South West Nigeria Led By Mr. Sunday Igboho a self acclaimed secessionist group.	Self-government, Self-Rule and Independence of Odudua State from Nigeria. They agitate for self government. This is a political agitation.

Ethnic chauvinism has become a logical factor in Nigeria's federal structure. It is evident in the above table where almost all the groups originated from different region of ethnic background with unique agitations. It is used as basis for political solidarity or agitation, in fact; it has become an instrument of violence. In Nigeria federation there seems to be no end to divisive tendencies confronting the nation. In the past the country had experienced ethnic and sectional violence that threatened the very co-operate existence of the country (Asabi, 2006). Federalism in Nigeria first came into the line light, following the adoptions of Oliver Lytletton's constitution of 1954. It is believes that the adoption of this system would give room for harmonious inter ethnic relations at least for relative socio-economic and political stability but to no avail.

Evidence of Ethnic Chauvinism and the Rising of Agitations in Nigeria

It is evident that in Nigeria communication or a conglomeration of communities that form an ethnic identity, that there are sub-ethnic sentiments. Most actions and statement of individuals or groups has hitherto heightened agitations in Nigeria. For instance,

1. Statement by Nnia Nwodo against Nigerian governments planned re-arrest of Nnamdi Kanu and revocation of bail. Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of Independent People of Biafra was granted bail on April 25,2017 which the Federal Government then, threatened to revoke. The President General of Ohaneze Ndigbo, Chief NniaNwodo, stated on behalf of the group and accused the Federal Government of been bias, double standard and violation of Kanu's fundamental human rights especially for refusing to arrest the Arewa Youth for threatening and hate speech to Ndigbo (Ogbonna, 2017). The positions of the Ohaneze Ndigbo leaders over the demand by Nigerian government to re-arrest Kanu as well as his expression of dissatisfaction over actions of the government not only strengthened the Igbos but also facilitated their agitations.

2. Arewa Youth quit notice to Igbo people in the North on 3rd June, 2017. Sixteen Northern youth groups rose from a joint meeting in Kaduna to give Igbo residing in their states up to October 1, 2017 to vacate the region. This was in reactions to the strutting down of major town in the south East on May 30th, 2017 as part of the campaign by the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) for the actualization of Biafra Republic (Akharine, et al, 2017). In its reaction, the Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) said it received with gladness the quite notice, and urged the Igbos to return home immediately.

This kind of statements and counter statements not only strengthened each group but also heightened agitations that is not healthy for the survival of Nigerian Federalism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the strength of the data generated it is evidently clear that, insurgency and agitations have significant impact on the security challenges in Nigeria. There is also a nexus between ethnic chauvinism and the rising spate of agitation in Nigeria. Above all, ethnic conflicts have negative implications on the survival of Nigerian federalism. The paper recommended that; the government should improve on boarder management to curtail terrorist influx in the country; there is need for proper restructuring of Nigeria into a federation that will guarantee equality of all ethnic groups; and finally, the government should endeavor to resolve the major problems of ethnic, religious, socio-economic and political crises bedeviling Nigeria, considering that these issues have continuously been traced to the country's insecurity and threat of secession.

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