

Political Implications and Internally Displaced Persons in Nigeria: The Uzo-Uwani Experience

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Abstract

It is widely accepted that every human society experiences different levels of crises. Nigeria as a multi-ethnic country is battling with her crises at different levels. This paper takes a clinical look at the Herdsmen-Farmers' clash, the issue of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and its political implications in Nigeria. Secondary data was collected and analyzed. Managing Organizational Conflict theory propounded by Kenneth W. Thomas was adopted. The paper concludes and recommended among others that Grazing Reserves Policy should be given a legal backing to ensure adequate implementation across the country and revenue in the form of tax could be collected to assuage the agitations surrounding the policy.

Keywords: Insurgency, Internally Displaced Persons, Herdsmen-Farmers' clash, Political Implications.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation has experienced crises that have affected her stability since Independence. In portraying this, Allswell (2014) identified these crises to include: election violence, military interference, declaration of Niger Delta Republic, the Civil War, Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Oodua People's Congress (OPC), Northern Arewa Groups, series of religious crises, Jama'atu Ahlil Sunna Lidawati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram), Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru), herdsmen-farmers' crisis. Activities or crises perpetrated by these groups have given rise to internal displacement of people.

The Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) pass through painful experiences. In the event of this displacement, they become people who have no homes, food, shelter, security, even hope of survival. In some cases, many lose their families or are delinked from families and communities throughout their life time. Omenihu (2016) maintains that Internally Displaced Persons live in very poor conditions; a large majority number of Nigerians are housed in overcrowded camps across the disturbed areas, and these camps which are mainly school facilities and empty government buildings with few basic amenities. To this end, Internally Displaced Persons are among the most vulnerable set of people and therefore deserve every attention, and unfortunately in Nigeria the number keeps increasing at geometric rate. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), as at April 2015, reported that 1,538,982 people were displaced by internal conflict and violence in Nigeria.

This is owing to the fact that internal displacement is unprecedentedly increasing day-by-day

especially following the activities or attacks by the herdsmen. Adding to this menace is the unconvincing manner in which Nigerian security agencies are handling the deterrent measures in foiling these attacks. Nigeria being a multi-ethnic and religious country, still struggling for compatibility, trust and stability should nip such menace at the bud. It is very sad that while many countries are concerned and focused on advancing technological developments, breaking into new discoveries, Nigeria is still battling with herdsmen-farmers' clash in the 21st Century. One can argue that Nigeria is not the only country in the world that consumes cows or practice agriculture. In one of the media interviews of the current Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Chief Lai Mohammed, he argues that Fulani-herdsmen current crisis is at the result of climate change (Otelo, 2016). One may wonder if Nigeria is the only country that experiences climate change.

It is good news that Nigerians displaced by Boko Haram insurgency are gradually returning home as a result of successful war against the terrorists. This should be a sigh of relief on the issue of internal displacement in Nigeria, but that does not seem to be the situation owing to the increment of internal displacement as a result of incessant attacks by herdsmen. According to Charles (2016), Fulani-herdsmen have launched attacks in many states in the country more especially in Zamfara, Taraba, Ekiti, Benue, Nassarawa, Plateau, Adamawa, Enugu, Imo and Abia among others. However, focus is placed on the herdsmen attack in Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani in Enugu State because of the security breaches that characterized the ugly incident. The thrust of this paper is to unmask the political implications of this menace.

Clarification of Concept

Insurgency: According to Imasuen (2015, p 9), insurgency refers to a violent move by a person or group of persons to resist or oppose the enforcement of law or running of government or revolt against constituted authority of the state or of taking part in insurrection. It means a violation of the constitution's criminal law and the international treaty obligations of a nation in the following circumstance: when it constitutes an attack on defenseless citizens and other property resulting in injuries, loss of lives and properties as well as forced or massive internal displacement of people out of their habitual places of residence. When it drives business/investors away from an insecure area and also when it constitutes domestic and international crimes punishable by law such as treasonable felony, terrorism, murder, crimes against humanity and genocide.

Similarly, Godwin (2007, p 12) sees insurgency as an organized resistance movement that uses subversion, sabotage, and armed conflict to achieve its aims. Insurgencies normally seek to overthrow the existing social order and reallocate power within the country. They may also seek to (i) Overthrow an established government without a follow-on social revolution. (ii) Establish an autonomous national territory within the borders of a state. (iii) Cause the withdrawal of an occupying power. (iv) Extract political concessions that are unattainable through less violent means. (v) Attack in order to dominate or retaliate. The attack on Nimbo community is apparently retaliatory.

Displaced Persons (IDPs): The most commonly used definition of IDPs is premised on the United Nation's (UN) Guiding Principles on Internally Displacement. The Guiding Principles define IDPs as "Persons or group of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residences in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violation of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border (cited in Iheme, 2014: p50). Victims of man-made or natural disasters become IDPs when they no longer live within their residential homes but remain within home country's territory.

Internally displaced persons are victims of various kinds of injustices or violent confrontations perpetrated by either their own government against them or by others, such as communal clashes, riots, religious conflicts, terrorism, natural disasters and so on. On the other hand, it is most painful when people are rendered internally displaced due to failure of security operatives to deter an impending attack.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used for this study is Management Organizational Conflict Theory in order to explain the crisis between two groups (Herdsmen and Farmers), and the strategy adopted by security operatives that eventually created IDPs.

Management Organizational Conflict Theory emphasizes the diagnosis of and intervention in affective and substantive conflicts of inter-group, intra-group and inter-personal levels and the strategies or manner used to handle these conflicts. Here, diagnosis establishes whether there should be need for intervention and the type of intervention and strategy needed. This intervention is generally targeted at three major factors - (a) to attain and maintain a moderate amount of substantive conflict in non routine tasks at various levels (b) to reduce affective conflict at all levels and (c) to enable the organizational members to select and use the appropriate styles of handling conflicts so that various situations can be effectively dealt with (Rahim, 2002, p24).

The relationship of these two communities, (herdsmen and farmers in Nimbo) resulted in an organized bloody conflict that claimed lives of many people, which had needed an urgent intervention of the security agencies. This intervention would have been targeted at preventing colossal damages and of course averted internal displacement. Furthermore, the strategies or manner in which this intervention was handled is part of the focus of this theory as it has consequential effects which in this case are negative. The government of Enugu State and the security agencies including the Police, Army, Civil Defense, among others were in adequate position to launch deterrent intervention which would have successfully foiled the organized attack by the herdsmen, since they had pre-information about the impending attack. As the theory emphasizes the strategies or approaches adopted in handling intervention of such conflict, it is seen in the complacent and indifferent approach or manner exhibited by both the state government and security agencies which made the "impending attack" to be a huge

success. Against this backdrop, on the part of the state government, one would have expected that they establish a constant contact with the security agencies which would have kept them on their toes to ensure a quick and well sustained intervention. On the side of the security agencies, especially the police, there was lack of sustenance in preventing the attack which depicts complacency, indifference and above all, lack of commitment in handling the much needed intervention. Deploying police personnel in Nimbo Community and withdrawing them in the early hours of the morning shows the faulty manner in which intervention was approached. Even after withdrawal of security personnel one would have expected an immediate placement of surveillance over the area, hence the certain reliability of the pre-information source.

Nimbo Community and Herdsmen Relationship

Nimbo, as it is equally called 'Ukpabi-Nimbo' is a community border in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, Nigeria. Nimbo is made up of seven villages which include: Ekwuru, Nimbo-Ngwoko, Ebor, Ugwujiro, Enugu-Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara (Emeka, 2016). These villages were invaded by herdsmen on April 25, 2016 which claimed many lives, and brought chaos in the entire local government as the youths went on rampage. Uzo-uwani is a local government in Enugu State bordering southern states of Eboyi and Anambra, and central states of Kogi and Benue. The local government headquarters is located in the town of Umulona (or Umuluokpa) community (Uche, 2016, p5).

Nimbo is a community that depends mainly on farm produce. This is owing to the fact that majority of her population are farmers. According to Isiguzo (2016), Nimbo indigenes live within their farm areas as 'camps' for easy access and control of their plants and crops. This means that the lives of the people of Nimbo community are centrally dependent on their farm produce. This depicts how painful it would be for any form of destruction including the grazing of cattle to befall their farms, despite the cordial relationship that may have existed between them and herdsmen.

Nimbo community has a long time relationship with the herdsmen. This is evident as Ikenna (2016) holds that Fulani-herdsmen had established contact with the people of Nimbo for over 30 years, with a mutual understanding on when and how to operate with their cattle. Similarly, Obasi (2016) holds that years back, some children of Nimbo community at their leisure time used to follow Fulani-herdsmen around as they pasture their cattle, while in return the herdsmen will give them cow milk called 'Nunu'. This shows how the herdsmen were integrated into the community system. Obasi (2016) further maintains that Fulani-herdsmen were asked to attend community meetings where they were formally informed on the areas they were to graze their cattle against areas the community were to cultivate for the farming season. Looking at the recent attack on the community, one would wonder what actually went wrong. Why did the already established mutual relationship get severed? Though, it is quite understood that there are incessant infiltration of the community by herdsmen who apparently must have had bitter and violent experiences elsewhere. This, in no doubt will impact negatively in the already existing peaceful and cordial relationship, hence the April 25th, 2016 invasion of Nimbo

community by herdsmen that led to internal displacement.

Nimbo, Uzo-Uwani Invasion

Nimbo community in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State experienced bloody attack on April 25th, 2016. According to Ukaegbu (2016), seven Nimbo villages - Kwuru, Nimbo-Ugwoko, Ugwijoro, Ebor, Enugu-Nimbo, Umuome and Ugwuachara were invaded, and scores massacred by over 500 heavily armed herdsmen, rated the fourth deadliest terror group in the world, in the early hours of April 25, 2016.

Terrorist activities carried out by some herdsmen have been a big national security issue. It is widely held that as they go round pasturing their flocks, they encroach and claim ownership of people's or community land. Any attempt to resist or negotiate will be viewed as molestation which will consequently result to organized attack or invasion of the community. Relating to this, in the account of the invasion, Patrick (2016) holds that the herdsmen who reportedly were bent on occupying a portion of community's farm land for grazing of their cattle, plotted an attack, and went on to notify the natives on 23rd April, 2016 about their pending invasion. It may not easily be reconciled on how an attack that had earlier been made known to the people and security agencies was carried out successfully. Similarly, Patrick (2016) further asserts that the intelligence was promptly reported to security agencies, and at about 5:15 am on April 25, 2016 the armed herdsmen numbering over 500 struck, killing over 40 people. The following day, April 26, 2016, six more bodies were recovered and 14 victims were lying critically ill at Royal Cross Hospital, Nsukka, Nsukka District General Hospital and Bishop Shanahan Hospital, Nsukka.

Before the herdsmen struck, there was tension in Nimbo and other neighbouring communities in Uzo-Uwani over widespread rumour that about 500 herdsmen were mobilizing to attack them. According to Isiguzo (2016), this was as a result of villagers resisting the use of their farm lands as grazing fields by the herdsmen, and the situation degenerated after some herdsmen who operate in Nimbo and other communities in Uzo-uwani axis claimed that their cows were missing and that some of their colleagues were killed in the area. In a similar account, Saidu (2016,) holds that:

four Fulani people were killed around Nimbo in December 2015, and less than a week later, two boys from one Fulani parent based in Nasarawa State were equally killed. The father of the deceased, saddened by the news of their death visited Nimbo for inquiry, only for him to also be killed. I got intelligence about the impending attack on Nimbo, as there was massive recruitment of Fulani herdsmen from Nasarawa and Benue states respectively. Over 500 herdsmen who had camped at the bush in AmaekeNsuka, in preparation for the attack, which made me to abort my journey to Nasarawa and quickly returned to inform the Uzo-Uwani Local Government Council boss about it.

Following this assertion, Kennedy (2016) reaccounts that during the raid, Christ Holy Catholic Church, Odozi-obodo at Onu-Eke and eleven (11) houses were burnt by the marauders. This ugly

experience remains an indelible scare on the people of Nimbo, considering the level of internal displacement it has caused. It can be noted that all the states within the South East region have direct share in the tragic incident. Many of the displaced persons fled to neighbouring communities and states which further caused anxiety.

Beyond the South East region, it is recalled that such tragedy occurred in many other states, more especially in Agatu community of Benue state, where hundreds of people were massacred and few surviving ones displaced by herdsmen. Kennedy (2016) further posits that the Agatu mass killing shocked the whole nation as the entire community and beyond was sacked and it is estimated that the country has lost billions over herdsmen attack. In the Nimbo invasion, the Police Commissioner of Enugu state maintains that his men engaged the invaders in a shootout and prevented them from gaining access to the centre of the town which was their target to bring down many valuables, (Udodi: 2016).

Akobundu (2016) holds that Governor Ifeanyi Ugwuanyi of Enugu State disclosed that he received a security alert from the Local Government Transitional Chairman that suspected Fulani herdsmen were planning to attack the Nimbo Community in Uzo-Uwani, and he immediately summoned a meeting of the heads of security agencies which include: Brigadier general Olufemi Akinjobi, the Garrison Commander, who represented the General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the 82 Division of the Nigerian Army, the Commissioner of Police, Nwodibo Ekechukwu, the state Director of Department State Security Service (DSS), M. Abdul Malik, the State Commandant of the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, Lar Stephen, with representatives of the Nigerian Air Force, Federal Road Safety Corps, and Nigerian Prison Service as observers. Apart from the Governor, the government team at the meeting included the Deputy Governor, the Secretary to the State Government, the Chief of Staff, the chairman of the state Traditional Rulers Council, and the Attorney General of Enugu State. All assured him in the emergency mid-night security meeting that they had mobilized their operatives to protect the threatened town. What would leave one wondering is the fact that such urgent mid-night security meeting targeted at repelling the impending attack, eventually was carried out with huge success, despite the high profile meeting.

The Political Implications and Recommendations

Security breaches which led to the successful invasion of Nimbo in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State created large number of Internally Displaced persons (IDPs) which consequentially has political implications. This poses a threat to the Nigerian federation. The threats posed are not limited to Nimbo community alone but wider Nigerian community, especially as evident in good number of states that have experienced the painful attack.

The negligence and indifferent attitude exhibited by the security agencies in forestalling the herdsmen bloody attack on the people of Nimbo amounts to loss of public confidence in security agencies not only by the people of Nimbo community but other Nigerian communities who mostly have interaction

with herdsmen. According to Omenihu (2016), the broad-day-light murder of defenseless indigenes of Nimbo under the watch of Nigerian security agencies is a sign that it is now a waste of time and will be suicidal for ordinary citizens of this country to depend and rely on the protection of these same security agencies. As was initially stated, this implication may be contagious in nature, as a result leads to fear of ethnic insecurity and domination, which goes a long way to threaten the unity of the country.

It is no doubt that active, functional and diligent security operatives breed hope and confidence in both majority and minority ethnic groups that constitute every federation including Nigeria, and therefore, reduces the feeling of insecurity and domination. This is far from being realized in a situation where there is security intelligence about impending attack on a community or ethnic group by another ethnic extract, and the security agencies fail to put up deterrent measures against such attack. Worst of it all is when some security personnel are accused of leading such a genocidal attack. This is evident as Ohaneze Ndi Igbo, against the attack in Nimbo has expressed fear over security of Nigerians after reviewing the circumstances that brought about the bloody attack. Similarly, the Tiv and Idoma nations raised alarm over an attempt of domination by certain section of the country (Omenihu, 2016). Such fears threaten the unity of the country.

The follow up of these political implications is a resort to self defense and reasons for agitation of secession. This could lead to loss of confidence in the security agencies, coupled with records of connivance of security personnel in perpetration of such attacks, it may be expected that communities and individual federating units may go all out to defend themselves, which may not turn out positive for the country. This is inline as the Governor Ugwuanyi has held a serious security meeting comprising all the traditional rulers and local government chairmen in the state, after which indigenes of Nimbo community and beyond were asked to arm themselves and provide self security, also the creation of internal security body (Vigilante group) (cited in Akobundu, 2016). Similarly, Ikenna (2016) maintains that Enugu State has established a well armed 'Vigilante group' as a follow up to Nimbo massacre, in extension, other Igbo speaking states have stepped up on internal security arrangements. It is close to be widely accepted that herdsmen attack is contagious, after being heard in North East, North Central, in no distant time it was heard in South West, South East and then South-South of the country. However, a resort to self defense against these attacks and invasion is a big threat against the fragile unity of the country, and such scenario depicts the status of chaos, anarchy and a failed state.

Nigeria enjoys respect and commendation from the international community, especially in her effort towards sustaining her democratic governance. This attracts good economic trade and direct foreign investments which enrich the national economy. The continuation of such attacks truncates the political stability and threatens the country's democracy which can earn her the status of a pariah nation before the international community.

Political uncertainty and failure breed division and mutiny in the security sector. Every personnel in all the security agencies have biological root and belongs to a particular ethnic extraction. The natural

tendency to sympathize and even empathize with his people or ethnic nation is very obvious. This is a worst situation every country should not afford to experience. Security agencies, more especially the Military have been widely seen as an intervening agency of government. Conflict or division that ensues in the country is always arrested by the intervention of the military, but when such ensued within the security sector, and then the Carmel's back is broken. Such situation could be attributed to what led to the collapse of the First Republic of Nigeria which subsequently led to the Civil War, and therefore should be avoided.

It is pertinent that the country finds a lasting solution to this menace. Efforts should aim at preventing and avoiding the resurgence and reoccurrence of internal displacement caused by herdsmen invasions. It will help to heal the old wounds. In an attempt to achieve this, the Federal Government should not hesitate in condemning such attacks, thereby, not giving room for any form of allegation, accusing the Federal Government of bias. Such effort will gradually restore feeling of protection and accommodation by every individual and the federating units.

Investigation and eventual arrest and prosecution of the perpetrators of these attacks will also restore confidence in the Internally Displaced Persons and their communities. This will undoubtedly make them feel valued and reintegrated and furthermore, restore confidence in the system.

The Federal and State governments should make a concerted effort towards having a collective dialogue with the stakeholders towards legalizing and implementing the Grazing Reserve Policy. Against the controversy surrounding the policy, the government should carry out public enlightenment programmes to educate the people on the policy.

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