

ETHNIC MILITIA AND VIOLENT CRIMES IN NIGERIA: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

By

Leonard N. Ezeh (Ph.D)

Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka
leomikelking@yahoo.com, +2348035092127.

&

Izuchukwu L.G. Ndukaihe

Department of Psychology, University of Nigeria, Nsukka,
izumario@yahoo.com, +2348037780593.

ABSTRACT

Currently, Nigeria is facing serious violent security breaches and challenges which express themselves in different forms and shapes of violent crimes such as: bomb attacks, armed robberies, assassinations, kidnappings, sectarian violence, etc. These violent crimes and security breaches are essentially perpetrated by different ethnic militias that dot the entire landscape of Nigeria such as O'odua people's congress (OPC), Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereignty State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Boko Haram, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), etc. These security problems have caused Nigeria and Nigerians enormous human and material resources, as well as impacted negatively on the growth and development of our dear country. Hence, national insecurity appears to be the greatest challenge/problem facing Nigeria today as a country. Therefore, in this paper, we shall examine serious issues of ethnic militias and violent crimes in Nigeria by addressing the following objectives: the rationale/justification of the emergence of ethnic militia groups in Nigeria; the identification of major ethnic militia groups across the geo-political zones of Nigeria, their operational bases and their violent campaigns; and the articulation of the impact of their violent campaigns and recommendations on how to curb the emergence and menace of these militia groups in Nigeria.

Key words: Ethnic Militia, Violent crimes

INTRODUCTION

Today, Nigeria is fundamentally faced with violent security breaches and challenges, which manifest themselves in different forms and shapes of violent crimes such as, bomb attacks, armed robberies, assassinations, kidnappings, ethnic violence, sectarian and political violence, etc. These violent crimes and security breaches are essentially perpetrated by different ethnic militias that dot the entire landscape of Nigeria such as; O'odua People's Congress (OPC), Movement for the emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF),

Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereignty State of Biafra (MASSOB), Arewa People's Congress (APC), Boko Haram, Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and recent Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), etc.

The campaign of impunity and violence unleashed by these ethnic militias against Nigerians and Nigeria has on daily basis escalated in forms of both frequency and intensity. These have cost Nigeria enormous human and material resources, as well as impacted negatively on the growth and development of the country. Also, these atrocious crimes have impacted negatively on peaceful co-existence among the populace, and at the same time have

threatened the unity and the very foundation of our existence as a people and as a nation, hence, the issues of national security challenges appear to be one of the greatest problems confronting Nigeria today as a country.

Therefore, in this paper, we shall seek to examine problematic issues of ethnic militias and their violent activities in Nigeria from a psychosocial perspective. This shall be addressed based on the following objectives:

- The rationale/justification of the emergence of ethnic militia group in Nigeria;
- The identification of major ethnic militia groups across the geo-political zones of Nigeria, their operational bases and their violent campaigns; and
- The articulation of the impact of their violent campaigns and recommendations on how to curb the emergence and menace of these militia groups in Nigeria.

Rationale/emergence of ethnic militia groups in Nigeria

It is instructive to recall that the advent or restoration of the current democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999, led to the emergence of the proliferation of many vigilante groups, ethnic militia groups and separatist groups in the country. These militant groups essentially were formed to defend and protect the interests of different ethnic groups in the country. Also, it must be noted that these militia groups and their violent activities are more pronounced under the current democratic dispensation than the preceding military regimes. Their emergence might be hinged on the relative liberal environment created by plural democracy with its degree of tolerance and openness where different shades of opinions are expressed (Akinwumi, 2009).

The freedom provided and guaranteed by the current democratic rule coupled with many years military dictatorship influenced some aggrieved Nigerians who are used to military impunity and violence into misinterpreting the democratic freedom to mean taking laws into their hands. Hence, militia groups were formed along ethnic/sectional/religious lines as means of seeking redress and settling old scores. Some also were formed to serve as political pressure groups in order to be relevant in the current political scheme of things (Okechukwu, 2003).

Youth unemployment and poverty among the people due to corruption and mismanagement of the economy by the various levels of government has been cited as one of the reasons for floating many militia groups in Nigeria. The army of jobless youths essentially served as ready and willing tools in the hands of failed politicians and criminals elements to carry out both violent and illegal activities in the country. Added to this, due to rampant corruption from all levels of government, government cannot deliver on their mandate, this leads to popular frustration among the people over government failure to deliver basic services to the people and out of frustration, many people especially the youths resort to criminality and consequently join violent gangs/groups to seek redress against the state (Asolo and Owanje, 2007).

High rate of insecurity in the country occasioned by constant sectarian ethnic violent clashes which have led to the destruction of lives and properties has been cited as the most veritable single factor that has facilitated the emergence of ethnic militia groups in Nigeria. Added to this, is the usual apparent helpless attitude and inaction of security agents in the face of such violence, naturally compels people to form armed groups to protect and defend themselves (Okechukwu, 2003).

Furthermore, the impact of Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil wars are strongly believed to have promoted the emergence of ethnic militias and violent crimes in Nigeria (Akinwumi, 2009). This is because; many soldiers that participated in the wars under the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) command who returned

to Nigeria were discharged as a result of injuries sustained in the wars. Some of these discharged soldiers sold their weapons to the leaders and promoters of these ethnic militias. Some of these discharged soldiers even became active commanders and members of some militia groups. For example, it is reported that some of the members of Tiv militia group that murdered 19 Nigerian soldiers were actually discharged ECOMOG army officers

Also, dissatisfaction with the political structure, operation and power configuration of the Nigerian state guaranteed feelings of marginalization, alienation and injustice in the psyche of many ethnic groups (Omoruyi, 1999). More aggrieved are the southern ethnic minorities who felt that inspite of the fact that they produce over 80% of the total revenue of the country from oil mined from their land, they are not well compensated economically and politically by the Nigerian ruling class.

Rather, what they got was state terrorism as witnessed during Gen. Sani Abacha's military dictatorship as well as environmental degradation and pollution. All these grievances may have explained why the south-south geopolitical zone has the highest number of ethnic militia groups in the country. Moreso, feelings of injustice among the Igbos of the South-East zone of Nigeria was mainly responsible for the emergence of MASSOP in 2000. Also, the violent reaction of Yorubas of the South-West to the annulment of the 1993 presidential election in which their kinsman Chief M.K.O. Abiola won was due to feelings of injustice. This is in line with the assumption of equity principle of constitutional-learning theory which assumes that individuals may resort to violence or join violent groups as a reactionary measure in search of equity, fairness and justice particularly when other possibilities for redress seem distant and non feasible.

The militarization of the Nigerian society is another important factor that had played a significant role in the formation and emergence of militia groups in Nigeria. As an independent country, Nigeria has spent more years under military dictatorship than under democratic leadership. Within this period, Nigeria have been used to military regime and in line with the assumptions of social learning theory, they have imbibed the culture of violence and impunity, and they have come to believe that might is right. Thus, associating with violent groups has become the culture of the people.

The failed economic programmes of many regimes in Nigeria mainly due to lack of fiscal discipline can be used to explain ethnic militancy in the country. The failure of these programmes naturally attracted negative consequences to the ordinary people. For example, many people were retrenched from their jobs and to worsen the situation, embargo was placed on employment in all public establishments, and agencies. As a result, many young graduates could not get employment and millions of Nigerians were jobless. This provided fertile group for many unemployed youths to be involved in violent crimes and thus many were attracted to different militant groups that spread all over the country.

Finally, according to Tamuno (1970) porous borders give militants easier access to weapons of destruction. To Tamuno, the borders are not adequately manned, hence, it is easy to smuggle weapons into the country. As a result of this, many weapons have been smuggled through the borders. Also, militants access weapons through their sympathizers in the security agencies. All these factors have been cited by the protagonists and promoters of many ethnic militia groups as major factors responsible for the formation and emergence of their militant groups. It is believed that some of these factors aided violent operations of these groups to a large extent.

However, the next part of this paper shall discuss some major ethnic militia groups in terms of their objectives, the geopolitical zones where they operate and the litany of their violent crimes.

The South-East Zone

The South-East zone occupies major part of the old Eastern part of Nigeria. They are Igbo speaking areas made up of the states of Anambra, Imo, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi. There are two prominent militia groups in this geopolitical zone and they include: BAKASSI BOYS and the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereignty States of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB).

Bakassi Boys: this is a militia group which came into prominence in Aba, Abia State in 1999 but, was latter legalized as a vigilante outfits by the Abia and Anambra state governments to checkmate criminal activities of armed robberies and other armed criminals in these two states. Before its emergence, armed robbers and other criminals had almost taken over the major cities of SouthEast geopolitical zone with no solution from the security agencies. It was this hopeless and helpless situation that the militia group was legalized to protect the zone from the menace of armed robbers and other violent criminals.

MASSOB: This militant group was formed by Chief Raph Uwazurike in the year 2000 in Okwe, Okigwe, Imo state with the following objectives:

- Restoration of the Biafra sovereignty;
- Fighting against Igbo marginalization; and
- Reintegration of the Igbo's mainstream national politics.

The old Eastern Region led by Late Gen. Ojukwu had attempted to secede from the Nigerian federation in 27th May, 1967 which led to Nigerian-Biafran war. The abortive attempt was essentially responsible for their second class status and marginalization of the Igbo's in the country today. It was to resolve this political problem that Raph Uwazurike founded this group for a separate country for the Igbos. On the 27th May, 2000, he unsuccessfully declared the state of Biafra.

The South-South Zone

This zone is made up of Southern Nigeria minority ethnic groups such as; the Ijaws, the Isokos, the Itsekiris, the Ogonis, the Edos, the Efiks, the Ibibios, etc. This zone is also called the NigerDelta region which produces the major source of oil revenue that account for about 80% of Nigeria foreign earnings. Inspite of this, the region is one of the poorest and least developed areas in the country and this perhaps is responsible for the emergence of many ethnic militias in the zone to protect/defend the interests of their ethnic groups against the Nigerian state and against the various multinational oil companies operating in the region.

The major ethnic militia groups in this region include: the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MASOP) founded by Late Ken Saro-Wiwa; Niger Delta Peoples's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Mujahid Asari-Dokunbo; Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) led by Henry Okah Niger Delta Avenger (NDA) and the host of other militia groups.

However, the objectives of these groups include:

- Regional autonomy and self-determination;
- Resource control; and
- Call for a sovereign national conference to restructure the federal system in the country (Akinwumi, 2005).

The South-West Zone

The South-West zone is essentially made up of the Yoruba speaking stock. Essentially, the emergence of the O'odua People's Congress (OPC) in 1994 was associated with feelings of alienation which many Yorubas had been experiencing since 1954 when the Yoruba political leaders led by Chief Obafemi Awolowo were sidelined from the Nigerian political mainstream.

These depressive feelings were validated and became acute with the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election won by their Kinsmen, Late Chief M.K.O. Abiola. The desire to fight and resist further marginalization of the Yorubas motivated Dr. Fredrick Fasheun and other Yoruba leaders to form OPC. The persecution and the clamp down of Yoruba political activists by the Abacha military regime and the eventual death of the acclaimed winner of 1993 presidential election, Chief M.K.O. Abiola in detention reinforced and strengthened the case of the Yorubas for self-determination and attracting more and more of their kinsmen into the OPC. By March, 1999, the OPC had thousands of branches in all the nooks and crannies of the Yoruba states and beyond, and with membership population of about 3 million.

However, the objectives of the OPC militia group include:

- To ensure that Nigeria is administered as a true federal republic where the federating units are allowed to develop in their own and manage their resources;
- To struggle for the restructure of Nigeria on the bases of equality of ethnic nationalities;
- To resist the domination of other nationalities by any group or any section of the country; □To ensure the protection and respect of ethnic minorities;
- To struggle for convocation of a sovereign national conference that would produce peoples constitution for the Nigerian people and to make government answerable to their people; and
- Above all, to protect the interest of the Yorubas at home and in the Diasporas (The Week Magazine, 9th June, 2002).

The Northern Zone

The Northern zone is made up of old Northern region which includes; North-East, North-West and North-Central geopolitical zones. The Hausa-Fulani tribes are the dominant ethnic group in the zone. Other ethnic groups include; the Tivs, Junkuns, Idomas, Beroms, Madas, Ibiras, etc. in this region, Arewa people's Congress (APC) and Boko Haram are the only prominent militia groups.

APC: This militia group was established in Kaduna, by Captain Sagir Mohamed with the following objectives:

- To safeguard and protect the Northern interest;
- To oppose the disintegration of the country through the activities of ethnic groupings; and
- To respond to further attacks on Northerners in any part of the country.

Boko Haram: This as an ethnic and Islamic militant group founded in 2001 by an Islamic fundamentalist, Late Mallam Yusuf Mohammed (BBC News Online, 2008) in the city of Maiduguri, North-East of Nigeria. The group proposes that the interaction with the western world is forbidden and also, supports opposition to the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria (www.the postnewsline.com, 2009). However, the objectives of this militia group include:

- Total islamization of Nigeria;

- Total rejection of western culture, especially western education; and □Protection of Northern interest (BBC News Online, 2008).

Today, Boko Haram is not regarded as an ethnic militant group but, also a terror organization that has succeeded in terrorizing the entire landscape of the country.

The militia groups and their violent crimes

Undeniably, ethnic militia groups in Nigeria is synonymous with violence because of the violent manner they prosecute their agenda. This is buttressed by the chronology of some major violent activities that are associated with them from 1999-date as documented thus:

- On 31st May, 1999, Ijaw, Urhobo and Itshekiri groups engaged in violent clash in Warri, Delta State over the Olu of Warri throne and recognition. At the end, over sixty persons were violently killed and property worth millions of naira destroyed.
- On 17th July, 1999, ethnic clash between members of OPC and Hausa community in Shagamu, Osun State erupted. The violent clash was as a result of the murder of a Hausa woman for violating the Yoruba annual Oro festival. The violent clash led to the death of about 50 people while, the reprisal attack in Kano on 22nd July, 1999 claim over 100 lives (The News Magazine, 31st January, 2000).
- On the 9th September, 1999, OPC was involved in a violent clash between the Duck workers of Yoruba and Ijaws where houses and human lives were destroyed. It took the Lagos State government over one month to restore peace and order in the areas affected (The Guardian, 15th September, 1999).
- On the 8th November, 1999, Egbesu ethnic militants killed a police man in Odi town, Bayelsa state in retaliation for the murder of their own members by the police. The militants were arrested by the police, but, the federal government deployed soldiers to the town to fish out their sponsors and promoters. In the process, thousands of people were killed and the whole town became desolate (The Punch, 30th January, 2000).
- On the 29th November, 1999, Ketu riot broke out over the control of the popular mile 12 market in Lagos state which pitied the Yorubas against the Hausa. At the end, the death toll was put at over 115 people (Saturday Champion, 27th November, 1999). Consequently, the Federal Government ordered the police to shoot members of OPC and APC at sight, who were believed to be the real brain behind the ethnic crises (The News, 31st January, 2000).
- On 9th January, 2000, a senior police officer was abducted and murdered by the suspected members of the OPC. This act of violence prompted the federal government to impose a ban on all ethnic militias in the country and threaten to impose a state of emergency in Lagos, if the situation was not brought under control.
- On 5th June, 2000, there was report of killing of people and destruction of properties as a result of the violent clash between two militant groups who were linked to the contenders to the throne of Olowo of Owo land in Ondo state.
- On the 13th July, 2000, violent clash erupted between the Igbos and Yorubas. The dominance of the Alaba International Market by the Igbos was challenged by the Yorubas who argued that Igbos would not allow such in their South-Eastern part of the country. In the violent clash that ensued, elements within the OPC and Bakassi Boys were used as foot soldiers which led to loss of lives and destruction of properties.
- On the 15th October, 2000, there was violent attack in Ilorin, the capital of Kwara state by the members of the OPC to effect the change of Emirship to Obaship which led to the death of some people. The violent attack was between the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba ethnic nationalities.

- On 1st May, 2001, Ijaw militia attacked security forces and oil installations in Opumani tank farm in Okere-Nkoko, Delta state.
On 27th May, 2001, MASSOB under the leadership of Ralph Uwazuruike unsuccessfully declared a state of Biafra. Its members have been consistently arrested by security agents for sundry violent criminal activities (Akinwumi, 2005).
- In May, 2001, the Tiv/Junkun and Fulani militia engaged in a feud over disputed land and property in Jukun land in Taraba state which led to loss of lives and properties.
- On 29th October, 2001, nineteen soldiers were killed by the Tivs militia in Taraba state in an escalation of ethnic feud between Tivs/Junkuns and Fulanis.
- On 25th April, 2003, there was an attack on the Navy and the Army by Ijaw militants and which left about 10 people dead in Warri, Delta state while, their radio communication equipment were damaged.
- On 30th April, 2003, Ijaw militia again opened fire on an Itsekiri town killing five people. The Nigerian security agents, in an attempt to quell the situation engaged the Ijaw militants in a gun duel which led to loss of more lives and properties.
- On 2nd May 2003, Ijaw militia attacked security forces and oil installations in Effurun and Ugbeji, Delta state (Okechukwu, 2003).
- On 7th December, 2006, MEND kidnapped three Italians and one Lebanese oil workers (Tell Magazine, February 5, 2007)
- On 14th January, 2007, there was reported case of brutal and gruesome murder of 12 Chiefs of the Kula kingdom by unknown armed militants (Tell Magazine, January 29, 2007).
- On the 20th January, 2007, six expatriate oil workers and one Nigerian were kidnapped at Okerenkonko in Warri, Delta state (Tell Magazine, February 5, 2007).
- On the 23rd January, 2007, a Dutch and two Nigerians were killed by armed militants (Tell Magazine, January 29, 2007).
- On 26th January, 2007, MEND kidnapped 24 Filipinos oil workers in Warri, Delta state over suspicion of their ship conveying arms and ammunition brought in by politicians to destabilize the region (Tell Magazine, February 26, 2007).
- On 28th January, some members of the Niger Delta militants attacked two police stations in Port Harcourt, released 125 detainees, killed two civilians and several others were injured (The Nation Newspaper, January 30, 2007).
- On 30th January, 2007, an unidentified militant group abducted one American and one Britain identified as Bill Graham and Nelson Moris respectively. The incident occurred in Port Harcourt, the capital of River state, Nigeria ([www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia.com), 2012).
- On May 1, 2007, at 4:15 a.m., MEND attacked Chevron's Oloibiri floating production, storage, and offloading vessel off the coast of the southern Bayelsa state. After one hour of fighting with security boats, resulting in the death of 10 people, MEND seized six expatriate workers, consisting of four Italians (Mario Celentano, Raffaele Pasceriello, Ignazio Gugliotta, Alfonso Franza), an American (John Stapelton), and a Croat (Jurica Ruic). On the same day, MEND published photos of the captives seated on white plastic chairs in a wooden shelter around the remains of a campfire (Oil and Gas Journal, 2007).
- On May 3, 2007, MEND seized eight foreign hostages from another offshore vessel. The hostage were released less than 24 hours latter, stating they had intended to destroy the vessel and did not want more hostages (www.wikipedia.com, 2012).
- On November 13, 2007, MEND militants attacked Cameroonian soldiers on the disputed Bakassi peninsular, killing more than 20 soldiers; three days after this incident, a southern Cameroonian rebel group claimed responsibility for the attack (BBC News Online, 2007).

- On September 14, 2008, MEND inaugurated Operation Hurricane Barbarossa with an ongoing string of militant attacks to bring down the oil industry in Rivers State (Pflanz, 2008).
- On May 15, 2009, a military operation undertaken by a Joint Task Force (JTF) began against MEND (Fatade, Owete and Okulaja, 2009). It came in response to the kidnapping of Nigerian soldiers and foreign sailors in the Delta region (Walker, 2009). Thousands of Nigeria have fled their villages and hundreds of people may be dead because of the offensive (IRIN News, 2009).
- On June 18, 2009, MEND claimed they had blown up a Shell pipeline, as a warning to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev who was arriving to Nigeria the Next day and to any potential foreign investor (CNN, 2009).
- On July 6, 2009, MEND claimed responsibility for an attack on the Okan oil manifold. The pipeline was blown up at 8:45 p.m. Sunday. The militants claim that the manifold carried some 80 percent of Chevron Nigeria Limited's offshore crude oil to a loading platform.
In a separate action on the same day, the group said that three Russians, two Filipinos and an Indian were seized Sunday from the Siehmen Peace oil tanker about 20 miles (32km) from the southern port city of Escravous (CNN, 2009).
- On October 1, 2010, two bombs exploded at Abuja during independent anniversary parade leaving 12 people killed and 17 injured. The bombings were I KM away from President Goodluck Jonathan. MEND claimed responsibility and also claimed to have sent warning in the form of an email to a journalist half-an-hour before the bombs detonated (www.wikipedia.com, 2012).
- On November 8, 2010, MEND attack on an Exxon Mobil Oil platform, kidnapping seven Nigerian workers (Tattersall, 2010).
- On 22nd April, 2011, Boko Haram group claimed responsibility for the 2011 Abuja police headquarters bombing (Brock, 2011; Mark, 2012).
- On 16th June, 2011, Boko Haram bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri, leaving 25 dead and 12 injured (Reuters, 2011; Somali Press, 2011).
- On 10th July, Boko Haram bombing at the All Christian Fellowship Church in Suleja, Niger State (www.wikipedia.com, 2012)
- On 26th August, 2011, bombing of UN building at Abuja by Boko Haram militants (BBC News, 2011).
- On 8th February, 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna (BBC News, 2012).
- On 16th February, 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility for another prison break staged in central Nigeria; 119 prisoners are released, one warden killed (www.wikipedia.com).
- On 3rd June, 2012, 15 church-goers were killed and several injured in a church bombing in Bauchi state. Boko Haram claimed responsibility through spokesperson Abu Qaqa (www.allafrica.com, 2012).
- On 17 June, 2012, Boko Haram claimed responsibility of suicide bombing strike at three churches in Kaduna State. At least 50 people were killed (Guardian News, June 17, 2012).
- On 3rd October, 2012, about 25-46 people were massacred in the town of Mubi in Nigeria during a night-time raid (www.allafrica.com, 2012). Currently, there are still litany of violent crimes being perpetrated by many of these ethnic militia in different parts of the country without end.

Implications of militant activities on Nigerian future

The continued existence of these militant groups and their violent activities have given the country a negative international image. For example, many countries have barred their citizens from coming to work or invest in Nigeria. This will affect the country economically since the country will lose certain benefits that are supposed to accrue to it by the presence of such foreign nationals.

Also, prior to late Umaru Yaradua's amnesty programme, the violent activities of these militia groups have resulted in a reduction of the foreign earnings from oil, since there was a drastic reduction in crude oil production and export in the country due to attacks at oil installations by South-South militants. Consequently, these have adversely affected the living standard of people due to low earnings from oil and promoted higher rate of unemployment which in turn led to higher rate of criminality in the country.

More youth crimes like armed robberies, kidnappings, hired assassinations and other terrorist acts are now being committed in Nigeria on daily basis because, arms and ammunition have found their ways into the hands of criminals. Furthermore, criminals have exploited the inefficiency of the police and other security agencies and citizens have therefore, resorted to forming or joining vigilante groups and ethnic militias who have been credited with high level of success even though, they act arbitrarily and employ violence in carrying out their activities.

The activities of ethnic militant groups in Nigeria had promoted ethnic stereotypes, prejudices and hatred among the various ethnic groups that made up of Nigeria and this does not augur well for the much taunted national unity and development. Consequently this leads to unhealthy ethnic rivalries, and ethnic divides in the country has promoted violence and criminality in the land resulting to many loss of lives and destruction of properties worth billions of dollars. The government in response to this ugly state of affair had budgeted and spent large sums of money to contain the situation but all to no avail. The fund that could have been used for other developmental projects are now therefore, diverted and wasted for security operations that are not usually accounted for. This, to a large extent, had contributed to the underdevelopment and weakening the economy of the country.

Also, the violent activities of these ethnic militia groups have impacted negatively on the fortunes of many international organizations operating in the country, like Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC), AGIP, and even many Nigerian organizations. Hence, most of them are downsizing its workforce and or relocating. Moreso, the activities of these militants have demotivated or hindered direct foreign investment in the country because, these groups through their militancy, violence, and hostage taking have created an awesome level of fear not only in the minds of these foreigners but, also built enormous fear and anxiety in the psyche of Nigerians and Nigerian investors. Added to this, no good investor will like to invest his money in an atmosphere of uncertainty as a result of such investment will no longer be there. These, consequently, have led to crushing poverty among the people and capital flight.

Furthermore, the campaign of violence by the militants has increased cases of anxiety, sleep disorders, incidence of mental illness due to trauma and shock, number of orphans and vulnerable children as well as reduction in life expectancy among Nigerians.

Finally, the unity and the political future of the country is been threatened by the activities of these ethnic militia because; the various ethnic nationalities that make up the country are relating to one another with skepticism and suspicion, while the international community is also

scared and afraid of associating with the country for fear of being perceived as supporting one group against the other and its attendant consequence on their economic interest in the country.

Recommendations

The Nigeria government should not toy with any idea that will subvert the democratic process let alone implement it. Such ideas include; the idea of declaring a state of emergency in places where violent crimes are committed by militants, armed robbers, or armed hoodlums or the creation of a special security squad like, Joint Security Task Force (JTF). It is the view of the authors that if the

Nigerian police are repositioned, adequately motivated, well funded, retrained, fully equipped and properly oriented, it will be in a better position to curtail the activities of the militants and other criminals in the country.

The government should stop the militarization of the democratic system instead; government should embrace dialogue instead of deploying soldiers to engage the militants in the name of maintaining law and order. Also, all levels of government in the country should be made to account for huge sums of money accrued to them. In fact, accountability and transparency should be the hallmark and the basis of governance at all levels of government. With this, the youths will be assured that their resources are judiciously and transparently utilized as well in the best interest of all Nigerians.

The government should stop paying service to fight against corruption. In this regard, the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) and other anti-graft agencies in the country should be reorganized and reconstituted so as to more autonomous and have more sweeping powers and run and managed by principled and incorruptible Nigerians. This will enable the agencies to fight corruption and corrupt Nigerians without fear or favour. With this, funds meant for the development of Nigeria will be used for the purpose for which it is budgeted for.

The government should also reorganize and strengthen the National Directorate of Employer (NDE) through proper funding. This will enable the agency to properly document the population of unemployed youths in the nation and be in a better position to adequately train them for self employment. These will definitely help to reduce the level of youth unemployment in the country and consequently depopulate the members of the ethnic militia groups in the country.

Promoters and leaders of militant groups involved in crimes against humanity should be arrested and prosecuted according to the laws of the land. This will serve as deterrent to others who have penchant to commit such violent crimes. There should be no sacred cow in this regard.

Government should embark on realistic aggressive poverty alleviation programme by ensuring that the funds that are allocated to this are fully paid to those who live below poverty level. Incorruptible Nigerians should be appointed to manage the funds and EFCC should work in synergy with the agency in charge of the fund to ensure that this is accomplished to avoid diverting the funds as it is currently been experienced.

The National Orientation Agency (NOA) should be awake to its responsibility through extensive mobilization of Nigerians on the need for peaceful co-existence, national unity and

development. This can be achieved through regular organization of youth conferences, workshops, seminars and town hall meetings, etc. through such interactions, the needs, feelings and expectations of the youths can be understood and appreciated and the government based on this can make some special interventions to address peculiar problems of the youth.

Religious leaders, traditional rulers, parents, and politicians should teach and educate their followers/wards on the need for peaceful and harmonious co-existence. They should be taught that peace has no alternative and that peace brings about positive development. Government should also extend amnesty to all the militants in the country.

Wealthy Nigerians and international organizations should partly give back to Nigerians what Nigerian has been able to give them. In this case, they should assist government in the area of infrastructural development and employment opportunities. Added to this, government should ensure adoption of fair play and equity in the allocation of resources and positions. This will definitely go a long way to curtail or discourage the emergence of ethnic militia groups in the country.

Conclusion

The recurring security breaches and challenges in Nigeria is an ill-wind that blows nobody good. Every hand must be on deck, to ensure that Nigeria returns to the path of peace and stability.

Nigeria and Nigerians should believe in the slogan “No Peace, No Meaningful Development”. All Nigerians must be messengers of peace and there should be no blame game.

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