

RESURGENCE OF ARMED CONFLICT IN NIGERIA **AND HUMAN SECURITY DIMENSION**

Onu, Uzoma David*

Abstract

This paper examines the resurgence of armed conflict in Nigeria and its effects on human security. Apparently, Nigeria has a vicious cycle of armed conflicts running through religious prejudice, struggle for economic control and renewed call for secession. The fault lines between ethno-religion and economic control are replacing the political and ideological boundaries of the era of Civil war as the flash point for armed conflicts and bloodshed in Nigeria. But, the new wave of armed conflict in Nigeria runs along what are now known as the religious boundaries between Muslims and Christians in the north, renewed call by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-East and the Niger Delta Avengers in the South-South. This division is no longer on the line of Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa/Fulani in the north or south, instead it is war of religious dominance, resource control and secession. This paper used social conflict theory to examine the recurring armed conflicts in Nigeria and suggestions are made towards a solution to avoid these constant threats to the peace, security and oneness of Nigeria.

Keywords: Religious-Prejudice, Insecurity, Armed-Conflict and Human-Security.

* **Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Abuja, Nigeria**

Introduction

Nigeria is a country categorized by intense ethno-religious polarization and conflict. Its politics has entered into a new phase since May 29, 1999 when the military handed over power to the democratically elected government. This according to Mustapha (2004) indicates the “return of customary rivalries between religious divides and the incline of the ethnic groupings which brew the conflicting pulls of prejudices and insecurity among others in the country”. This problem is more pronounced among the majority tribes of Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa-Fulani, and among the adherents of the predominant religions: Islam and Christianity-Pape (2004).

The return to democracy in 1999 pushed Nigeria into high hopes that the country had finally overcome the problems of the early years of its independence but little had Nigerians relaxed to enjoy their new democracy that unhealthy rivalries and insecurity resurfaced. The fear of domination by one zone over the others, national integration, social identity, security, power struggle, minority question, devolution of powers, resource control among others which were problems of the past republics re-emerged. For example, the issue of resource control intensified under the military regimes and the poor handling of the issue led to emergence of militants in the oil rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria which takes a new dimension now. The Niger Delta Avengers as they are called now, is more deadly than ever. There are series of kidnappings, killings, bombing of gas pipelines in the region and these activities affect the exploration of crude oil, which is the major source of revenue generation for the government of Nigeria. Also, the issue of domination and call for secession by the Biafra has resurfaced in the South-East of the country. While the Boko Haram insurgency particularly in the north eastern part of Nigeria has resulted in the death of many people and shock the foundation of the country.

However, this paper uses the social conflict theory to analyze the human security implications of the resurgence of armed conflicts in Nigeria. This conflict theory as a social structure evaluates the conflict situation, assessing with a better understanding the resurgence of armed conflicts in Nigeria. The paper elucidates Nigeria’s security situation and continuous conflicts from a social relation point of view; and how social inequality propels conflicts. The paper established a direct link between dominance, deprivation, denial, frustration, aggression and resurgence of armed conflicts in Nigeria. As a way out, Nigeria’s economy and political institutions should be

restructured to improve the nature of social relations and redistribution of resources, in the country.

Conceptual Clarifications

Human Security:

Classically, the concept of security was related more to nation-state than to people. The concept of human security is an offshoot of traditional security which dominated the international political discourse at the end of the Cold War in 1990s. According to Adibe (1993) this constitutes “security expansionism” that is, the expansion of the notion of security beyond the traditional emphasis on defending a state against external aggression. Therefore, human security is a people security not territorial or state based. For most people, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Will they be tortured by a repressive state or victim of violence because of their state of origin? Will they and their families have enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will their streets and neighborhoods be safe from crime? Will their investments and property be safe from ethnic and religious violence? Will the oneness and sovereignty of Nigeria remain sacrosanct? These are pertinent questions arising from human security, since after the end of the Cold War. According to Porter (1995) “Human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced”. This implies that human security is not concerned with weapons but with human life and dignity. It is a universal concern, relevant to people everywhere, both the rich and the poor. There are many threats that are common to all people – such as unemployment, drug, crime, pollution and human right violations. Their intensity may differ from one part of the country (Nigeria) to another, but all these threats to human security are endemic, divesting, real and growing without attracting adequate attention.

Also, according to Porter (1995) human security is of two major components: freedom from fear and freedom from want, thus:

The founders of the U.N when considering security always gave equal weight to territories and to people. In 1945, the United States secretary of state reported to his government on the results of

the conference in San Francisco that set up the United Nations. He was quite specific on this point. The battle of people has to be fought on two fronts. The first is the security front where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of an enduring peace.

The implication of the above assertion for Nigeria is that the incursion of Boko Haram on the country since 2009, resurgence of IPOB and the Niger Delta Avengers in 2015 should change the country's perception about security, changing from an exclusive emphasis on territory to a much greater emphasis on the people, and from security of armament to security through sustainable human development. This is because the armed conflicts are not only war against the territorial integrity of Nigeria, but a human security challenge characterized with ethno-religious violence. According to Adibe (1993) "it is not a deterrent concept – the way territorial or military security is. Instead, human security is an integrative concept. It is embedded in a notion of solidarity among people it cannot be brought about through force with armies standing against armies or armies standing against civilians, it can happen only if we agree that development must involve all people not minding their religion, ethnicity or state of origin".

Armed Conflict

To many social critics such as Francis (2007), "Conflict is the pursuit of incompatible interest and goals by different groups. Therefore, armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interest and goals." It is continually inevitable product of cohabitation or co-existence of individuals or people in society struggling for limited values or resources as against countless desires. In his conceptual approach, Bakut (2006) defines conflict as "the pursuit of incompatible goals or interests by different groups or individuals." According to him, all humans or groups of humans have goals and interests which may be different with the goals and interests of other groups.

Sometimes, armed conflicts become inevitable when different groups confront each other in the process of achieving their goals. Conflict on its own is not always bad but the negative action taken to resolve the conflict that represents the threat to peace. Bakut (2006) argues that the term

“negative here connotes action that entails injuring other people or destroying their property in the attempt to resolve the conflict: for example, the use of arms (armed conflict) to resolve the conflict in one’s favour which may result in mass killings, murder or even genocide of innocent and unarmed civilians.” Therefore, what differentiates conflict and armed conflict, is the use of force or arms to resolve conflicting interests in any society.

Causes of armed conflicts in Nigeria

The following are said to be the major causes of conflicts in Nigeria:

Ethno-Political factor: Since its independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed series of armed conflicts that are ethnically and politically motivated. According to Nnoli (1980) “Nigerian politics have presented an image of a struggle among the various ethnic groups for a division of national resources. Most Nigerians have come to believe that unless their ‘own men’ are in government they are unable to secure those socio-economic amenities that are disbursed by the government.” This constant struggle for political positions has intensified polarization of the country into sub national ethnic and sub-ethnic cultures, widely separated in terms of identity and loyalty, is encouraging armed conflict in Nigeria. Since the country’s return to democracy in 1999, Nigeria is under armed conflicts that have ethnic origins. For instance, Sharia/Islamic law was introduced in 1999 in the northern part of the country as check on Obasanjo (southerner) led administration; Niger Delta militants came in very hot in 2009 during Yar’Adua (northerner) led administration, while Boko Haram took its turn in 2011, during Jonathan (southerner) led administration and in Buhari’s (northerner) administration, there are renewed call by IPOB for secession and Niger Delta Avengers from the southern part of Nigeria. Apparently, the armed conflict in Nigeria is essentially provoked by ethnic sentiments as stated above.

Religious factors: The twisting of religion and ethnicity in Nigeria is deep and dangerous. Of the three major ethnic groups, the Hausa-Fulani in the north is mostly Muslim, the Igbo and Yoruba in the south are mostly Christian (although there is a significant number of Yoruba Muslims). Given the regional domination of Nigerian politics at independence by these major ethnic groups, the structures of the country are built on this religious divide since independence. The introduction of *shari’a* in 1999 as the official legal system of most states in the north-west

geopolitical zone heightened the security situation in the north and subsequently the emergence of Boko Haram in 2009 worsened security wire of the entire country. Obviously, religion will continue to divide Nigeria so long as political leaders are chosen along this line.

Economic factor: the nature of economic relations in Nigeria is a major reason for resurging armed conflicts in the country. The economy fails to keep pace with the needs of the teeming population as result of an inherited mismanaged and decaying economic system, steady over-dependence on oil, poor foreign investment, a bloated public sector, and pervasive corruption in high places. The revenue allocation predicament is raining down hard on the oil-producing communities where most of the violence takes place. For instance, the resurgence of Niger Delta Avengers is basically for resource control. This shows the relationship between means of production and armed conflicts. According to Marx (1866), that "social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources...Individuals and resources, in turn, are influenced by these structures and by the unequal distribution of power and resources in the society" Niger Delta region being the repository of the country's oil economy, has long-suffering oil communities impoverished as result of the exploitation of the region's wealth by successive Nigerian governments and international oil companies. From the perspective of frustration-aggression approach, Niger Delta is prone to constant armed conflict to control its rich oil zone.

Theoretical Framework

Social conflict theory is adopted in this study. It is associated to Karl Marx as the father, which is a component of the social paradigms. It maintains that social structures are created through conflict between people with differing interests and resources. Individuals and resources, in turn, are influenced by these structures and by the "unequal distribution of power and resources in the society"-Marx (1866). This conflict theory as a social framework captures the conflict situation, assessing with a better understanding the resurgence of armed conflicts in Nigeria. It has an overwhelming application in this study because of its social values for human interactions in any given society. This theoretical framework explains Nigeria's security situation and continuous conflicts from a social production point of view; and how social inequality propels conflicts. Obviously, there is a direct link between dominance, deprivation, denial, frustration and

aggression and why people go to war. So, armed conflicts are attributable to the nature of social relations and redistribution of resources, as evident in Nigeria.

Impact of armed conflicts on human security in Nigeria

The security challenges has also greatly changed and encompassed threats that go far beyond aggression on Nigerian state but on the people. These threats to human security are long but our discussion is centred on four main categories: economic security, food security, personal security and community security.

Economic Security: According to Adibe (1993), “Economic security requires an assured basic income usually from productive and remunerative work or in the last resort from some publicly financed safety net”. But only about a quarter of the Nigeria’s population may at present be economically secure in this sense. Many people in Nigeria today, feel insecure because jobs are increasingly difficult to find, investment, business and markets have been sheltered by the violent attacks of Boko Haram, IPOB and Niger Delta Avengers in the past years. The number of jobs in industrial sectors or oil exploration in Nigeria depreciates on the daily basis and the labour force also diminished drastically because of armed conflicts across the country. According to the World Investment Report (WIR) 2013, FDI flows into Nigeria dropped by 21% in just one year — from \$8.9 billion in 2011 to \$7 billion in 2012. The revenue generation in the entire country, according to Federal Inland Revenue Service Gauge (Jan-March 2016) has dropped astronomically to the point of shutting down its offices in the affected states. By the end of 2014 over 2.5 million people were reported to have fled northern east Nigeria because of the Boko Haram bombing in the area and the first quarter of 2016, about 20 major oil pipelines have been blown up by Niger Delta Avengers causing many Multinational Companies to shut down their facilities in the affected region, while in the South-East, there is an ongoing gun battle between the Joint Military Taskforce and IPOB dragging down commercial activities in the region. One the effects of these armed conflicts is mass retrenchment of workers and internal displacement of people in the Nigeria.

According to NEMA’s report on July 05, 2015 Boko Haram displaces over 1.4m in North East: “That Boko Haram insurgency and incessant communal clashes among various ethnic groups in

the North East sub-region of the country have displaced 1,385,298, million persons in five states of the sub-region. The number of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), were contained in the June, 2015 Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) released by International Organisation for Migration and NEMA to newsmen in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital.”

Made famous earlier this year after kidnapping more than 200 girls from the Chibok region in the northern state of Borno, Boko Haram has been operating in the sparsely populated north for more than five years. At the moment, the only economic impact the group has had is slowing down production in a region that is already struggling for survival. Agriculture accounts for roughly a fifth of the nation’s GDP and employs more than 35 percent of youths aged 18 to 35, and is starting to show signs of strain. It’s concentrated in the northern states, which are also those with the highest poverty rates and the majority of Boko Haram’s activity-NEMA June, 2015.

Food Security: Food security implies that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. This requires not just enough food to go round; it requires that people have ready access to food - that they have an entitlement “to food by growing it themselves, by buying it or by taking advantage of a public food distribution system. People can still starve even when enough funds are available without enough food supply to go round - like the war situation in northern Nigeria.

The war situation in northern Nigeria has debased the volume of food supply from the area, such as fish, beans, and tomatoes among others. In fact, this has created abnormal demand and supply curve, where demand outweighs supply, pushing the cost of food up astronomically over the last two years. Farming activities are diminishing in the north – east Nigeria as Hoko Haram attacks remained unabated. It is a sad indication of inadequate access to food, particularly for southern Nigeria who depends heavily on the northern Nigeria for supply of vegetables, fruits and cereal. According to Reuters (2011) “In some parts of the north, the security situation has affected farmland production and that has led to some increase in food prices”. Food prices rose 9.8 percent in June, and inflation hit 8.2 percent, the highest in 10 months, according to Nigeria’s national statistics bureau-“The effects of conflict on the agricultural sector are largely due to the risk of being attacked by insurgents,”

According to Federal Inland Revenue Service Gauge (Jan-March 2016), there is a disparity between north and south in terms of revenue collection. “That its economic rebasing shows that revenue is now doubled at 51% up from 26% in southern part of the country but Agriculture is down from 33% to 22% in the northern part since 2014 because of the attacks of Boko Haram in the region”. Government on its part is trying in many ways of increasing food supply across the country through the silos system but the scheme has a limited impact. This is simply because access to food comes from access to meaningful livelihood. Work and assured income have all gone down in the northern with a negative impact on the southern part of the country that has a long standing trade and industrial interdependency relationship.

Personal Security: The resurgence of armed conflicts in Nigerian puts many lives at greater risk than ever before. For many people, the greatest source of anxiety is crime, particularly violent crime. Criminal element contribute to the erosion of the rule of law when they harness public institutive to facilitate their illicit activities. Crime rate has increase astronomically as Boko Haram activities, the IPOB and Niger Delta Avengers attacks knocked the youths out of school, conscripted them into their folds; these youths have taken to drug trafficking and other vices as reported by Crime Watch 2016 that “crime in Nigeria in 2015 went up by 45 percent. In second quarter of 2015, the murder rate in the country especially the affected regions in Nigeria doubled”.

The gruesome murder of people both in the north and the south is in the increase and most affected are woman and children. Many women are now bread winners as the Boko Haram violent attacks rendered them untimely widows with many children to tender. “In north – east Nigeria more than 7,500 women have been reported raped by both the Boko Haram and the military and several harassments on their job are very common”-NEMA June 2015. While children who should be the most protected in any society are subject to many abuse and untold hardship in the north. In northern Nigeria, over 20,000 children are being conscripted into suicide bombing. Nearly, 10000 children are reported dead from gunshot wounds. Poverty level in the north compels many children to take to the street as beggars or take on heavy work at too young an age – often at great cost to their health. Report has it that over 2 million spend their lives on the street and over a double of the number involve in child prostitution in northern

Nigeria-Reuter 2015. This ugly development threatens human security in northern Nigeria and shatters peaceful coexistence.

Community Security: In most African cultures, most people derive security from their membership of an extended family system, of a group, of a cult, of a community, or of an organization that can provide a cultural identity and a reassuring set of values to them. Such groups also offer practical support to the members mostly in a distressed time. For example protection to weaker members and many tribal societies work on the principle that heads of households are entitled to enough land to support their family – and land is distributed accordingly as need arises. Even though, the extended family is now less likely to offer support to a member in distress, it remains a major guaranteeing front for human security in a polarized society like Nigeria. Despite that traditional languages and cultures are withering under the onslaught of mass media and globalization, many oppressive practices are being fought by people's organization, extended family system and through legal actions. Traditional communities and family groups also form a formidable security network to wade off much more direct attack from invader or attacker. But attacks from the Boko Haram, Niger Delta Avengers and IPOB on populace of Nigeria have dislocated from their communal living and weakened the traditional security network.

In north-east states for instance, for about three years now marriage ceremonies and other traditional activities are contracted outside the states for fear of attacks from Boko Haram insurgents. This has resulted in an erosion of community values and principles. Many young people from the volatile northern Nigeria have vowed never to return to their native communities. Great number of them fled their homes and cultures to new ones without a foreseeable hope of a return. The situation has increased ethnic tensions in their new communities, often over limited access to opportunities – whether to social service from the communities or to jobs from the market. As a result, about half of the communities in northern Nigeria lost out in community's development initiative, recently they experienced inter – ethnic strife as they are dislocated to strange communities and cultures. Ethnic clashes often have brutal results. According to NEMA's report on July 05, 2015 Boko Haram displaces over 1.4m in North East Nigeria.

Since 2013, crime reporters report many unlawful detention and imprisonment of innocent people by Boko Haram which attracted military intervention. On the other hand, the military also are cited as agents / the perpetrators of human right violations in both northern and southern Nigeria. One of the most useful indicators of insecurity in any community is the priority the government accords military strength- since government sometimes use armies to repress their own people. Arguments can be advanced for the use of armies to repress Boko Haram, but caution should be applied basically to avoid the unsuspecting innocent Nigeria being subjugated to untold humiliations and intimidations by the armies in the course of discharging their called duties. Along different routes, especially in the north, government is more concerned about its military establishment than the people, this imbalance shows up in the ratio of military budget spending to social development, yet nobody bothers to report the mayhem this military unleash on innocent civilians around the country. Travellers along Abuja – Lokoja or Abuja-Kano routes may not totally narrate their ordeals as they traverse to their different destinations on daily basis. Life is worthless and short in the hands of the military, although more in the hands of Boko Haram, both are agents of death and repressions in most northern states.

According to UNHCR March 2014, “Nigerians fleeing Boko Haram’s relentless terror, Gombe state’s capital has accepted hundreds of internally displaced people from the neighbouring states of Adamawa, Borno and Yobe. Extreme violence has led some 250,000 civilians to flee their homes and find refuge in safer areas, staying mainly with host families”. As the world’s attention has focused on Boko Haram’s kidnapping of more than 300 schoolgirls in the north-eastern Nigerian town of Chibok, other aspects of terror have been largely ignored. For instance, its brutal violence has caused significant forced displacement in the north-east of the country and beyond.

Concluding Remarks

The voracious armed conflicts by different militant groups, (Boko Haram, IPOB and Niger Delta Avengers) across the country is worrisome and threatening, not only to human security but to continuous existence of Nigeria. These armed conflicts are largely influenced by religion, economic strive, ethnic identity and political maneuvering. The worst is the Boko Haram

involves in suicide attacks, despite the fact that suicide terrorism is common in Islamic countries but not all modern suicide insurgents are Moslems. More than half of all suicide attacks across the world are carried out by new converts. Therefore, Nigerian government should not just concentrate on Muslims alone but attention should be given to the converts from other religious groups. According to Pape (2004:45), “the world's leader in suicide terrorism was the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, a Marxist group that is completely secular and that recruits from Hindus.” Undoubtedly, the resurgence of militant groups and their subsequent violent confrontations on the state are a direct consequence of the failure of successive governments in Nigeria to sincerely address cyclical social prejudices and human security that threaten its statehood. Because of this perceived social imbalance and injustice, every ethnic nationality or religious group struggles to survive by taking undue advantage of Nigeria’s security lacuna. For instance, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) renewed call for the sovereign state of Biafra or the call for resource control by the Niger delta militants, are all evidence of ill-structured federalism in Nigeria.

Without justifying violence, naturally many people become outraged when they are mistreated on the basis of ethnicity, religion, politics and resource control and they are prone to aggressive attacks. Therefore, Nigerian government should make an urgent step to address the unbearable economic oppressions and other social injustices people suffer in the country. People should be given sense of belonging in terms of revenue sharing and political participation. The economically devastating conflict in the Niger Delta is due to the perception that its oil money is being used to develop other parts of the country, and not to benefit the local communities. And in the *northern* states, the right to live by the chosen faith has to be unconditionally instituted.

The way forward

Therefore, this paper has proffered the following recommendations as the way forward:

❖ **Concerning religious motivated violence**, government should through workable policies and programmes discourage sacred terror, adherents of great faiths and religious cults that are placing violence at the heart of their beliefs. For instance, the use of hijabs, blocking of streets and main roads, uncontrolled loud speakers in the churches and mosques should be

banned completely. Government sponsorship of pilgrims to holy lands- Mecca and Jerusalem should be prohibited, because pilgrimage is personal and private.

❖ **Boko Haram is a threat to the unison of Nigeria**, it undermines peace and security, human rights and sustainable development within the country and its neighbouring countries. Government should discourage religious extremism by improving on its deliverables such as adequate security, early defensive attacks on intending militias not minding the religious backgrounds.

❖ **Restructuring of the country**, Nigeria's government should restructure the institutions and structures of the country by addressing the question of true federalism and revenue sharing to accommodate the different ethnic groups in the country.

❖ **Mobilizing the security operatives**, the security operatives should be mobilized, ammunitions procured for fighting of insurgency and adequate training should be given to them on intelligence gathering and preventive measures that are traditionally understood across the country.

❖ **For the IPOB**, the present government should put an end to the wanton destruction of lives and properties in the South-Eastern of Nigeria by conducting referendum as a matter of democratization process.

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