
The Violence in a Multi-Cultural Nigeria: Root Causes, Implications and Way Forward

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Abstract

Violence in Nigeria has a negative implication for national integration and development. This paper, which anchors on realistic group conflict theory, and theory of justice, investigates issue of violence in Nigeria. It first identifies the root causes of violence, followed by discussion of its implication, and finally suggests way forward. Data evidences are from secondary source and current happenings in Nigeria. Among the root causes of violence identified are: ethnicity/multiculturalism, poverty, and religion. To remove fear and mutual distrust among the different ethnic nationalities, the Nigerian government should first release all the freedom fighters held in prison custody and other confined places, and seriously consider the reasons for their agitations; all citizens of Nigeria must be given equal opportunity rather than regarding some as first class citizens and some as second class citizens. Government should be sincere in implementing the G3Rs of genuine reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration; and harken to the clamour for restructuring Nigeria, make prices of commodities affordable, and punish indulgers in religious violence notwithstanding their ethnic affiliation.

Keywords: ethnicity, insecurity, multiculturalism, multilingualism, violence

1. Introduction

The rate of violence in the world has become so alarming that it has occupied a centre stage in many discourses. Afolabi (2009, p. 24) submits that Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau were for decades crippled by conflicts and civil strife that have caused much violence and incessant killings. Today, violent conflict has spread to so many other countries of the world like wild fire, including Africa. Apart from incessant killings, other aftermaths of violence are destruction of property, displacement of people internally, increase in small arms and light weapons, human and drug trafficking as well as illegal exploitation of natural resources and banditry (Afolabi, 2009, p. 25; Marc et al, 2015). A most recent development is Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has posed a threat of third world war. In Nigeria, there is insecurity as people now live in fear of not being sure of what would happen next and who would be a victim of any violent situation or security challenge. It has become almost very difficult in Nigeria for the citizens to travel on road from one part of the country to another for business transactions because of fear of being maimed, killed or kidnapped for ransom by terrorists and armed bandits. Cases abound of how commercial buses and private cars are being hijacked and the passengers taken to unknown places with some ending up being killed or released on payment of ransom. There is no gainsaying that a lot of capital and human resources have been wasted in Nigeria due to violence.

Violence is defined by Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English as 'a violent behaviour that is intended to hurt or kill somebody'. The end result of any violence is, therefore, injury to someone or even death. Violence can occur with an intention of forceful achievement of something or it can be a result of accumulated injury that has become very unbearable.

When violence is not checked or properly handled, insecurity sets in and there would be lack of trust. According to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary of Current English, insecurity is a noun derived from the verb "insecure", which has to do with one not being confident about oneself or one's relationship with others. Insecurity is the inability to trust oneself as being safe in any situation or relationship/association/union with other people; the feeling by someone or group of not being protected.

There are many facets of violence, and they are: domestic violence, ethnic violence, political violence, economic violence, and religious violence. Domestic violence is defined as a kind of abusive behaviour in any intimate relationship that is used by one partner against another in order to gain or maintain power and control (US Department of Justice, 2023). This includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic, psychological or technological actions or threats of actions or coercive behaviour exhibited with the intent to influence an intimate partner. Ethnic violence, according to Mohapatra (2022), is a conflict that relates with one or all ethnic parties. The scholar points out that this kind of conflict is catastrophic and includes genocide, mass migrations, economic sufferings, and environmental damage. This view agrees with Završek and Zorn (2011), who had earlier viewed ethnic conflict as being politically or socially motivated and involving one or more groups, and also noted that all ethnic conflicts have a common structure of social inequality. Political violence is a form of violence relations and crisis of interest, goal and ambitions between individuals, groups, and political structures in the in the process of attaining power and keeping it (Johnmary, 2012). It occurs with the struggle for power, and that is reflected by Bozonelos et al (2022) who posit that political violence involves the use of physical harm which is motivated by political intentions. They further identify

those seeking to challenge the socio-political status quo as the perpetrators of this kind of violence. Economic violence, in the opinion of Ohlan (2021), represents a state of control over the capacity of an individual to obtain, utilize and keep up economic assets. For religious violence, it is a term that covers issues that have religion as either the subject or the object of violent behaviour (Wellman and Tokuno, 2004:291). Sulaiman (2016) concurs with them where he refers to religious violence as a threat or actual implementation of acts which are capable of inflicting physical, emotional or psychological injury on a person or a group of persons for religious ends. Notwithstanding all these kinds of violence, this paper focuses attention on ethnic, political, economic and religious violence in Nigeria. It discusses the root cause(s) of violence in Nigeria, the implications and way forward. Next section treats the theoretical orientation that guides the study.

2. Theoretical Orientation

This paper is anchored on Sherif's (1966) realistic group conflict theory (RGCT) and Rawls' (1971; 1999) theory of justice. The realistic group conflict theory proposes that the existence of conflicting goals (i.e. competition) among differing social groups breeds intergroup conflict, but the existence of mutually desired superordinate goals attainable only through intergroup cooperation reduces conflict (Jackson, 1993). The theory identifies the root cause of intergroup hostility as well as how the intergroup hostility could be resolved, and it adopts a holistic approach in dealing with the issue of intergroup behaviour. Following from this theory, one group mores, norms, and routines are decisively affected by relationship with other groups (Sherif & Sherif, 1964), and the overall favourability of intergroup interactions is determined by reciprocal interests and goals of the groups involved (Sherif &

Sherif, 1979)¹; such factors are identified by Jackson (1993) as real or imagined threat to the safety of the group, economic interests, political advantage, military consideration, or social status. Sherif notes that once a group engages in reciprocally competitive and frustrating activities to the extent that the gain of desired goals by one group results in the loss for the other group, this other group will become unfavourably stereotyped. Continuing, the scholar says that the persistence of such stereotype would lead to a high degree of intergroup social distance.

Rawls' (1971; 1999) theory of justice, on the other hand, is a theory of equity and fairness which proposes that peace is a product of a shared public conception of justice, and that for tranquillity to exist in any society, there should be equity and fairness in the distribution of goods. The theory is considered as a fair choice model in which individuals will hypothetically choose mutually acceptable principles of justice, equity, and liberty in their social interactions (Ndeche & Iroye, 2022). The absence of justice, equity, and liberty in social interactions eventually results into hostile relations. The theory of justice supports egalitarian society with specific political arrangements that will foster atmosphere of equal rights of individuals to the basic liberties, equal opportunities (Rawls, 1971); and the principles of justice inherent in the theory guarantees the rights derived from these principles (Rawls, 1999).

The foregoing discussion of the realistic group conflict theory and the theory of justice indicates that the two theories have a point of convergence. They both support a harmonious relationship.

3. Methodology

¹ This is disclosed by Jackson (1993)

This paper has relied on secondary source for data/information, especially from the newspapers and magazines. As there are frequent violent activities in Nigeria, the paper also has relied on the recent happenings some of which are reported by the media. The data/information enable us to identify the root cause(s) of violence, followed by a discussion of the implication of violence and suggestions on way forward. The argument postulated in this paper are based on two theories: the realistic group conflict theory of Sherif (1966), and Rawls' (1971; 1999) theory of justice.

4. Root Causes of Violence in Nigeria

Violence is viewed as an aftermath of things/society not working well with few persons being rich while majority of the people are poor, and there is no evenly distribution of the commonwealth of a nation, usually in an ethnically plural society (Varshney, 2009). This suggests that ethnicity is one of the root causes of violence and insecurity. There are many multi-ethnic and multicultural nations, such as: Nigeria, Indonesia, former Yugoslavia, and India. Nigeria, for examples, has an estimated number of 450 languages; in Indonesia, there are about 800 languages (Translators without Borders, 2022); while India has 22 constitutionally recognized languages and more than 99 non-scheduled languages (International Mother Language Day, 2022). Multi-ethnicity or multilingualism also leads to multiple cultures since language and culture hinge together. The link between them is clearly evident in Mbalisi's (2017) view on ethnicity as a social phenomenon involving interactions of a social group (referring to ethnic setting) with a communal character and not always homogenous. This view suggests that ethnicity deals with an ethnic group with common identity, the same social setting with the same or minor differing cultural traits. For example, the Igbo people of Nigeria are members

of the same communal setting within which are minor differences that result into different varieties of the Igbo language and minor variations in Igbo culture. Onitsha Igbo variety would realise the phoneme /l/ where Owerri Igbo variety realises /r/, as illustrated in (1).

	Onitsha	Owerri
(1) i.	òlòma	òròma ‘orange’
ii.	ọlụ	ọrụ ‘work’
iii.	ala	ara ‘breast/madness’
iv.	alụ □	arụ □ ‘abomination’

Likewise, other ethnic groups in the country; such as Hausa, Yoruba, Efik, Ibibio, Ijaw, Nupe, Gwari, and so on, have some minor differences. The members of these individual ethnic groups are bonded by a common ancestry, language, belief system and tend to present a common front in struggling for the well-being of their members.

One identified problem of ethnicity and multiculturalism is mutual hatred and distrust among members of the different ethnic groups (see also Obi, 2017; Ugochukwu & Ogwudile, 2017; Uwaezuoke, 2018). This problem is a result of conflicting goals (i.e. competition) existing among the differing ethnic groups that in turn breeds conflict as postulated by the realistic groups conflict theory. In a multi-ethnic and multicultural country, some of the indigenous languages gain popularity due to certain factors, such as: government language policy, the level of development of the language, the exposure of the speakers of the language, and the numerical strength of the speakers (Uwaezuoke, 2018). This is the case with the Igbo, Hausa and Yoruba languages in Nigeria, which the National Policy on Education (NPE) considers as majority languages; while other languages are regarded as minority

languages. The dominance of these three ethnic groups in Nigeria has also led to the use of the acronym “WAZOBIA” (*WA* for Yoruba, *ZO* for Hausa, and *BIA* for Igbo; each meaning ‘come’) to represent the three major languages. This scenario is viewed with contempt by members of other ethnic groups. As a result of ethnicity and multilingualism/multiculturalism, most often, one hears such comments in (2) from people of different ethnic groups against one another.

- (2) i. **shege nya-miri banza**
 bastard give-water nonentity
 bastard Igbo people useless
 ‘Igbo, irresponsible people’
- ii. **omọ Igbo, aje-okuta ma mo mi**
 person Igbo eater-stone NEG drink water
 Igbo man, eater of stone not drinks water
 ‘Igbo man, eater of solid food without drinking
water’
- iii. **ndi ofe mmanu a abia-kwa**
 people soup oil this come-Perf
 these oil soup people have come
 ‘These Yoruba people have come’
- iv. **ndi mgbati mgbati a na**
aghugho
 people onomatopoeic these and cunny,
crafty
 people Yoruba these and cunny, crafty
 ‘These Yoruba people and their craftiness’

v. **aboki** **a** **abja-kwa**
my friends this come-Perf
foolish this have come
‘These foolish people have come’

vi. **aboki** **metusa**
my friend pollute.Perf.
my friend have polluted
‘Hausa man has polluted’

(2i) is a direct abuse of an Igbo person by a Hausa person. *Shege* and *banza* are Hausa words and they mean ‘bastard’ and ‘nonentity’ respectively, while *nyamiri* is an adulterated form of an Igbo expression *nye m mmiri* ‘give me water’. Here, the Igbo man is perceived as being irresponsible. For Yoruba people, they perceive the Igbo people as people that like eating solid food, and that they can do so without bothering to take water. So in (2ii), the expression is used by Yoruba people to abuse the Igbo people. In (2iii), *ofe mmanu* ‘oil soup’ is used to refer to Yoruba people based on the fact that they put plenty of oil in their soup. Whenever an Igbo person wants to refer to a Yoruba person without mentioning the tribe, he/she would prefer to say *ndi ofe mmanu*. *mgbat mgbati* is onomatopoeic sound produced by Yoruba people whenever they speak the Yoruba language. As used in (2iv), it refers to the Yoruba people. *aboki* in (2v) means ‘my friend’ in Hausa, but for the context it is used by Igbo people, it derogatorily refers to someone who behaves abnormally. However, in (2vi), it refers to the Hausa tribe. Unlike (2i,iii &vi), where all the words used are from the same language, Hausa, Igbo, and Hausa respectively; there is mixture of codes from two languages in (2ii,iv&v). The Yoruba and Igbo

languages are combined in (2ii&iv), and in (2v) is a combination of the Igbo and Hausa languages.

Ethnicity and multiculturalism breeds nepotism and corruption, and leads to throwing of merit into the dustbin. Once a member of an ethnic enclave gets into power, it most often becomes an opportunity to better the lots of the person's ethnic nationality, even at the detriment of others. There is no justice as the people of different ethnic groups are not given equal opportunities. Government policies and appointments are most often planned in such a way that a particular ethnic group is favoured. This instance is reported of Buhari's administration in Nigeria by Ede (2021) in the Punch Newspaper. Ede reports that the Governor of Benue State, Samuel Ortom, had condemned President Buhari's lopsided appointments, nepotism and the acts of sectionalism which tends to divide Nigeria more than ever. In a multicultural/multilingual nation, whatever policy being instituted by government is usually critically studied by members of other ethnic groups to ensure that it does not undermine their existence. Leaders are also not considered for election based on their individual merits, but based on their language and ethnic affiliation. For example, in Nigeria's 2023 general election, despite that the outgoing President Buhari is from the North, Atiku and his many Northern elites in the People's Democratic Party (PDP) insisted that the President should be from the North instead of having it zoned to the South east that has not tested the office for long. Likewise in the All Progressives Congress (APC), Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, with the support of leaders of the party, insisted that it was his turn to become the President when it was a Yoruba man who handed over to Yar'Adua/Goodluck. Peter Obi seemed to have broken that jinx through his "obedient movement" that have supporters from all parts of Nigeria. There is also imbalance in the distribution of the wealth of the nation among

members of the differing ethnic groups. This scenario has often resulted into series of agitations and violence from members of other ethnic groups not in power, as a way of attracting government attention. No wonder Schneider and Turshen (2011) had observed that political violence intertwines closely with economic violence because political status often determines economic opportunity, and further identify denial of citizenship or representation, wrongful detention or enslavement, forceful eviction, and statelessness as forms of political violence.

Violence has engulfed Africa and, indeed, West Africa. Annan (2014) avers that the major challenge confronting West Africa is how to end violent conflicts. In West Africa, between 2011 and 2019, the number of violent events jumped from 581 to 3,617; and the number of associated fatalities surged too, rising from 3,361 recorded in 2011 to 11,911 in 2019 (Gurría, 2020). Also, the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in 2021 reported that terrorism and violent extremism are arguably Africa's greatest security threats in 2021. In Africa and indeed West Africa, including Nigeria, violent situations are usually either ethnic, political, economic or religious. For example, in Indonesia where, in 1998, the SARA policy which forbids mobilisation or discussion of ethnic differences in the public realm lost its legitimacy giving room for horrendous group violence that took place on ethno communal lines (Bertrand, 2004, p. 3). The former Yugoslavia is another example, where there are ethnic and national identities with ethnic rivalries that so hobbled the Balkans in the first half of the twentieth century (Varshney, 2009). Nigerian has had very ugly scenarios, as its foundation had been resting on violence and insecurity. The history of violence and insecurity in Nigeria predates colonialism, and the ugly menace continues till today; it has, in fact, reached a crescendo. This is well captured by Adebajo and Ayodeji (2020), who inform that the origin of violence

and insecurity in Nigeria dates back to pre-colonial period, which was characterised by uncertainty and fear among the people due to inter and intra-tribal conflicts that made captives to be fed into the slave trade industry. Even the British colonisers did not help matters. In fact, the scenario during the colonial rule is explained thus:

Insecurity continued with colonialism and its characteristic oppressive rule. The manner in which the British colonisers conquered some parts of Nigeria, particularly the North, created an environment of insecurity in the society. Merging different ethnic groups existing independently further created atmosphere of tension and violence in Nigeria (Adebajo & Ayodeji, 2020).

Nigeria as a country is bedevilled with disharmonious relationship and mutual suspicion existing among the different ethnic groups. This has become a cog in the wheel of progress of the country and has even threatened the country's sovereignty. Achebe reports on Nigeria's experience before 1970s.

The social malaise in Nigerian society was political corruption. The structure of the country was such that there was an inbuilt power struggles among the ethnic groups, and of course those who were in power wanted to stay in power. The easiest and simplest way to retain it, even in a limited area, was to appeal to tribal sentiments, so they were egregiously exploited in the 1950's and 1960's (Achebe, 2012, p. 51).

From 1970 till today, Nigeria has not stopped living with this bad experience. Uwaezuoke (2021) blames the Nigerian leaders whom he has described as non-nationalists, who are not bothered with how to unify the country and bring about the needed development. He notes that Nigeria is addressed as “the giant of Africa” without anything to show for it and has refused to develop amidst abundant human and mineral resources. He points out that the myopic nature of the Nigerian leadership has made them to be so much bedevilled with ethnic sentiment that they could not harness the country’s abundant human and mineral resources for the good of the country, noting that hunger persists in Nigeria with the citizens finding it hard to eke a living. It is for this same reason that Kalu (1987, p. 192) had earlier canvassed for the leadership at the national level to be marked by competence for integrating diverse groups into a coherent national entity denominated in national consciousness.

The Nigeria/Biafra war of 1967–1970 was a result of ethno-political rivalry which made the Igbo to feel unsafe in the Nigerian Union and, therefore, had to seek for self-realisation. After the war, the Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon, declared “No Victor, No Vanquished” and embarked on “RRR” policy of Reconciliation, Reconstruction and Reintegration; but he was unfaithful with its implementation. For example, after the war, not minding the amount of money an Igbo man declared, every Igbo man was given only £20. Neither had any government after Gowon bothered to implement the policy. Also, since the war, there has been a conspiracy by other major ethnic groups against an Igbo man becoming a President of Nigeria. The problem of ethnicity/multiculturalism has subsisted in Nigeria and there have been a series of agitations by members of different ethnic nationalities for the dissolution of the Nigerian Union. The Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra

(MASSOB) led by Chief Ralph Uwazuruike, and later the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) led by Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, have been agitating for a Biafra nation. There is also the Ijaw Peoples Movement (IPM) fighting for the emancipation of the Ijaw nation. The activities of the Niger Delta militants in Nigeria through MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta) between 2006 and 2009 when they were granted amnesty cannot be easily forgotten. The insurgency of the Islamic terrorist group, the Boko Haram, in Nigeria erupted in 2009. This terrorist group has its base in the Sambisa forest; and the group has been ravaging the North East region of Nigeria. Their main stock-in-trade is suicide bombing of public places, such as: churches, mosques, markets, public buildings, and so on. They also engage in kidnapping of school children as well as burning of houses and villages. Through their terrorist activities, many villages have been overrun with scores of villagers killed or maimed or chased out of their villages to the internally displaced peoples' camps (IDPC). In April 14-15, 2014, the Boko Haram abducted 276 female students (mostly Christians) of Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, in Borno State, Nigeria. The Amnesty International (2021) reports that irrespective of the escape or later release of most of these girls, more than 100 of them had remained in captivity. The situation has remained the same till 2022 (africanews.com, 30/7/2022). Five other abductions of school children are reported by the Amnesty International from December 2020 to March 2021, after that of the Chibok in 2014; which are: the rounding up of 300 students of Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Kastina State, northwest Nigeria and marching them to an unknown destination by hundreds of gunmen, who broke into seven of their dormitories and held them in captivity for six nights, from Friday 11th December, 2020, until their release on 17th December, 2020; on 17th February, 2021, 27 students of

Government Science Secondary School in Kagara, Niger State, were abducted by gunmen from their dormitory in the early hours of the morning, and were released on 27th February; hundreds of school girls were abducted from Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State, on 26th February, 2021, and after four days in captivity, 279 students were released on 2nd March, 2021; in March 2021, two different schools were attacked in Kaduna State, northwest Nigeria, including the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization where 30 students were seized on 11th March, 2021. The Amnesty International notes:

These attacks against schoolchildren, teachers and school buildings as a show a callous disregard for the right to life and the right to education by both the bandits and insurgents on one hand, and the Nigerian authorities who have failed to end these horrifying attacks, on the other (The Amnesty International, 2021).

Marama (2022) reports that the Boko Haram invaded Kautikari village in Chibok Local Government Area of Borno State and killed the traditional ruler's son, Mr Bulama Wadir, and two internally displaced persons (IDPs) being hosted in the community. He discloses that the community had on 1st January, 2022, been invaded with over 10 people mostly women and children abducted and largest churches razed.

There is incessant violence between the Fulani herders and farmers in the North West and North Central parts of Nigeria with many people killed and many wounded. The Fulani herders raid unsuspecting villages, loot, kill and burn peoples' houses as well as displace the villagers from their ancestral homes and farmlands. The raids sometimes witness a reprisal attack by the farmers. Ojewale

(2021) writes that in the last decade, 1,412 incidence of conflict occurred in the Northern region with 7,399 deaths recorded across the North Central States of Benue, Plateau, Kogi, Nasarawa, Niger, Kwara and FCT; pointing out that the escalating violence has deeply affected the local economy with Nigerian government losing an estimated \$13.7 billion in revenue annually. Agbakwuru, (2021) reports the killing of 45 farmers and scores of people wounded at Lafia, Obi and Awe Local Government Areas of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Aljazeera News (2021, December) also reports on that and attributes the problem to struggle for rights of grazing and water as a result of drought, population growth, the expansion of sedentary farming into communal areas and poor governance. It notes that the conflict has taken a religious dimension as the herders are Muslims, while the farmers are mainly Christian (Religious violence). Joined to the herders/farmers conflict are the activities of armed bandits across North West and North Central, who kill and abduct school children and travellers for ransom. Olufemi (2021a) reports on how armed bandits attacked and killed people in Niger and Sokoto States in September 2021; they attacked Muya Local Government Area and Sabon Birni Local Government Area killing people, abducting women and setting houses ablaze. They burnt people in their rooms and those who attempted to escape were slaughtered. Similar incident occurred between July 31 and August 2, 2021, in Maiyanga, Kpachudu, Kpetenvie, Nche-Tahu, Tafi gana, DTV, Zahwra and Kishasha villages in Bassa Local Government Area, and Riyon in Mabouring Local Government Area (Olufemi, 2021b).

On 13th May, 2022, there was the gruesome and cold-blooded murder and burning of Miss Deborah Samuel Yakubu, a 22 year old Christian and a 200 level student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, by angry Muslim fundamentalists championed by her course mates. Her sin was that she professed her

Christian faith by attributing her doing well in an examination for a particular course to Jesus Christ's miraculous intervention; a statement her killers termed "blasphemy". St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State, was attacked by armed bandits in the early hours of Sunday, 5th June, 2022, and over forty (40) worshippers were killed and many injured. The Punch Newspaper (2022, 13th July) reports that 18 Catholic Priests were kidnapped with three killed in 2022. The South Eastern part of Nigeria is not left out as so many innocent people have died in the hands of bandits. There are several cases of burning of INEC offices and the police stations in the south-east. In both the Western and Northern Nigeria, the Igbo people have suffered a lot in the hands of youths of their host communities. Cases abound of the burning of markets and looting of goods belonging to Igbo traders even at a slightest provocation that might not have directly involved the Igbo people. For example, there was the burning of Dei Dei International market, along Kubwa-Zuba Express road, Abuja by angry Hausa/Fulani youths on 18th May 2022.

In 2020, the "END SARS" protest was staged throughout Nigeria, and beyond, by irate youths protesting against police brutality to Nigerians. The slogan "END SARS" was a mass demonstration throughout the major cities of Nigeria as well as major cities of the world calling on the Nigerian government to disband a unit in the Nigerian Police Force known as the "Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS)". This unit of the force, *inter alia*, had had a long record of abuses on the Nigerian people, and a lot of innocent citizens have died in their hands. The "END SARS" protest was hinged on police brutality, but the fact is that these youths were fed up with poverty and hunger in the entire country as well as other forms of injustices being meted on citizens of Nigeria by those at the helm of affairs. The Nigerian youths had expected to

see the poverty level of Nigerians reduced and the high cost of living remedied by the Buhari's administration. But rather than things getting better, Nigeria's condition gets worse every day. Of course, prior to the election of President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015, the masses were fed up with the sixteen years of consecutive rule by the Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP), which made them to clamour for 'change'. Nigerians had felt that they had seen in Buhari the Messiah who would better the condition of Nigeria and improve on the lives of the citizens, not knowing that the kind of change they will receive would be that of moving from the frying pan into the fire. Akpen Leva, the Benue State, Nigeria, CAN Boss, explains Nigerians' disillusionment in the following manner:

I am sorry to say that from the promises that were made, this government has taken us so many centuries backward. Because, look at the issue of security, for instance, if you are fortunate to wake up, you don't know what may happen the next day. Even when you are travelling on the road, you're travelling out of fear that maybe they will kidnap you and take you to the forest and if you're not able to pay the ransom, maybe they will butcher you and so on. And this ransom is always in millions (Ejembi, 2022).

In addition to things getting worse in the country, innocent citizens were being framed up and extra judicially killed by the police Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and men of the other law enforcement agencies without people getting justice in the end. The "END SARS" protest, therefore, was a fight against all forms of negative things happening in Nigeria as well as the poor economic

condition of the country (Uwaezuoke, 2023). The protest led to the breaking of the Correctional Centres, burning/damaging of many police stations and some public establishments across Nigeria (e.g. INEC buildings), and killing of many police officers who were recognised to have aided the wasteful loss of lives of innocent Nigerians. The protest also led to the death of many Nigerians in the hands of the law enforcement agents. On Tuesday, 5th July 2022, heavy armed bandits attacked the convoy of President Mohammodu Buhari in Katsina as well as Kuje Correctional Centre, Abuja, and freed prisoners.

Another rampant cause of violence in Nigeria is cultism/cult rivalry. A lot of different cult groups exist in Nigeria and they rain havoc on themselves. Different cult groups engage in cult wars. They attack themselves with dangerous and lethal weapons leading to death of so many individuals. On Saturday, 26th February, 2022, a group of persons suspected to be cultists invaded Umuogbuefi primary school, Ebenebe, in Awka North Local Government Area of Anambra State, Nigeria, the venue of the burial ceremony of a member of another cult group. They shot sporadically at unsuspecting mourners and killed about 20 persons, while the corpse was sprawled on the ground. Similarly, on Saturday, 26th February, 2022, at Mbacher Council Ward of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, Benue State, a similar incident occurred where gunmen attacked and killed, at least, 9 mourners at the burial of a tax collector, Zaki Atser Nor, in reprisal for the killing of some armed militia men loyal to slain Benue's militia warlord, Terwase Akwaza, alias Gana on Thursday 24th and Friday 25th February, 2022, by troops of Operation Whirl Stroke (OPWS) (Ejembi, 2022).

Many of the numerous ethnic groups seem to have so much lost confidence in the entity called Nigeria that they have continued to clamour for the restructuring of Nigeria if they must continue to

co-exist as part of Nigeria. (Uwaezuoke, 2021). The implications of violence are discussed in the next section.

5. Implications of Violence and Insecurity

It is said that a house divided against its self can never stand. Violence and insecurity have negative implication, which include:

1. **Retardation of development and growth** – Violence and insecurity retards development and growth. Through violence, the economy is destroyed; and whatever is destroyed would require huge amount of tax payers’ money to rebuild. For example, during the “END SARS” protest, the police stations burnt would need much money to be rebuilt. In addition to requiring huge sums of money to rebuild what have been damaged, the economy becomes crumbled as offices are not opened, and shops and markets remain closed for business. The incarceration of the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, by the Nigerian government does not help matters in the Southeast. It has led to IPOB declaring “sit at home” every Monday and any day Mazi Nnamdi Kanu would go to court on the whole of the South East, and people obey the order for fear of being killed or wounded. All business and commercial activities are crippled on those days
2. **Death** – Death of many individuals is another implication of violence and insecurity. The incessant violence and insecurity in Nigeria has claimed so many lives, while many were wounded or permanently maimed. For example, the Lafia attack in 2021 claimed 45 lives; and 40 lives were lost during the attack on St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owo, Ondo State. Some of the people whose lives were lost

during violent situations are people who would have been useful and who would have contributed their quota in leading the country to greatness.

3. **Displacement of people** – The invasion of villages and houses burnt with their occupants has made many villagers to flee for their dear lives. So many villages and communities have been abandoned in the North East, North West and North Central where activities of the Boko Haram and armed banditry are very rampant. An example was the attack on Muya Local Government Area and Sabon Birni Local Government Area killing people and burning houses. There are a lot of internally displaced people (IDP) with so many internally displaced peoples' camps (IDPC) everywhere in the northern part of the country.
4. **Scarcity of food** – Violence in the North East, North West and North Central has made farmers to be insecure and abandon their farmlands for fear of being attacked and/or killed by herders. The resultant effect is that food crops like yam, rice, etcetera, and vegetables and other agricultural products are no longer cultivated. This brings about scarcity of food; and where one manages to see food, it is always very expensive and unaffordable.
5. **Increase in crime/destruction of lives** – Violence leads to increase in the crime rate. Most often, youths are the ones engaged in violent activities and they are given guns and other dangerous weapons by their sponsors. When the storm is over, it becomes difficult to retrieve those guns and dangerous weapons from the youths, who now use them to engage in various kinds of criminal activities. Also, before

embarking of violent activities, the youths resort to taking illicit substances and other drugs that are dangerous to health. Most often, they end up destroying their lives, and many becoming school drop-outs because of the effect of the illicit substances and hard drugs they had taken.

6. Way Forward

From the discussion above, insecurity in Nigeria has far-reaching implication to the development of Nigeria. The country is divided along ethnic lines and a closer look at the different violent situations reveals that ethnic violence is more prevalent, and sometimes serves as a catalyst for other forms of violence. Therefore, in order to solve the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria, there must be a way of first integrating the different ethnic nationalities. Ethnicity and multiculturalism may portray negative effect, but if properly managed could leads to positive development. Nigeria should borrow a leaf from India, which is a multi-ethnic and multicultural country with diverse languages, but the government recognises all languages through the use of “Accommodationistic” policy that accommodates various ethnic groups thereby making them to be at peace (Manor, 1996). Uwaezuoke (2021) suspects that Ezeani (2015) might have had this kind of approach in mind where he points out the importance of peaceful co-existence to successful evolution of the state and also suggests that a nation without social harmony cannot develop beyond the level of her disunity, acrimony and instability. This idea is supported by the realistic group conflict theory and the theory of justice. Government should begin with the release of all the freedom fighters held in prison custody and other confined places for championing the cause of self-determination for their ethnic nationalities. Instead of arresting and locking-up these people, the reasons for their agitations should be seriously

considered and solved in such a way that every citizen from any part of the country would have a feeling of a sense of belonging. As a way of healing the past wounds, there is need for government to implement what this paper has termed the G3Rs (i.e. genuine reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration).

Secondly, government should consider the clamour for restructuring of Nigeria to make the central government less attractive and the Regions/State governments more attractive. The Regions/States should be able to control their resources and to develop at their own pace. This will usher in healthy competition among the Regions/States.

Thirdly, the Nigeria police and other security operatives in Nigeria should be reformed and reoriented to understand the dignified nature of human beings. They should be made to handle the Nigerian citizens in a dignified manner as well as be seen to be discharging their responsibilities effectively so as to restore the lost trust from the common man.

Finally, government should pursue the principle of mutually desired superordinate goals for the country by living up to its responsibility of protecting lives and property of the entire Nigerians and not a section of Nigeria. No section of the country should be treated as first class citizens, while others are regarded as second class citizens. Government should not turn deaf ears to instances of invasion, but swiftly intervene to ensure that those decimated return home as well as identify the families affected by violence and find a way of compensating them. Above all, government should find a way of bridging the gap between the rich and the poor by making prices of commodities more affordable to ordinary citizens.

7. Summary and Conclusion

This paper considered the issue of violence as one of the numerous challenges Nigeria is faced with and, therefore, set out to examine its root cause(s) and implications. Anchoring on the realistic group conflict theory and the theory of justice, it had also sought for a way forward for Nigeria. It first identified many facets to violence in Nigeria: domestic, ethnic, political, economic, religious and cultism; but maintained that ethnic violence is more prevalent. Ethnicity/multilingualism/multiculturalism breed mutual hatred and distrust among different ethnic nationalities. There is usually imbalance in wealth distribution, poverty and neglect, poverty of leadership and corruption, and brutality on innocent citizens by security operatives. Other violent situations in Nigeria are terrorism, banditry, religious conflict, ethnic agitations and cultism/cult rivalry. Violence leads to insecurity and retards development. It also leads to death, displacement of people, food scarcity, and increase in crime/destruction of lives.

As a way forward, and in concordance with the realistic group conflict theory and the theory of justice, the paper suggests the creation of harmonious relationships among various differing ethnic nationalities in Nigeria. Government should provide favourable environment that would guarantee their cooperation and integration. This should start with the release of all the freedom fighters held in prison custody and other confined places, while the reasons for their agitations are seriously considered to accord a sense of belonging to citizens. Government should implement the G3Rs (genuine reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration). It should consider the clamour for restructuring of Nigeria, and make the central government less attractive and the Regions/State governments more attractive with the Regions/States allowed to control their resources and to develop at their own pace. The Nigeria

police and other security operatives should be reformed and reoriented to understand the dignified nature of human beings with a view to handling the Nigerian citizens in a dignified manner. Government should live up to its responsibility of protecting lives and property of the entire Nigerians and not a section of Nigeria. Nigerians should be treated on equal basis irrespective of tribe, language, religion, and etcetera. Those who indulge in religious violence should be brought to book not minding their ethnic affiliation. Finally, prices of commodities should be made affordable for the common man. When all these are done, Nigeria would be a safer and a better place.

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