

IMPACTS OF INSURGENCY ON NIGERIA'S DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

Insurgence is an act of violence that involves attack on human lives and properties. Since the democratic rule of government in Nigeria since 1999, the country has had to deal with huge cases of insurgency. In the same vein, lot of lives have been lost and properties destroyed in countless numbers, leaving the democracy of the country in jeopardy. Hence, this paper explored what it means for a country to be democratic, and how Nigeria's democracy has been vulnerable to the point that insurgency has thrived for many years. It adopted the Frustration-Aggression Theory as its analytical frameworks. The Frustration-Aggression theory postulates that "aggression is always a consequence of frustration, and that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration often leads to some form of aggression." The paper also sampled the work of other researchers, carefully analysing them and trying to strike a balance through their opinions and submissions. It found that the impacts of insurgency on Nigeria's democracy are numerous and mind-boggling, and therefore examined a few of them. By way of recommendation, it urges government to do the needful and provide adequate security system to its citizens. Critical method of research was used.

Keywords: Insurgency, Democracy, Nigeria, Security, Nigerians, Properties.

Introduction

Today, democracy has become a familiar name throughout the breadth and depth of all liberal and less liberal societies worldwide. The idea has gained popularity in part because it is thought to be essential for the body polity's growth, development, and sustainability as opposed to a military autocracy. The idea of democracy is, therefore, similar to the interests, goals, and common demands for change of the populace. In any political situation, the ethos of democracy emphasizes the overall benefits that the populace will derive from the system, making any opposite activities that do not adhere to its ideals and philosophies strongly discouraged and potentially harmful. "The concept was based on the maxim contained in the *American Declaration of Independence* from British rule that all men are created equal, and they are endowed with certain inalienable right by their creator" (Joseph, 2011:246). In the light of this, government is there to protect these rights, thus it must get its authority from the people it is supposed to be protecting. That means that the general public's viewpoint is of utmost importance in governance and so acts as a driving force in the operations of a free state in a democratic setting.

Since Nigeria reinstated democracy in 1999, her socio-political existence has been marked by one insurgency or another, from the numerous ethnic militias, bloody armed robberies, Niger Delta

militants, to the most current Boko Haram uprising. The adverse effects of these insurgencies have been the loss of lives of innocent citizens and loss of properties whose values goes in billions. Contrary to the principles of democracy which include human liberty, equality, rule of law, fundamental human right, priority of common good etc, Nigeria is currently faced with high level of poverty, corruption and dishonesty especially on the side of the politicians, electoral malpractices, lack of judicial independence etc (Umezurike, 2017:99).

In describing the way democracy is perceived in Nigeria, Umar Ado (2015) puts it this way:

The polarization and great disparity of wealth amongst citizens, the overt and insensitive corruption by public servants, the increasing widespread of poverty and deprivation within the vast majority of the people, the extreme forms of election frauds by incumbent leaders etc., the relation between the government and the governed invariably have to come under severe stress as it turned out to be, because our local civic cultures are unable to withstand the stresses and strains of these economic and political pressures, these naturally breed disappointment, despair and instability it then takes a little for civil resistance to go virulent. Here then lies the proper explanation of the vicious insurgencies.

The insurgencies that are threatening Nigeria's corporate existence are thought to be the result of Nigeria's failed democratic system, which is exemplified by the country's unresponsive political leadership, widespread institutional corruption, electoral fraud, absence of the rule of law, lack of popular sovereignty, etc. Olamilekan (2014:362), in his analysis of the issues ravaging Nigeria argued that "the political atmosphere in the country has always encouraged conflicts in the form of political violence, communal clashes and ethnic-religious crisis, and the latest of which is Boko Haram insurgent attacks on public places such as schools, churches, mosques, market places, government and military installations."

Muzan (2014) opined that the insurgency in northern Nigeria appears to be an outlier among all these security issues and has been gaining power, sophistication, and most significantly, has become highly frightening and tough to combat. In a nutshell, if the threat posed by terrorism is not adequately addressed, the nation is on the verge of a terrible precipice.

Conceptual Clarification

The concept of insurgency remains the same, though several scholars at different time has postulated diverse definition. While some of these definitions corroborate one another, some contradicts them, making the concept a lot broader. As Moore (2007:2) has rightly put it, "the term *insurgency* has been used interchangeably, though, not completely correctly with the terms warfare, unconventional warfare, revolutionary and even terrorism." In his argument, he stated that given the variety of ways that insurgency is being utilized to express disapproval of government policies and programs or to further egotistical and religious ideas, the interchangeability of notions in attempts to create a precise explanation of the phrase insurgency is comprehensible.

Abdu and Shehu (2019) have observed insurgency as an insurrection against a legitimate authority, whether done so for self-serving or political reasons. Abolurin (as cited in Abdu and Shehu, 2019:10) described insurgency "as a revolt, revolution, riot, rebellion and mutiny." Inferentially, persons who commit rebellious activities are members of insurgent groups which are engaged in insurgency. The United States Department of Defence, DOD (as cited by Ukpog-Umo, 2016) gave the definition of insurgency as "an organised movement which its aim is to overthrow a constituted authority or government through

the use of subversion or armed conflict.” Pustay's (1965) understanding of insurgency is a reinforced conflict phenomenon that can grow from coercion through the different phases of outright defiance by small armed groups to final completion in civil war.

In the words of O'Neill (2005), “insurgency is a struggle between a non-ruling group and the ruling authorities in which the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of one or more aspects of politics.” In corroboration to this assertion, Chalk, et al. (2001) pointed out that “certain conditions can transform a dissatisfied future of the population into an insurgency, people resist because of the government (or occupying power) or unwillingness to meet the legitimate needs of the population, the lack of government or occupying power and control can be real or perceived.”

From another worldview, Bernard, (2005) explained “that insurgency is the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” This essentially refers to the lack of liberty from fear and attack. While many scholars have linked insurgency to terrorism, some of them have argued that both terms are in fact different, though citing the close link between them. For instance, Curta and Liolio (as cited by Amalu, 2015:36) argued that although some insurgent groups have used some of these tactics to achieve their objectives, insurgency is neither terrorism, subversion, guerrilla war, conventional war, revolution, or coup d'état.

In the same spirit, Hassan (2014) postulated that since insurgency is often viewed as a form of political conflict rather than a military conflict, a purely military response is not an option without resorting to levels of violence that are intolerable in the modern world. He further went ahead to elaborate that since terrorism has been the rebels' primary and most-used tactic, conflating the terms "insurgency" and "terrorist" is not entirely incorrect. McAllister (1989) carefully outlined that “terrorism is the most commonly adopted strategy and it involves the adoption of some methods such as bombing, kidnapping and abduction.” Murtala (2014) surmised it when he said that “insurgency is a premeditated, politically, economically or religious motivated violence perpetrated against the state or a regime by an aggrieved group, usually intended to influence audience.”

Democracy, meanwhile, according to Bratton (2007) and Joseph (1997), “is concerned with freedom, equality, participation and consent in politics or governance.” The anecdote of democracy, of course, covers more ground than the postulation of Bratton and Joseph. Other “scholars of democracy in plural societies provide influential justification which puts democracy ahead of all other forms of government” (Lijphart, 1977).

Diamond (2005:1) defined democracy “as a system of government that allows the people to choose their leaders and representatives, and can replace them at regular, free and fair elections.” While Joseph (1997) argued “that democracy has been largely 'infertile' in Africa”, the bottom line is that Africa is actively practicing democracy whereby power is given to the people. “Democracy ought to promote good governance which is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, efficient, equitable, inclusive and follows the rule of law” (UNESCO, 2005).

Appodorai (1974) defined “democracy as the system, either of government under which the people exercise governmental power directly or indirectly through representatives

elected by them.” The people exercise their power mostly during election, where they have the opportunity of deciding for themselves the people they prefer to represent them. According to Alikpi (2004:130) “election is the barometer to measure the political maturity, health, legitimacy and stability of a democratic governance. It is generally held to be the single most important indicator of the presence or absence of democratic governance.” Okolie (2005) added that “elections are the processes of selecting the officers or representatives of an organization and groups by votes of its qualified members.” Furthermore, he opined that “as a political phenomenon, elections are institutionalized procedures for choosing political office holders by the electorates of a country.” Paki (2006) elaborated more on the subject matter when he observed that the “process no doubt allows for the opportunity to vote in credible men and women of both timber and calibre, who will be expected to pilot the affairs of governance within a specified record of time before the next round of elections.

Theoretical Framework

In light of the topic's importance, the paper uses the Frustration-Aggression Theory as its analytical underpinning. Coined by Fererabend and Feirauben in 1972, “the major assumption of the model is that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, and that the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.”

Aggressive behaviour, which is a consequence of problems like poverty and unemployment among others, leads to insurgencies. This clearly addressed the underlying problem behind why certain people might consider insurgency instead of being law-abiding citizens.

Meanwhile, Berkowitz (1989) argued that “aggression can be driven by inherent personal benefits to the aggressor and not necessarily by past wrongdoings and that people are more akin to attack when they discover that they are wilfully sabotaged or denied what it's legitimately theirs than when the interference is an accidental occurrence.” He surmised that “frustrations are aversive events and generate aggressive inclinations only to the extent that they produce negative effects.”

Furthermore, Adeniyi and Rosenje (2021) opined that “the increasing attacks of bandits across the country, most especially in the northwest region, are largely driven by frustrations and struggles to generate economic assets.” Uche and Iwuamadi (2018) corroborated this opinion by adding that “the alarming acts of banditry such as cattle rustling, kidnapping, physical attacks and encroachments on farms are bred by frustrations.”

The Nigerian Democratic System

In political theory, the majority of researchers concur that democracy is defined as inclusive, collective (or at least largely acknowledged) will establishment and decision-making that aims for political accessibility, in the sense of effectively transforming citizens' priorities into policies and effects, while preserving political rights and liberties through boundaries of the people's will (Warren 2017). This concept seems vague and offers no clear guidance as to how individuals are supposed to rule, which is essentially the outlook of democracy that addresses curiosity. As a result, the rule of law, as reflected

in a nation state's political structures, must be connected to the fundamental idea of democracy. Linz (1997, p. 120) captured it succinctly when he asserted that, "No state... no democracy." His idea basically revolves around the establishment of a thriving state before the implementation of democracy.

Democracy has been attributed to a lot of factors, among which is economic development. In the words of Sen (1983), "economic development is the sustained, concerted actions of policy makers and communities that promote the standard of living and economic health of a people." Actions like that, when carried out appropriately, can trigger enormous human resources, which could invariably result in the development of important infrastructure and global identification of a state. Sen went further and described economic growth "as an aspect of the process of economic development." Przeworski et al (2006), also admitted that "economic development either increases chances for a transition to democracy or helps newly established democracies to consolidate."

According to Przeworski et al (2006), "wealth also correlates with education as a factor of economic development. According to them, a poorly educated and illiterate population may elect populist politicians who on election abandon democracy and become dictators even where there were free and fair elections."

The question of the role that civil society play in democratization definitely need to be answered, after all, democracy has been ascribed to be the "government of the people". Zaleski (2008) observed that "the relationship between civil society and democratic political society, dates back to the early classical liberal writings of Alexis de Tocqueville." Almond and Verba (1989), however, suggestively developed by 20th century theorists when they identified the role of hands-on culture in a democratic instruction as vivacious.

These theories contended that the political components of political organizations encourage more awareness and better-informed citizens who, as a result, cast better ballots, engage in politics, and hold the government more accountable. Putnam, et al (1994) in their support of the notion "state that non-political organisations in civil societies are vital for democracy." However, the effectiveness of the civil society in democracy is being questioned by some researchers. For instance, Agnew (2002) and Zaleski (2006) are of the standpoint that civil society players have now attained an impressive degree of political influence without participating in elections or being given political portfolios.

This kind of system is prevalent especially in Nigeria's democratic system. According to Ajayi and Ojo (2014) "the irreducible fact seems to be that the promotion of the welfare of the masses is neither the primary preoccupation nor the cardinal objective of the anchors of Nigeria's democracy." They added that in some parts of Nigeria, power supply is practically non-existent, potable water is scarce, healthcare facilities are either completely non-existent or in utter disarray, and hundreds of people perish in motor vehicle accidents each year as a result of the country's horrendously inadequate road systems. This would seem like a paradox, considering the fact that Nigeria runs a political system that is ascribed to "the people".

Adelakun (2013) expressed himself regarding the Nigerian democracy system through his words when he cried out that:

"Today, Nigeria is literally bleeding. There is too much violence. We have bred enough Frankenstein monsters to haunt us. We feed them red meat each time they cry for blood. Those who are not killed by Boko Haram are killed by the Joint Task Force. Those who escape the JTF fall into the hands of mind-bending

illiteracy. Those who manage to escape all those are consumed by road accidents. Some die in poorly equipped hospitals. Those lucky to bypass all of the above are either killed by hunger, poverty, or frustration practically turns them to the living dead. It is the curse of Cain. The earth antagonises people who needlessly shed blood. Recently, multiple road accidents claimed almost 100 lives. In a country where life counts, that should have led to a major social change. Sadly, not even a paragraph of official response came from the government, not even the local government chairmen of the areas the accidents happened. Unfortunately, the government aides who explain away these deaths are the same ones who rush to Twitter to console President Barack Obama over the Boston bombing. They are not their own brother's keepers because their brother's life is worthless.”

It can therefore be inferred that though democracy is meant to ascribe power to the people, rather than the few elites, in Nigeria, the exact opposite is the case, thereby rendering itself of a weak kind of democracy. As a result of this weakness, insurgency has found a loophole and infiltrate its democracy, greatly affecting the socio-economic activity of the people, as well as taking several lives and properties.

The Impacts of Insurgency

The causes of insurgency in Nigeria range among many factors. One of the major insurgent bodies that has, for a long time, terrorize the country is the Boko Haram Insurgence. As Igbini (2020) rightly put it, the Boko Haram insurgency in northern Nigeria has been the most hostile and dangerous threat to Nigerian people and security personnel since the return to democratic governance. The systematic approach of the insurgent bodies in carrying out attacks on unsuspecting Nigerians is daily gaining momentum. Igbini (2020) lamented that since the rise of these groups in the country, insurgency in all of its forms, whether from Boko Haram, banditry and herders' attacks, or militancy both in the northern and southern areas of the country, has put the safety of lives and properties and the future of Nigeria in grave danger.

In the same vein, the effects of this insurgency have had both short- and long-lasting effects on the country. Some of those impacts are discussed below:

Loss of Lives and Properties

The development and gradual spread of insurgency has, over time, led to loss of lives and properties in huge number. For instance, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) stated that “between July 27, 2009 and February 17, 2012, Boko Haram has launched fifty (53) attacks in which 1,157 people were killed and hundreds of people injured in northern Nigeria.” These numbers are mostly speculated as it is difficult to ascertain the specific number involved in terms of lives lost and properties destroyed. (Ahokegh, 2013).

Crisis Group Africa Report (2014) highlighted that “the attacks increased during the first months of 2014, with almost daily bombings, fighting, thefts and destruction of schools, homes and businesses.” Amnesty International meanwhile recorded that “at least 1,500 people were killed in that period.” Gilbert (2014: 152) meanwhile stated that “it is on record that Boko Haram has killed over 2,000 persons in 2014 alone and is responsible for more than 12,000 deaths and over 8,000 maimed persons since it started it's murderous campaign of insurgency”. While the numbers vary from one scholar to another, the one thing they all have in common is that insurgency has led to loss of lives and properties in a country that practice democracy, which one of its core tenets is the protection of lives and properties. It would be an understatement to assert that the situation is indeed paradoxical.

Socio-Economic Degradation

Another negative effect of the prevalence of insurgency in Nigeria is the massive disruption of economic activities. The Guardian (2012) reported that “the insurgents have destroyed more than twenty-five telecommunication masts and base stations in Maiduguri, Potiskum, Bauchi, Gombe and Kano states, thus setting back efforts to improve telecommunications in the region.” Other economic activities have been suspended or completely halted as a result of insurgency. Many farmlands have been destroyed and animals rustled, thereby completely crumbling the economic activities in the affected regions. Isakpa (2011) has rightly put it that “there can be no real progress made in any economy that is hostile to security”.

Decline in Investment Opportunities

It is difficult for a country that is often disturbed by insurgency to witness the influx of foreign investment. Due to Nigeria's inability to eradicate this menace, there has been rapid decline in foreign investments. This contributes largely to the setback in economic activities, since the organizations that are supposed to invest in the country are stepping back in order to protect their lives, properties, and investments.

Low Enrolment of the Girl-Child in Education

The aftermath of the abduction of the 276 Chibok school students, all of which are girls, in 2014 (Shaibu et al., 2015), in addition to the incident of 19th February 2018 when hundreds of girls were abducted from Dapchi Government Girls' Science and Technical College, Yobe State (Sahara Reporter, 2018; Aljazeera News, 2018) has led to the degradation of the school system. As a result of the fear of the recurrence of these events, the enrolment of the girl-child in school has dropped drastically. UNICEF (as cited by Adepelumi 2018) estimate holds that it is difficult for students to receive a proper education during this time, as evidenced by the destruction of over 1,200 schools in Nigeria's northern and eastern regions, the denial of a secure learning environment to 319,000 children, and the displacement of more than 1952,029 school-aged children. The implication of this is enormous. For one, since the educational output of the country is largely determined by its input, and as a result of insurgency, the input has greatly been affected, the output would invariably be drastically affected. From another perspective, since the gender suffering from this is the female, it means that female participation in both political and economic discourse is largely affected since they have been deprived of the foundation that would take them to such spotlight. Bilyaminu, Iya and Purokayo (2017) corroborated this when they expressed themselves that through low enrolment, low attendance, and poor school facilities, the Boko Haram insurgency has negatively impacted human capital investment and undermined the country's educational standards.

Recommendations

The restoration of Nigeria's democracy is important, and should be a priority. As a result, some steps have to be taken, and they have been suggested as thus:

1. The Nigerian government should prioritize National security by investing massively in the security system of the country in order to creatively combat these insurgent bodies and restore the glory of the country's democratic system.
2. Government needs to also provide adequate job opportunities for the youth, as majority of them that are being recruited are often promised future rewards by these insurgent bodies. However, when the youths are adequately engaged, they would be automatically unavailable for insurgent recruitment.

3. The security system of Nigeria is advised to collaborate with the people, since this is a democratic system, which means that the people have the bulk of the power in their hands, the system can therefore leverage on the power of the people in order to carry out its responsibility, which is the protection of lives and properties.

Conclusion

Nigeria's democracy has been in jeopardy for years, as a result of the development of insurgent bodies like the Boko Haram. Since its transition to democracy in 1999, each government administration has had to deal with one or more insurgent activities. During the first administration, which was led by President Olusegun Obasanjo, the Niger-Delta Militant group was a cause for concern, as they agitate and destroy the countries pipeline in order to be heard. This would mark the beginning, as the Boko Haram insurgent rose up in 2009, and started bombing innocent citizens mostly at public places. Since then, though the Boko Haram is yet to be subdued, other insurgent bodies have as well risen. As a result, the Nigerian democracy is seriously under threat as these insurgent bodies seem to thrive and often get away with their evil deeds. The most recent of the insurgencies labelled Fulani Herdsmen, have wreak untold havoc, especially in the northern region of the country. They mostly invade villages and turn them to slaughter house, murdering countless people, including children and the aged. In addition, another group called unknown gunmen have adopted similar strategy, invading places with arms and ammunitions, and shooting sporadically at citizens. The evildoings of these people have led to Nigeria suffering great decline in foreign investment, which has invariably resulted to increase in unemployment and of course, low economic activities.

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