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National Integration: A Panacea to Insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nigeria is currently confronted with myriads of challenges which is rapidly stagnating the development and progress of her core productive and sensitive sectors. One of the most piercing problems is that of insecurity; in fact, this problematic question has gone beyond disorganizing the domestic environment, it has succeeded in labelling Nigeria repulsively in the international community. However, till present, government efforts toward this challenge has not recorded substantial outcomes; it is within the premises of this condition that this paper considers a more propitiatory means of achieving sustainable national security in national integration. While the paper is conscious of the preceding efforts toward integration in the country, it still beholds untapped resources in it for sustainable security in Nigeria. Hence, the paper strongly advocates a New Crusade on National Integration (NCNI) which will immensely guarantee unity, peaceful co-existence and security in Nigeria.

Key words: National Insecurity, National Integration, Peaceful co-existence, Nigeria

Introduction

Nigeria is a heterogeneous entity composed with a large mass of people from varied cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious affiliations. This attribute have been an

inextricable appendage to the country, owing to its complex colonial and historic nexus. The British had in 1899 revoked the charter of the Royal Niger Company. By 1914, it completed the process of bringing together several hundreds of ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups and communities which then had attained different levels of economic and political development (Ifeanacho 2009).

The outcome of this arbitrary merger is the prevalence of oriental ethnic prejudice and intolerance, colossal religious confrontations, endemic political tensions and strives instigated by what Awolowo identified as the passionate desire for ethnic hegemony, extreme intolerance for democratic norm and practice as well as a complete absence of ideological direction by political players (Awolowo, 1981) which have all cumulated in grave insecurity that have plagued the country since the crash of colonialism.

In the midst of this perturbed situation, the need for national integration has been emphasised and embarked upon at different stages of development in Nigeria. In General Yakubu Gowon's Civil War Victory Message to the Nation on the 15th January, 1970; he expressed the need to pursue unity in diversity/national integration vigorously: "We desired to preserve the territorial integrity and unity [national integration] of Nigeria. For as one country, we would be able to maintain peace [national security] amongst our various communities... [And] minimize the problem of re-integration... All energies will now be bent to the task of reintegration..." (Gowon, 1970).

The above is an extract from Gowon's speech following the armistice of the Nigeria Civil War (1966-1970), shows the commitment of his regime to the integration of the various ethnic and ideological affiliations in Nigeria. The element of the drive toward national integration also reflected in President Shehu Shagari's Inaugural Speech on October 1, 1979 when he said: "... the integration of the various ethnic groups in Nigeria... is a great challenge... [But] determined that the slogan of "One Nation, One Destiny" shall be translated into reality... there is need for a dedicated leadership and citizenry imbued with faith to cultivate a wide-spread national feeling for "One Nigeria" (Shagari, 1979).

More importantly, apart from the aforementioned, the 1999 Constitution as amended in Chapter II, Article 15, sub-section 2 clearly stated: "...national integration shall be actively encouraged, whilst discrimination on the ground of place of origin, sex, religion, ethnic or linguistic associations or ties shall be prohibited" (FGN, 1999).

In all these, it is open that the pursuit for national integration is parallel to the attainment of sustainable security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria. Thence, this paper considers national integration as a veritable tool in fixing the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. The rest of this paper is organized in four major fragments. The

first aspect engages in a conceptual outlook of the basic themes under this study. The second is an exposition on the modes and manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria. The third is a survey of the mechanisms adopted for integration in Nigeria while the fourth concludes and suggest an approach to utilizing national integration for sustainable security and peaceful co-existence in Nigeria

National Insecurity and National Integration: A Conceptual Outlook

The grasps of foundational concepts are imperative to an adequate understanding and evaluation of any thematic discourse. In this view, a theoretical consideration of the dominant themes making up this piece becomes necessary; hence, a specific approach will be adopted in this section as it concerns the different concepts, this will adequately create a framework to understanding the paper exclusively.

National Insecurity

The common usage of the term ‘national insecurity’ has not till present accorded it a universal conceptual outlook, it has been considered from different perspectives. This perhaps could be as a result of the realities, nature and concept of insecurity which differs from nation to nation. Like other contested concepts, the term contains an ideological element which renders empirical evidence irrelevant as a means of resolving the debate (Ehi, 2009).

An appropriate illustration of national insecurity entails a foreknowledge of national security. What then is security? The Encarta dictionaries (2009 edition) simply and shortly defined it as “the state or feeling of being safe and protected.” Maier (1990) conceived national security “as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity and wellbeing.” The above considered national security within the power and influence of the nationals.

According to Brown (1983) “National security... is the ability to preserve the nation’s physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature, institution, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders” (p. 281). Consequently, national security is beyond the narrow conception of human protection and preservation in a nation, it extends to issues on preservation of international social, political and economic relations.

Cain (1973) noted that national security is “the means of achieving safety and stability in the nation” (p. 1). Complementing Cain’s position, Paleri (2008) asserts that:

The measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi- dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance, that can be indexed by computation, empirically or otherwise, and is extendable to global security by variables external to it (p. 521).

From the foregoing, it is apparent that the concept of security is ambiguous. However, it is instructive to note that insecurity in concept and reality is the direct opposite to security; Tijani (2013) describes insecurity as “when the nation cannot maintain law and order; when the lives and property of citizens cannot be protected” (p. 181). Besides, Gbenga and Augoye (2011) says insecurity is a result of malignant environment dominated by man’s insensitivity to man.

Hence, by inference national insecurity captures a condition where a nation lacks the ability and influence to forestall the protection and preservation of its nationals from being victims of environmental disorder arising from internal and external attacks, social disorientation and dehumanisation; alleviate economic hardships stemming from domestic and foreign interplays; and imbue in citizens a physiological orientation of a national cohesion through skilful development and implementation of domestic and foreign policies. In fact, a nation is clouded with insecurity when its inhabitants expresses uncertainty and exhibits hopelessness for its future.

National Integration

National integration as a concept has attracted significant definition and description in several literatures. Khurana’s (n.d) explanation of the concept goes thus: “National Integration is the awareness of common identity amongst the citizens of a country... though we belong to different castes, religions and regions and speak different languages we recognize the fact that we are all one.” Coleman and Rosberg (1964) capture it as “the progressive reduction of cultural and regional tensions and discontinuities in the process of creating a homogenous political community.” Simpson (n.d) understands it as a process of “creating a mental outlook which will prompt and inspire every person to place loyalty to the country above narrower sectarian interest.”

The various descriptions above are opened enough to aid a robust understanding of the concept under consideration. All the same, in a more lucid way, national integration could be articulated as a depiction of keen sense of unity within disparate diversities. It indicates unity and solidarity in all spheres of human cultures and civilizations without the manifestation of dogmatic sentiments, prejudice and loyalty among nationals of a country.

Insecurity in Nigeria

The issue of insecurity in Nigeria is no more a challenge, but a cancerous problem; the regularity of religious, political, communal and ethnic based insurgences, upheavals, conflicts and violence in post-colonial Nigeria has attained endemic proportion. In fact, the description of the trending precarious situation in Nigeria as insecurity is perhaps an understatement; the prevailing terrorist/Islamic fundamentalist threats and attacks, unrelenting kidnappings and assassinations at virtually all societal strata, irrepressible armed robbery muggings as well as structural ethno-religious cum communal conflicts among several other anti-social as well as life threatening and claiming activities have cumulated in the creating an insecure and almost uninhabitable atmosphere in Nigeria.

Nigeria since independence at different stages of economic and socio-political development has witnessed grave threats to the nation's existence. At this juncture, the main indices, expressions and manifestations of insecurity in Nigeria will be considered.

Conflict and Crime

Conflicts have emerged as a result of new and particularistic forms of political consciousness and identity often structured around ethno-religious identities (Ibrahim & Igbuzor, 2002). In a similar vein, the increasing rate of crime in Nigeria has become undeniable been evident in public parastatals, private organizations, and social groupings. It is poignant to observe that the development and amendment of constitutional provisions have not tangibly reduced this trend. Conflict and crime have taken the place of the traditional harmony and honesty that existed among the various people of Nigeria in the course of their inevitable intra and inter-ethnic, communal and group relations.

Conflicts in Nigeria have been expressed on the ethnic, religious, political and economic circles. The crisis that aborted the first republic in Nigeria and the Biafran War (1966-1970) are suitable examples of conflicts that were largely influenced by socio-cultural, religious, political and ideological differentiation and contradictions among the various groups constituting Nigeria. These occurrences were not just conflict situation but severe threats to the existence of the Nigeria as a nation.

Again, crime in particular have abjured Nigerians the confidence in their right to protection from the state. Ehi (2009) submitted that:

Many Nigerians have fallen to the assassins' bullets/letter bombs. Others have been kidnapped and only released on huge ransom which re-payment they may not be able to achieve for the rest of their lives. From Dele Giwa, Bola Ige, and recently Ohu, all security agencies Police, SSS, army, etc. have not been able to unravel

the whereabouts of the assassins. Kidnapping has become a very fast-growing industry enriching the criminals with millions of Naira on daily basis. The Police and the SSS appeared to be compromised while the government is either insensitive or helpless too. The Billions of Naira voted for security both at State and Federal levels for inexplicable reasons are not made available to combat these problems. Meanwhile citizens continued to pay their taxes and fulfill other obligations to the Government of the day amid this state of insecurity, fear and siege (p. 13).

It is necessary to point out that conflict and crime are leaves of the same stem; the occurrence of conflict open avenues for crime activities and the dominance of crime in any society is a signal to conflict. These anti-social features have supplanted peaceful co-existence for anxiety and insecurity in the Nigeria society. However, the mad pursuit for scarce value and resources, power and control, propitious opportunism and materialistic incentives are partly responsible for the twist from societal friendliness and orderliness to intolerance and suspicion.

Terrorism and Insurgence

Terrorism and insurgency is obviously a developing hub propagating and expanding the bane of insecurity in Nigeria than any other (at least, currently). The activities of the defunct Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Boko Haram sect are sufficient stance in considering terrorism and insurgence in the context of national insecurity. Although, the issue of the Niger Delta crisis is not directly linked to the problem of national integration, rather it was engendered by government sponsored martial repressions and ignored agitation for resource control and regional dividend by the inhabitants of the oil rich region. It is important to mention that this insurgence constituted grave mayhems resulting in threat to human and organizational existence in the region; in fact, hundreds of people suffered injuries and death.

On the other hand, the Nigerian militant sect- Boko Haram has contagiously and continuously wreaked havoc in several parts of the nation, specifically in the North. Notably, According to Okpaga et al.(2012):

The group's [Boko Hara] official name is Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad, meaning "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." It earned its nickname from the teachings of its founder Mohammed Yussuf in the early 2000s., in the restive north-eastern city of Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state... Usuf argued that Western education, or 'boko,' had brought nothing but poverty and suffering

to the region and was therefore for bidden, or 'haram,' in Islam (p. 82)

In view of the above, the foundation of the Boko Haram is resident in the problem of national integration- lack of religious and ideological unity in Nigeria. The activities of this group have ranged from the use of heavy munitions to detonation of bombs in perpetrating assassinations, mass killing and destruction of public properties; between 2010 and 2013, the Islamic sect has claimed responsibility for more than 49 attacks across the nation primarily executed in Maduguri, Bauchi, Jos, Kaduna and FCT-Abuja among other suburbs of Northern Nigeria which occasioned thousands of deaths and unnumbered injuries among Nigerians.

It is poignant that the activities of this dreaded sect have unleashed terror on Nigerians and it is rapidly breaking the cords of unity/integration between the various ethnic entities in the nation. As a matter of fact, the sieges of insecurity in Nigeria have resulted in large-scale emigration of the diverse ethnical peoples back to their native land within Nigeria.

Viewed from whatever angle, it is generally acknowledged that the ugly development has not only threatened the polity but also the very existence of the Nigerian nation... the situation is also so critical that many indigenes have fled... about 22,000 Igbo's and Yoruba's residing in the state had left due to the current security situation, although leaders of the Igbo and Yoruba communities in the state have been calling on their people to return to the state (Okpaga 2012, p. 89).

In addition, Egburonu's (2012) article in *The Nation*, Sunday, 29th January, 2012 titled: *Tension as groups flee over Boko Haram Threats*, cited to the lamentation of Miss Agnes Agwuocha: "We are afraid of Boko Haram. Daddy and Mummy keep awake all night in case the attackers decide to invade our home. They would lock all the doors tightly, pray all night and ask us to sleep. But we never can, for we don't know what will happen next... They said we would soon go home, so we are waiting." Then, what does this represent, terrorism or insurgence? This could be is another subject of discourse; however, it may perhaps be the foundation of fundamentalism and modern terrorism in Nigeria.

Mechanisms of Integration in Nigeria: A Retrospective Survey

A thoughtful reflection on the Nigeria system from independence reveals that several domestic forces militate against national integration in Nigeria. While the race toward national integration has been an unrelenting task in the development of the Nigerian state, it is sad that this task as not adequately achieved its purpose. Here,

attempt will be focused on considering some significant efforts on national integration in Nigeria since independence.

By the time Nigeria won her independence from Britain in 1960, its artificial origin, coupled with other factors, had bequeathed it a number of fundamental problems, one of which is the challenge of integrating, into a cohesive socio-political whole (Adebola, 2006). In view of this, the necessity for a political structure that will help cohesion had to be implemented. The adoption of a parliamentary system of government and existence of an opposition party following independence enabled equitable influence by the three major ethnic groups- Hausa/Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo. While the office of the prime minister, president were occupied by a northerner and an easterner respectively and the opposition was under the auspices of the south. This was no doubt a noble foundational effort for strong national unity but it came out to be futile at the eruption of the Nigerian Civil War (1966- 1970). It could be acknowledged as the first major effort in pursuit for national integration.

Further, the adoption of a state structure in place of the regional structure in 1967 represents another attempt of unifying the nation. Since the pre-existing regional structure encourages ethnic classifications and loyalty in Nigeria, the adopted new state structure was aimed at redirecting the loyalty and commitment of the citizens to the state instead of their ethnic affinities and organisation. Therefore, the regions were partitioned into states. Oyebade (2013) stated that:

The first stage of this fragmentation [state creation process] was carried out in 1967 when the following states were created: South-Eastern State, Benue-Plateau State, East Central State, West Central (later, Kwara) State, North-Western State, Bendel State and Lagos State... [Again] in 1976 to further fracture the structure by introducing the following new states: Bauchi, Benue, Borno, Imo, Niger, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, and Plateau State. [Also] in 1987, more states were created out of the existing ones and they were: Akwa-Ibom and Kastina. In 1991, twelve more states were created thus: Abia, Adamawa, Anambra, Delta, Edo, Enugu, Jigawa, Kebbi, Kogi, Osun, Taraba and Yobe State. The final act that produced the structure which we have today, was carried out in 1996, with the creation of the following States: Bauchi (sic), Bayelsa, Ebonyi, Ekiti, Gombe and Zamfara (p. 8)

Despite this outstanding effort, the problem of national integration still persists in Nigeria; such that some Nigerians had called for the creation of more states, one of such is Emeka Anyaoku, the then Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations; in his lecture on National Integration documented by Punch Newspaper on Friday, 18th May, 2012. He was coated to have suggested that,

“Nigeria cannot function well under the existing 36 States. We need fewer federating units that have power for security, good education and infrastructural development” (Anyaoku, 2012). Thus, state creation has not done much as a mechanism of national integration in Nigeria.

Besides, the institution of the of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) Scheme in 1973 was mainly to fix the problem of national integration in Nigeria as stated in Decree No. 23 of 1973 General Yakubu Gowon, but now supplanted by an Act in 2004. According to the Act, the aim of the scheme was “... to develop common ties among Nigerian youths and promote national unity and integration” (NYSC, 2004). Rising from the latter is that the scheme was to address the ethnic loyalties, mutual group suspicion and distrust²⁶ that have plagued the fabrics of Nigerian society. The scheme is implemented such that fresh tertiary institution graduates are distributed to serve the nation in states or communities other than their native land with the intention of broaden their social-cultural orientation and to instil in them the virtue of tolerance. However, this approach to national integration as rapidly turning to be an avenue of disintegration among the various ethnic groups in the nation as parents and guardians now influence the posting of their wards to suitable parts of the nation mainly to ensure their security.

Federal character which became an integral part of Nigeria federalism in 1979 was another significant attempt at working toward national integration. As expressed in the amended constitution of the federal republic of Nigeria, Chapter II, Article 14, No. 3:

The composition of the federation or any of its agencies and the conduct of its affairs shall be carried in such manner as to reflect the federal character of Nigeria and the need to promote national unity, and also to command national loyalty thereby ensuring that there shall be no predominance of persons from a few states or from a few ethnic or other sectional groups in that government or in any of its agencies (FGN, 1999).

According to Bello (2012) as also defined by the constitution drafting committee (1976), the federal character principle is:

The distinctive desire of the people of Nigeria to promote national unity, foster national loyalty and give every citizen of Nigeria a sense of belonging to the nation (notwithstanding the diversities of the ethnic origin, which may exist and which it(sic) is their desire to nourish and harness to the enrichment of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.)

Consequent upon this provision, political appointments and other federal opportunities are accorded to people on the basis of equality in order to foster unity amidst the divergent populace. On the contrary, federal character in principle and practice has been traded for political patronage, tribalism and nepotism for appointments. In fact, virtually every sphere of federal, state and local governments operation is involved and consequently politicised (Agbodike, 1998). As a matter of fact, the purpose of federal character has been defeated in Nigeria.

Apart from the aforementioned, several other mechanisms have been staged up to achieve national integration in Nigeria such as; the national language policy as proclaimed in the Constitution as amended in Chapter V, Part 1, Section B, Sub-section 5 that "The business of the National Assembly shall be conducted in English, and in Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba when adequate arrangements have been made thereof" (FGN, 1999). The object of this is to integrate the various ethnic affinities that constitute Nigeria. In addition, the 1991 relocation of the federal capital territory from Lagos in the South, to a more geographically central region- Abuja in the North is to encourage common ties and discourage ethnic bias. It is discouraging to discover from the above discussion that virtually all the mechanisms adopted for the integration of Nigeria has not been tailored adequately toward achieving its purpose such that Nigeria keeps going through fragmentations at the expense integration. What factors will serve to prevent the further fragmentation of Nigeria? Because attempts to promote unification by structural means have largely failed, an alternative and more effective approach seem to be necessary (Adebola, 2006)

Conclusion and Recommendations

Even though, Nigeria has over four hundred ethnic groups with a great variety of cultures and languages (Olukoju, 1997). The possibility of national integration is not bleak as many suggest. Considering the current menace of insecurity in the nation, it is necessary to voice out that the activities of our security outfit (Nigerian Civil Defence, Police Force, SSS, Army and JTF) coupled with heavy fiscal support from the government can never procure Nigerians the desired enduring security, peace and tranquillity. Instead, it would only suppress the problem on the surface in preparation for more overwhelming mayhem of violence, insurgency, crime, armaments and fundamentalism.

Since the attainment of social order, peaceful co-existence and national security is exclusively a collective responsibility; all and sundry irrespective of ethnic, religious and ideological affinity should arise to the challenge of creating a society void of fear, tension and disruption. This could only be achieved on the basis of a cohesive psychological orientation which will only be infused through a proactive approach to national integration. Notably, the defiant outcomes of national integration processes in the past in Nigeria are coiled to lack of vigour and loss of focus in the

course of implementation. Nevertheless, frantic efforts should be taken to redirect all existing structures, schemes and policies channelled toward national integration in Nigeria.

In all, this paper advocates the adoption of a New Crusade on National Integration (NCNI) obliged with the objects of- propagating and expanding the ideology of collective responsibility in tackling insecurity across the nation; propelling a redirection in the actualization of national integration through exiting schemes and structures; developing and implementing new mechanisms on which national integration and national security will be achievable; preaching the creed of patriotism, tolerance, impartiality and honesty, as well as discouraging all vices capable of engendering terror and disruption in the society. In addition, the New Crusade on National Integration (NCNI) should capture the involvement of all strata (Bourgeoisie, Middle class and Proletarian) and groups (Religious, Cultural, Unions, Clubs, Parties, etc.) of the society. On these criterions, hopes are alive that national integration and national security will attain reality in Nigeria.

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