
THE NIGERIAN STATE AND DEMOCRATIZATION OF VIOLENCE: ISSUES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

The mischievous modification of the object of democracy to compulsorily conform to the perversive character of the state in Nigeria is one of the important undoing of democracy. Core indicators of democracy such as human rights, social welfare and human security are either forgotten or overlooked entirely. These failures constantly spawn cheap mobilization of less privileged youths for violence in the country. The study seeks to establish a linkage between the contaminated type of democracy in Nigeria, exemplified by the culture of impunity, and the rising culture of violence in the country. We adopt qualitative method of data collection and analyses. We conclude that the perversive character of the state in Nigeria, which infected the acquired democracy, thereafter, conspires to democratize violence within itself. Hence, there is need for deepening democracy and good governance, to deliver popular public goods, such as provision of employment opportunities and social facilities.

Keywords: *Democracy, Democratization, Prosecution, Violence, State, Tyrannism, etc*

INTRODUCTION

One important culture implicated in the acclimatization of democracy in Nigeria is the culture of impunity. The term impunity is derived from the Latin word *impunitas*, which means freedom or exemption from harm, punishment and other unpleasant consequences that ought to be associated with irrational and anti-social behaviours. We are helplessly convinced by circumstance, therefore, to believe that the Nigerian type of democracy did not only inherit the culture of impunity, it has well continued to be mutually compatible and reconciled with impunity thereafter. This, perhaps, accounts for the reason why public money, meant to serve the very essence of democracy is stolen by an individual or a certain 'clique' and nothing else is done. While some others, who in one way or the other are affected by the overwhelming impacts of such numerous stealing, pick up arms and organize violence, or at least are cheaply and vulnerably mobilized for violence. Militancy in the oil rich Niger Delta, electoral violence, Jos violence etc, all fall into this category. Of note is that all of these activities are important struggles against democracy in Nigeria. In any case, the ultimate goal of violence is not usually unconnected with the overriding intent of finding or maintaining such heinous avenues for stealing public monies. And because most violence has state flavour and colouration, little or nothing is being done to fish out the offenders. History, of events, has prevailed on us to appreciate that a certain level of indifference is confusedly exhibited by the state in nipping primordial ingredients of violence in the bud. One of the many cases is the seeming docility of the Federal Government to implement the recommendations made by various panels set up in the country to look into various issues of

violence. The usual urge to bargain with the militants from time to time, without correcting the roots of the turbulence is another concern altogether. We may genuinely ask: why then is the state so unconcerned about the obliteration of the culture of violence from the country? Perhaps, Ake keyed to the basis behind this strange mentality, in his comparison of the character of military and democratic states in Africa. He noted that "...the military is oriented to law and order; democracy to diversity, contradiction and competition; the method of military is violent aggression; that of democracy is persuasion, negotiation and consensus-building".¹ This mysteriously implies dangerous realities about democracy in Africa. In the first place, it shows that the inherited democracy in Africa is inherently allergic to law and order. Secondly, that the state operating therewith has high sensitivity or predisposition towards negotiating or bargaining in intricate security issues, even with violence peddlers (contradiction), at the expense of law and order. And in itself, the availability and installment of law and order are clear parameters of human dignity, of democracy. Indeed, they are important objects of democracy. Therefore following Ake's bias, one is prone to accept that the type of democracy observed in this part of the world is seemingly undemocratic in content. Definitely too, the democratization process in Nigeria was improperly monitored or guided. In fact, the hasty infusion of democracy into a state whose prehistoric and aboriginal character has long been perverted into antagonism and incivility, without prior character reformation, is a tremendous oversight. Hence, the inserted democracy was originally, inherently soiled and perverted from the onset. That is, in its prima contact with the state. It is in this inchoate framework that democracy was ignorantly mingled, blended and synthesized with the state-like culture of impunity and indifference. Thereafter, democracy became tormented, and defaced to be a necessary harbinger of violence. According to the former Minister of Police Affairs, General David Jemibowen:

*Our new found democracy became, to some extent, a source of insecurity and lawlessness, as rights were misconstrued and exercised without restraint. The last one year of this government has therefore witnessed an increase in the wave of crimes in various parts of the country.*²

The above means that violence is unwontedly reconciled into the Nigeria system since the acquisition of liberal democracy. Puzzling enough, as against popular expectations, that the state in Nigeria would become more positively persuaded towards the provision of important socio-economic goods, an action that will potently quarantine financially persecuted adult human beings from violence; owing to the anticipated 'dividends of democracy', it rather became more autonomized and indifferent. The question therefore is; *Is democracy democratizing violence?* Apparently, this has become the seeming vulnerability level of democracy in the Nigerian state, over a decade or so and still on. Paradoxically, democracy in Nigeria does not only suffer embryonic contamination, adulteration and defilement; it further develops high failure risks, unwittingly breeding seeds of its own destruction. Such was plotted by the state. Against this backdrop therefore, this study is set out to appraise Nigeria's disposition or efforts towards the containment of violence and related activities in the country since the inception of democracy. We are prone to problematize the seeming flaccidity and vulnerability of the Nigerian state in the face of rising internal violence and

insecurity in the country, despite the claims of being democrats; and the implications therewith.

Democracy and Violence: A Conceptual Discourse

In real terms, democracy is a humanitarian doctrine. It is a concept derived from the Greek term *demos* meaning people. This footing stresses Abraham Lincoln's bias, and in syllable with our traditional belief, that democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. An underlying factor here is the element of liberty to choose. By extension, democracy means empowerment of the people, allotting them absolute rights, a sort of preordained liberty to choose who serves their expectation of freedom best. Thus, democracy should strictly be construed in terms of human liberty. In support, the classical doctrine of democracy underscores common good. Joseph Schumpeter ardently held that:

...Men have natural rights to participate equally in political power, just as they have a natural right to be free from enslavement or to appeal on equal terms to judicial tribunals for protection of their lives and property against assault, trespass or encroachment of any kind. What is known as democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes common good by making people itself decide issues through the election of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will...³

Therefore, liberal democracy comprises of a cluster of basic elements such as free and fair election, freedom of the press, rule of law, universal adult suffrage, human rights, majority rule, protection of minority rights, equal opportunity for all, and fundamental recognition of popular sovereignty.^{4,5} In this sense, democracy is not only passionate in protecting civil liberty and freedom, it is both relevant in mediating between unpreventable but necessary conflicts which may arise among a people bonded together in the form of nation-state. For this alone, democracy has been dubbed to be the only form of government that is capable of fulfilling international covenants on civil and political rights, because of its provisions which is rather for the common good than being unnecessarily protective of individualistic interests. Harvey and Harvey opined that democracy "involves settling affairs according to known rules of government, tolerance towards minority views, regular elections and freedom of speech; above all observance of the rule of law."⁶ More miserly, Diamond conjures democracy as a system of government that meets three essential conditions of life: (a) meaningful and extensive competition among individuals and groups, especially political parties for political offices at regular intervals and excluding the use of force; (b) a highly inclusive level of political participation in the selection of leaders and policies, at least through regular and fair elections, such that no major (adult) social group is excluded; and (c) a level of civil and political liberties. Embedded in these definitions are core attributes that vents the claims of freedom from oppression and suppression of citizens both during and after the electoral process.⁷ Even though democracy may not necessarily embrace good governance *in toto*, the elements of democratic governance like the rule of law, constitutionalism, human rights, equality, civil liberty, universal adult suffrage, free and fair election among others, facilitate the practice of good governance.^{8,9} This inherently imply that an umbilical linkage exist betwixt the concept of democracy and human security. In fact, long before now, Heater have

argued in favour of the centrality of human dignity in the discourse of democracy. He noted that: *There are... five basic elements without which no community can call itself truly democratic. These elements are equality, sovereignty of the people, respect for human life, the rule of law and liberty of the individual.*¹⁰ Hereto, human security and the philosophy of dignity of human person become mutually entangled with the idea of democracy. Thus, securing the lives and properties of the citizenry and freeing them from fear of extreme want and of anxiety, in such a way that they pursue livelihood and other important lawful activities without hindrances, is what democracy simply implies. Or put generally, democracy is most fundamental to internal security. In this context, Imobighe submits that internal security means: *Freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could attenuate internal cohesion and corporate existence of the state's ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values... as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people... internal security also implies freedom from danger to life and property and the presence of a conducive atmosphere for the people to pursue their legitimate interest within the society.*¹¹ This aptly behove the reality that the ability or failure of a given state to effectively meet those basic legitimate aspirations of its people, especially in the aspects of good governance and adequate protection of citizen's lives and properties, have a direct bearing on its internal security, in terms of making or undoing democracy. This extrapolation has a fundamental link with violence.

Most classical scholars, including Gurr, believed that violence is defined as the illegitimate and unauthorized use of force to effect decisions against the will or desires of others. Violence herewith, refers to collective attacks within a political community against the regime, which amounts to the disturbance of the achieved political equilibrium of the given system.^{12,13} Further and more clearly, Locke, in the second treatise of Government, argues that the substantive grounds for a social order resolves around the benefits which the members of the society derives thereof. In the conviction of Locke, an individual denied the benefits of a society may be forced to operate against that society from a vexatious condition of war. Thus, acts of violence may even be justified to some extent. We must not overlook, also, that libertarianism fervently assert that violence is absolutely wrong only if meted against someone who himself has not committed any wrong. On this basis, violence may not be evil as such in absolutism. More especially if directed against an entity which is guilty in order to correct perceived or felt injustices. By these assumptions, a democratic system that fails to fulfill the aspirations of the people at a certain level of advancement may instigate some sort of, howbeit justified, rebellious acts from within. In content therefore, democracy, as other tyrannical and dictatorial forms of government is also at least, a sufficient condition for violence if not properly managed. Though, it may not per se serve as a necessary condition for violence as others may easily become. This is mainly because hardly can there be found a true democratic society where there are no emerging misgivings from time to time. Nascent democracies are mostly vulnerable. And too, who says the mere insertion of democracy into a state structure has potentially displaced such aboriginal form of government it hitherto practiced? Well, as we have seen, 'democracy' has come, but only to unluckily fall upon, never to outshine, pre-existing orientations of governments; such as

dictatorship, despotism, autocracy, tyranny, totalitarianism, oligarchy, gerontocracy, monarchy, plutocracy and so on. We need not stress this further; if the inventors of democracy, for instance, Britain, still operate her preordained monarch system; how then will it be so easy for African states which were merely recently and hesitantly circumcised from the shackles of military rule, to forget those inherent forms of governments that encourage abuse of power, and so soon? African states may have been fortunately rescued, to try democracy, but not fully redeemed from not trying tyrannism. The point being made is that a democratic state which fails to reconcile the recreation of dividends of democracy with the basic needs of its people in time, may face, and indeed suffers high possibility of constant violence, even serious acts of terrorism from dissident groups. If this happens, then internal security is seriously in doubt. In this case, there is likelihood of weakness on the side of the state. This is because the state, though an abstraction of human contraption, has feelings. Thus, natural feelings of guilt (of failure and non-performance) may potently compel the institution of state to either remain silent, seek hasty palliative measures, or develop urgent urge to bargain with violence. As such, violence may inadvertently become democratized or outrightly traditionalized in a democratic system. Such is the seeming fate of the state in Nigeria. And that is our concern here.

The State and Democracy in Nigeria

The Nigerian type of democracy, and as it is with other African states, is unruly anti-people and undemocratic. Ake further confessed that African type of democracy has a huge problem. He maintained that: *What is being foisted on Africa is a version of liberal democracy reduced to the crude simplicity of multi-party elections. This type of democracy...offers the people rights they cannot exercise...freedom which is patently spuriousone of the remarkable features of democratization in Africa is that it is totally indifference to the character of the state....What is the point of choosing 'democratically' those who will control a state apparatus which is inherently undemocratic? The state must be transformed structurally before such elections can be a meaningful exercise in democracy.* Surely, this aptly informs that the state was originally designed to guarantee peace, people's rights and adequate security of lives and properties. And democracy itself, mutually and compatibly programmed to initiate and consolidate an acceptable arrangement, a sort of pro-people character, expected to give plausible momentum to the operation of the state. Though, Ake argued in respect of a certain contradiction in the version of liberal democracy being foisted; it is our honest position that there may be nothing so much inherently evil about the content of such democracy, rather that the imparted democracy tragically fell upon; and got so contaminated by the already polluted character of the state, which have long been defaced and reoriented towards antagonism, indifference and hostility. If for nothing else, democracy as an unfortunate victim of the state contracted the character of impunity. Here we mean; go ahead and rig elections, inflate contracts, loot, steal public funds, kidnap, kill, assassinate, throw explosives, raze down public properties (as once happened in Anambra state) etc. and nothing will ever happen. Only be sure to have the state backings, or at least, backings of individuals with officially recognized names.

Of course, not even the colonial state as most scholars may assume, but primarily the military state which followed, as was the case in most African states that emerged; was culpable for entirely recasting, perverting and travestyng the natural programming of the state. Indeed, it was not until these bad intentions upon the state have been completely and successfully achieved that democracy started travelling, and into Africa. If there is any justification for us, in crude simplicity, to assume that democracy is truly of western origin; then there may be no fear in saying or concluding that 'a white democracy has been painted black,' in its foremost sojourn to, and contact with Africa. Thereafter, the hasty injection of democracy into 'perverted' states in Africa, therewith, ensured quick derangement, superfluous emasculation and castration of the basic ingredients of democracy itself. Let us just say that the democracy found here, personified, is a skeleton. For one thing, the state was able to capitalize and tap on the general philosophy of liberty (we mean - impunity) and freedom-hood provided by liberal democracy, to further corrupt and misrepresent what may be construed as the elements of the acquired democracy. One is therefore not surprised that the installation of democracy rather facilitated indifference and greater autonomization of the Nigerian state from its people instead of the other way round. Upon all these, notwithstanding that a dishonest type of democracy has been intentionally improvised and sustained into longevity, owing to the negated character of the state – that is, by acts of radical and offensive commissions; Ake quarrels that the reputation of being 'democrats' is still always preferred to the inconveniences of practicing even the mere tenets of the perverted 'version of democracy'.

The impacts of these are many. One important outplay is that the Nigerian state becomes intensely indifference to the onerous responsibility of maintaining adequate security regime in the country. In other words, the Nigerian state is unavoidably susceptible to violence owing to its inherent hesitance and democratic failures: to either fix economic hardship to stop people from criminality or fix security institutions to quell criminality and secure citizen's lives and properties. Our views are not very far from that of Dahiru who confirmed that "democracy which is purportedly supposed to engender national unity and cohesion in the country paradoxically generates tension and national disunity."¹⁴ One may not, but genuinely suppose that the spates of violence felt here in Nigeria are indirectly related to the struggle for deeper entrenchment of democracy in the country. Or put this way, they are calculated and naturally sequential attempts by the hopeless segments at the downstream of social production and reproduction, or those holistically stranded or carefully ostracized from the economy, to prevail upon or compel the state to democratize completely. That is, if there is any conviction or assurance that democracy happened down here in the first place. The truth, however, is that oppressive rule (as synonymous with developing states who merely answer democrats) or any other form of rule founded on oppression, deprivation and/or suppression of the perceived legitimate rights and/or freedom of a majority of the people or a certain group of people (as capitalism often engenders) within a social production system is likely to be maintained by constant violence. From this logical framework, we can understand that the rising violence in the country is not directly unconnected to the quality of rule in the country. In this reasoning, a full blown capitalism, as known in Nigeria and elsewhere; which

has failed to carry everybody along; that is, in the democratic philosophy of inclusiveness and socio-economic wellbeing, necessitates urban and rural conflicts and violence. This is likely to lead the state into concessions to those who are dissatisfied with their place in the production and reproduction system if they cannot be completely suppressed or neutralised.¹⁵ A situation like this apparently explains why the Federal Government is perpetually yoked in the face of turbulence, into bargain (as in the case of Niger Delta militants), plea (as in the case of Boko Haram) or quietude (as in refusal to intervene meaningfully into internecine conflicts, of incessant Jos crisis etc.). The irony is that this constant scenario raises high propensity of reverse action from the citizens (victims) of these lawlessness in the form of mass protest, anarchy or outright revolution.¹⁶ As we have variously demonstrated, this is one of the most potent ways of mobilization of mass violence and 'untimely' dis-unification of the Nigerian state.

The State in Nigeria and Democratization of Violence

Acts of violence are commonplace crimes committed against the Nigerian state day after day. However, destructive incidences of violence became particularly well known in the regime of democratic governance in the country. It is sufficient contradiction in itself, that political violence which has become a recurring decimal since the Nigeria-democracy intercourse is mostly necessitated by the electoral process, agreed as a barometric of democracy. If taken to be true, we may rightly argue, that in the case of Nigeria, the object of democracy is actually a necessary condition for violence. Equally too, militancy in the Niger Delta is rather a trend which Nigeria has lived with, virtually all her life. The unfortunate thing, though, is that it has become more lethal. Boko Haram Islamic sect is also a known terrorist group working arduously for the disintegration of Nigeria. altogether, there have been well over 90 violent ethno-religious conflicts in the country with over 100,000 lives lost in the process since 1999. Particularly, the incessant Jos crisis and the ongoing Boko Haram disturbances are also major challenges of the Nigeria democracy. More importantly, these acts of violence are perpetrated by illegally armed persons for one reason or the other. Nevertheless, even if they bear certain differential agendas, one point is clear. That is, that these illegally armed persons, owing to economic dissatisfaction, or perceived failure of the regime in power to deliver and trickle down democratic goods; feel frustrated and require urgent attention of the Federal Government through the perpetration of violence. However, our concern here is that these uprisings sabotage and negate the very essence of democracy, which in itself ultimately pledges the guarantee and protection of citizens' lives and properties. Thus, the continued failure and inability of the Nigerian state to take decisive and assertive socio-economic and security measures over these issues tantamount to travesty of democracy.

To begin with, the Nigerian state has continued to overlook the security issues associated with arms smuggling into the country, which is the main underlying factor behind the lifelong coexistence of acts of violence in the country. The laxity of border control is key issue in this regard. In fact, it is calculated that there could be as many as 1000 arms smuggling routes, which form a network of roads around the three most notorious arms smuggling frontiers in Nigeria. The south-west having Idi-Iroko in the Egbado area of Ogun state and Seme in Lagos state; the south-south also having the port city of Warri in Delta state; and the north-

east, at the borders of Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe states which they share with Niger and Cameroon.¹⁷ Thus, Ilesanmi worries that most of the outlawed goods, especially arms and ammunition are deceptively concealed in various unsuspecting items such as drums and packages of fake pharmaceutical raw materials, transport buses, refrigerators, freezers, air conditioner compressors, processed/frozen foods packages, vehicle tyres and tubes, used automobiles and industrial machinery spare parts etc., and smuggled into Nigeria from aliens residing in neighbouring countries.¹⁸ These realities are consciously condoned in Nigeria. According to the Nigerian Minister of Interior, Mr Abba Moro:

*At the moment, we are aware of 84 border posts in Nigeria. Of course, we have numerous others that are rather irregular. People who perpetrate the acts that are inimical to national security are people who cross to Nigeria through these irregular entry points...Plans are at the advanced level for the Ministry of Interior and the Immigration Service to work in conjunction with the Boundaries Commission, to identify all our boundaries.*¹⁹

This shows that the Nigerian government has purposely refused to even have common knowledge of the expansiveness of its borders. In effect, dangerous weapons are steadily pushed into the country for various acts of violence that inherently undermine the democratic fundamentals of right to life and freedom of the citizens. Over the years, the Nigerian state have only resorted to hasty arrangement of amnesty/ arms collection exercises in order to retrieve those illegal arms, of which it tacitly welcomed when it consciously threw its national frontiers open. In fact, there have been well over three successful amnesty/arms collection exercises in Nigeria, in an effort to mop up illegal weapons that now flood Niger Delta with which violence are constantly perpetrated. The calculation here is that if the Federal Government is able to woe out the militants from engaging in criminality, by paying them off and discounting their offences, then those illegal weapons will be totally retrieved by the government and the whole militancy issue put to eternal rest.

Howbeit, such amnesty assumptions have not only proved abortive and unsuccessful in containing the Niger Delta unrest but have variously faced quantum abuse and misuse over the years. The following table shows the various amnesty/arms collection exercises undertaken by the government since year 2001.

Table 1: Illegal Weapons Collected by Federal Government in Disarmament Programmes (1999-2009)

Year	No. of Illegal Weapons Surrendered	Participants	Coordinating Body	Destruction Exercise
July 2001	428 riffles 494 imported pistols 287 local pistols 48 dane guns	Ijaw Youths and many cult groups located in Niger Delta	National Committee	buried at sea
Jan. 2002- June 2003	1,902 assorted firearms 13,271 rounds of ammunition	Niger Delta cult groups	National Committee	not destroyed
2004	1000 guns (AK-47s)	NDPVF and NDV	FG Committee	not destroyed

	and SA. Vz 58s)		(chaired by Peter Odili)	
2007	Not successful	MEND	Rivers State Govt.	-
2009	Over 10,000 weapons-2,760 assorted guns, 287, 445 ammunition of different caliber, 18 gun-boats, 763 dynamites, 1,090 dynamite caps, 3, 155 magazines, eight rocket launchers and several dynamite cables, bullet proof jackets and jack-knives	Over 1,000 Niger Delta militants (ungrouped)	Amnesty implementation Committee	not destroyed

Sources: Compiled from Asuni;²⁰ International Alert,²¹ and Ginifer and Ismail²².

Inter alia, the above table informs that none of the amnesty programmes organised in this country has had any meaningful and sustainable impact on the attendants, that is, the militants. The last amnesty exercise of 2009/2010, which cost the Federal Government over 98 billion naira was the worst so far.²³ Indeed, violence rather escalated in the period of amnesty programmes. What an irony. It is clear that the last amnesty programme rather gave more impetus to a rise in criminality. To corroborate this truth, in an interview with *Weekly Trust*, Mr. Tobore Isaac, a resident of Warri in Delta state, who says he does business daily as a boat driver confirmed that:

*We all watched the militants surrender their arms during the amnesty program, but I tell you, when you see them operating on the high sea now, it is as if they have not surrendered anything. They are still well armed, if not better armed than before. They still fill ships with oil from broken pipes and flow stations.*²⁴

Recently, Shell Petroleum Company shut down its Imo River flow station (located in Imo State) owing to constant bunkering of the oil facilities in the station leading to a loss/shut-in in production of about 25,000 barrels of crude oil.²⁵ These go on to show that the Nigerian state has rather domesticated violence through the amnesty programmes against general expectations. By a simple understanding, amnesty means forgiveness of offences and bestowment of unmerited freedom and 'favours' to offenders of the state. But in another sense, it can as well imply freedom from the law in order to perpetrate more harm as it has become. But for how long will militants/armed groups live in criminality so that amnesty will abound? Thereafter, virtually all the amnesty programmes held in this country have after an ad-hoc period collapsed. The Federal Government has only achieved a simplistic and ephemeralistic détente in the whole exercises. The important question here remains, for how long will the Federal Government hoist the country and its over 149 million important persons, collectively known as 'good people, great nation' on a limping security structure? The outcome is an overwhelming cataclysmal collapse. In essence, if it is well known that intense violence against the state draws the attention of the Federal Government for a

reward over a crime, nicknamed and modified as 'negotiation' instead of reprisal, then too many potential armed denominations across all corners of the country, including the fledging MASSOB, are systematically encouraged. Thus, an inkling of holistic disintegration looms. Besides this, the whole exercise tends to encourage disobedience to law and discourage observance of the law, most especially when the non militants are carefully excluded from this 'illegal arms for money politics'. But more to the already stated is the fact that after this magnanimous amnesty is being granted, there tends to evolve many other split groups that seek for recognition. And for this, they usually begin by asserting more lethal attacks. Before it is known, another amnesty bell, which has long waited, will ring. The exercise go on and on in this cyclic trend. Of course, high level government officials are not only involved in oil bunkering business,²⁶ but have protected and backed armed militias to enable them to continue operating without interference by security forces.²⁷

In another dimension altogether, the Nigerian habitats have been vulnerably exposed to the terrors of Boko Haram Islamic sect, who use explosives and grenade launchers to blow up the country and its important people. This act is the hallmark of terrorism. To be sure, over 3000 lives have been decimated so far. While we do not intend to dabble into the details of their ferocious atrocities, our worry is that the Federal Government seeks more of negotiation with the group, rather than prosecution. While the new Police Affairs Minister, Navy Captain Caleb Olubolade (rtd) moved for a Federal Government negotiation with the Boko Haram sect,²⁸ dialogue and negotiation with the group was also recommended in a report recently submitted to President Goodluck Jonathan by the Security Committee inaugurated to look into security issues in Northern Nigeria.²⁹

In line, former President Olusegun Obasanjo worries that such group acting strangely but not insane has an agenda and calls for consultation with the group, and later embarked on same. Whichever option preferred, our contention is that the government has over the years, lacked the political will for correcting the remote provocations of the activities of armed groups and persons in the country, which results to the expansion and intensification of the activities of these groups. More so, the government has paid lip service toward alleviating poverty and instituting effective security architecture in the country, only to always resort to negotiation with armed groups. In the end, billions of naira is squandered in the process. Of important concern however, is the docility of the state in responding assertively over critical security issues. The cases of ethno-religious violence, politically motivated violence and electoral violence are major concerns. Why has the successive Nigerian leadership remained adamant to the recurring Jos crises and electoral violence in the country? For electoral violence, the case of the 2011 election was the worst so far. A situation where over 500 persons were brutally massacred, in the cities of Zonkwa (316 persons), Zangon-Kataf (147 persons) and Kafanchan (83 persons), including 25 youth corps members, all in the Southern Kaduna; and in Kano over 200 persons killed with several houses and churches burnt; and several others killed elsewhere; all lives lost totaling over 1000 with over 40,000 persons displaced, in the post-election violence which occurred on 23rd April, 2011.³⁰ The most disturbing aspect of the whole issue is that nobody talks about prosecuting the culprits. This may not be a

surprise though, as politicians have been involved in arming and equipping unlawful groups and persons to perpetrate mayhem during elections, in order to sway the process to their selfish advantages without adequately retrieving those weapons back after the elections. This unpatriotic indulgence and connivance of the ruling elites is further proven by the fact that no single person or persons have ever been prosecuted, convicted or jailed for electoral offence since 1999.³¹

The Prosecution Gaps

Importantly, the worrisome issue we should set our minds upon is the seeming silence of the Federal Government in prosecuting perpetrators of criminality. Today, the lingering Jos crisis, bordering on indigene-settler acrimony has never received effective attention from successive Nigerian leadership. The same goes with the various electoral, ethno-religious violence and other uprisings replete in the country. Particularly, out of 12,000 arrests made for trafficking and smuggling of illegal weapons (used in promoting violence) into the country by Nigerian security agencies, between 1990 and 1998, only 500 representing 4.2 percent were successfully prosecuted and since the period of democracy, it has become worst.³² At a recent conference on National Security organized by the Institute for Peace and Conflict Resolution, at Abuja, the Nigerian state was bemoaned for not effectively prosecuting illegally armed groups in the country.³³ And so far, no single person has been prosecuted for electoral violence in the country.³⁴

Meanwhile, in its submission, the Sheik Ahmed Lemu Panel for 2011 post-election violence, indicted and incriminated the Nigerian state as accomplice to eruptions of violence in the country, owing to its docility and insensitivity towards prosecution of perpetrators. More importantly, the Lemu Panel feared that the successive Nigerian leadership purposely shelved various reports and recommendations of successive security Panels set up to investigate issues of insecurity and criminality in country. The Panel concludes this way:

*The first and probably most important cause is the failure on the part of the previous successive regimes since the military handover of power in 1999 to implement the recommendations of various committees, commissions and panels that had taken place in our nation. That failure facilitated the wide spread sense of impunity in the culprits and perpetrators of crimes and violence in the Nigerian society. We recommend to your Excellency to order security agencies to fish out culprits of violence for prosecution.*³⁵

This goes on to exemplify that the advent of democracy rather democratized violence in the country. Hence, in a modest language, the Lemu Panel urged Mr. President to revisit previous reports of security panels and order the security agencies into action. Meaning that the successive regimes, as they found, have purposely and intentionally chosen to overlook and close eyes on violence activists. It is within this circumference that we can well understand the reoccurring decimal of Jos crisis, ethno-religious violence, electoral violence etc. Below are chronicles of successive security Panels set up by the Federal Government to carry out investigations on violence disturbances nationwide since 1999.

- (1) Babalakin Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Bauchi State Civil Disturbance
- (2) Karibi Whyte Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Kafanchan Disturbances

- (3) Niki Tobi Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Plateau State Disturbances
- (4) Justice Sankey Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Wase and Langtang Disturbances
- (5) Justice Disu Judicial of Inquiry into Plateau State Disturbances
- (6) Professor Tamuno Panel of Inquiry on National Security
- (7) Justice Uwais Electoral Reform Committee.

It agitates the mind that lots of monies are spent in funding these panels, yet, none of the various reports submitted so far have been thoroughly examined, not to talk of implementing the recommendations thereof. If and indeed as it is, that the Nigerian leadership has chosen to remain allergic to these reports; why set up the non-sequitor panels? Of course, this endemic exhibition of adamancy has high tendency of crisis provocation. Definitely, as the Lemu Panel observed, many victims of these previous disturbances are seriously nursing feelings of reprisals and have only been waiting for the slightest excuse to move into action. The overall implication is that violence is further perpetrated and lots of lives either obliterated or badly damaged in the process. The concern here is that Nigeria may inadvertently be tilting towards a failed state. Chomsky notes that failed states are those "that do not protect their citizens from violence and perhaps even destruction, that regard themselves as beyond the reach of domestic or international law, and that suffer from a 'democratic deficit', having democratic forms but with limited substance."³⁶ Thus, states fail whenever violence is overwhelmingly incorporated, institutionalized, traditionalized and democratized in its social fabric to the extent of threatening the very essence of democracy. The point being made is that the effort of the Nigerian state to contaminate democracy; and its failure to entrench what is left or the least ingredients of such infected democracy, especially by not proactively tackling socio-economic 'inconveniences' that remotely prompt or nourish internal violence, is unwontedly dragging her into the region of a failed state. Thence, the likelihood of precocious balkanization and cataclysmic disintegration may never be far off if things continue falling apart in this way, and for a little longer.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analyses have well demonstrated that the state in Nigeria is rapidly incorporating, institutionalizing, traditionalizing or democratizing violence into its internal system. This is one of the important undoing of the Nigerian type of democracy. We noted that the level of attention devoted by the Nigerian Government towards settling the problem has never been encouraging. The irony is that while democracy in its original formation is perceived to serve as an enduring tool for natural unification and peaceful aggregation of a people, with maximum guarantee of security of lives and properties; the case of the democracy seen here in Nigeria is rather the opposite. In the first place, the state in Nigeria, owing to its unruly character contaminated the democracy it bargained for, at first contact. As such, democracy became a destructive tool in the hands of the operators of the state. We found that the state in Nigeria democratizes violence, owing to the failure of its successive stewardship to either fix economic hardship to stop people from criminality or fix security institutions to quell unjust criminality and secure citizen's lives and properties. Against this self inflicted vulnerability highlighted above, the successive Nigerian leadership further institutionalizes and encourages internal violence by constantly bargaining with, and keeping

blind eyes on perpetrators of violence instead of prosecuting them according to the law of the country. Altogether, the violence presently perpetrated by dissident groups in the country such as Niger Delta Militants, Boko Haram, Jos crisis mongers, electoral violence culprits etc. endangers the livelihood and existence of the generality of the Nigerian populace. The reverse effect of such rising violence and rising state indifference thereto are such threats of anarchy and revolt by the populace themselves, against the state itself, for violating their democratic rights to life and property and of human dignity. Hence, things must be urgently corrected. The Federal Government should quickly dump the ad-hoc amnesty programmes which have high failure rate. Socio-economic problems in the country should rather be address in absolutism. The human welfare parameters must be met in order to dissuade criminality in the country. The security arrangement in the country should be repositioned to preemptively face the challenges of rising violence in the country. More importantly, the Federal Government should holistically revisit security reports made by various panels set up to investigate violence in the country and quickly implement the recommendations made thereof. Indeed, these are important ways of tackling violence, entrenching democracy and rejecting unwanted or even (un)timely balkanization.

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