

Investing in the Nigerian People: The Panacea for Violence and Terrorism

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ABSTRACT: Investing in the Nigerian People is the panacea for the violence and terrorism currently rocking the entire landscape of Nigeria as a country. The social charter is a contract between the individuals (Nigerians) and the government of Nigerian in which the government recognizes the rights of the people and responsibilities. The government of various times have promised to delivers these basic necessities which include potable water, food, clothing, shelter, adequate nutrition, basic education, primary health care, productive assets, security and protection from shocks and risks, for a decent human existence. Social conditions in Nigeria present a startling paradox: despite a rich endowment of natural and human resources, most of the country is poor. For decades, the country has struggled to improve socio economic conditions, which have declined despite increasing revenue from crude oil, poverty in Nigeria have stratified and polarized Nigerian society between the haves and the have not, north and south, educated and the uneducated, creating a kind of dynasty for the poor. The resulting tensions and social conflicts have eroded the fabric that has been holding the country together. The challenge is not only to reform the economy in order to boost economic growth but also to empower the people as a means of revitalizing the weakened social pillar. Doing, so, calls for a human rights approach to development planning that puts people at the control of development effort. This paper is an attempt in this direction.

Key Words: Violence, Terrorism, Poverty, Investment, Security.

Introduction

Nigeria is a country blessed with great natural wealth. Despite the great natural wealth, Nigeria is poor and social development is limited. Three main problems hamper progress: Not all our people enjoy the same chance of prosperity, past governments in Nigeria, instead of focusing on delivering essential public services assumed control of major sources of national income. In the process, corruption thrived in public sector and gained a strong foothold in society. Although the environment for private enterprise is improving, there are still many challenges.

Although Nigeria is rich in natural and human resources, seven of every ten Nigerians live in less than one dollar a day. Before the restoration of democracy, Nigeria suffered setback that tarnished its reputation. Considering the Kuru deterioration of 2001 i.e. to build a truly good African democratic country, politically united integrated and stable, economically prosperous, socially organized with equal opportunity for all, and responsibility for all, to become the catalyst of African Renaissance and making adequate all-embracing contribution sub regionally and globally. Nigerians legacy of mismanagement and corrupt governance has encouraged many people to seek ways of sharing the natural cake instead of helping to bake it. By 1999 corruption was practically institutionalized. Government was widely regarded as a provider of large contracts, distributed by officers in power to people wealthy enough to buy their influence. This was particularly to in the case of the oil industry. Over time, the judiciary became intimidated as the rich and powerful manipulated laws and regulations to their advantage instead of engaging in production activities that would help our economy grow, people chose instead to peddle their influence and position. The legitimacy and stability of the state suffered, as people began to devise ways to survive that lay outside the law.

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to progress has been the boom and bust mode of economic management, encouraged by the dominance of oil in the economy. Past governments allowed oil income to influence spending, when income was high, spending was high, while dips in oil prices were treated as temporary. Together with poor coordination between federal and state government in budgeting and expenditure, this practice led to spiralling debt. Today, all tiers of government spend far more than they earns. The deficit for the first five years alone amounts to more than N1 trillion. With external and domestic debt of 70 percent of GDP, current revenue is largely eaten up just by debt service.

Nigeria has one of the weakest economies in the world. It has lost decades of development as a result of slow economic growth. Despite oil export earnings of about 300 billion dollars since the mid 1970s, average income in the year 2000 was 20 percent lower than in 1975. Despite the mounting debt burden, past governments did not control public expenditure. Policies were not coordinated within federal departments or between federal and state governments. As a result, the national plan and budget have little relevance today, as a guide to funding and implementing development programmes.

Over dependence on oil and traditional sectors such as agriculture and services, is partly due to the hostile business environment. Businesses wishing to operate in Nigeria face many constraints, including poor infrastructure, particularly, road networks and electricity, supply, inadequate physical, security, corruption, weak enforcement, of constraints, and the high cost of finance. These factors have deterred foreign entrepreneurs from investing in Nigeria and reduced many Nigerians to take their money and skills abroad.

It is pertinent there to clarify some key concepts used in this paper to make the discussion, more robust and detailed. Violence is a fluid concept. It could take several forms, physical psychological, social, political, and even cultural. Violence or a violent act, involves threat or actual execution of acts which have actual or potential capacity to inflict physical, emotional and psychological injury in a person or group of persons (Short & Wolfgang, 1972) Erickson (1985) felt that violence or violent act may also be collective (perpetrated by a group/ or individual (perpetrated by individual). It therefore means that when social and political sphere is contested or economic measures are allocated the potential for conflict is also there. Violence is inevitable when the accommodation structure breakdown.

Conflict could be described as a situation or condition of disharmony in an interaction process, so conflict erupts when interest of various groups clashes. Imobigbe (1992) points out that conflict is not limited to any particular level of interaction. In other words, it could incur at any level of human interaction and it often manifest violent activities.

Security is the state of being secure from danger or risk. It is a situation when either an individual social group or geo-political entity is protected or defended against any form of danger, espionage or attack of any sort, internally or externally (Okene, 2010). Basically there are two types of security, by the crux of this study is on National security. National security implies the ability of Nigerian country to protect, develop itself, promote to cherished values, legitimate interest, and project the standing of living and well being of its people. Imobigbe (1991) sees security as the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and cooperate existence of the state and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people.

Terrorism can be conceived in terms of a series of trends and factors which are common to a majority of terrorist acts. These include (i) the use of violence or force in the manner of threat or action (2) the primary objective is a political one (3) thriving on the use of fear or terror to elicit the desired reaction (4) the expectation that the perpetrated actions will induce psychological and political effects and responses (Cunningham, 2003). African Union (AU) convention on prevention and combating terrorism defined terrorism as

“Any act which is a violation of the criminalwhich may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of or cause serious injury or death to any person, any number or group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated and intended to (a) intimidate, put in fear, coerce or induce any government, body institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint or to act according to certain principles or (b) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency or (s) to create general insurrection in a state”.

Violence and Terrorism in Nigeria

A country endowed with mineral and human resources capable of ensuring development remains ridden with crisis of governance. Nigeria is a notable country, not only in West Africa and the entire continent, but in the whole world, faces an unprecedented worrisome security challenge: Hence, this problem has brought to the limelight, the issue of persisting state failure and institutional decay in the

country. The soldiers retreat into the barracks in May 1999 signaled an expansion of criminality with urban areas, along high ways and in the border lands (Bauh, 2004). Before now, the most serious security challenge, however has been the intensification of the insurgency in the Niger Delta, an area viewed as increasingly lawless and unsafe particularly for foreign nationalists and Nigerians associated with the oil industry, government officials and security forces (Daulisu, 2016). Now the scale of terrorists attack that have rocked the country since the turn of the decade have been unprecedented even by the country” non post – independence standards (Colomon, 2012). Since independence from Britain in 1960, the country has experienced deep seated divisions, pervasive instability and recurring conflicts (Lewis, 2011), The constituents parts of the Nigeria society have each felt aggrieved, in one way of the other. For example, people from the Niger Delta states feel they have been denied fair benefits from their region natural resources (Omilusi, 2016). Nigeria presents the picture of a country where divisionist tendencies abound and in which tensions and violence permeate state–society relations. The absence of a comprehensive constitutional resolution of these matters has led to a strategy of “keeping the lid” on the smouldering cauldron, often though the forceful suppression of dissent. Frequently, violence breeds further violence leading to an escalating cycle of disorder (Mustapha, 2013) Nigeria is a country where it is difficult to distinguish between politically motivated terrorism on the one hand and armed criminality on the other (Adigbuo, 2014). According to him, there is an inseparable bond between terrorism and criminality in Nigeria. In a country such as Nigeria, which is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethnics, politically motivated, revolt by the masses and religious conflicts, and urgently in need of proactive public policies agents of peace, and conflict managers scholarly outing of this nature is imperative and timely and a welcome development and this is a step in that direction.

Major National Security threats in Nigeria

According to Thurston 2012, Nigeria faces five major national security threats. First the Boko Haram uprising in Northern Nigeria in the North Eastern States Borno, Yobe and Adamawa, and of recent extended to the Northwestern States of Sokoto Zamfara, all of these have exacerbated Muslim – Christians tensions of the national level. Second, localized cycles of Muslim – Christians violence in the middle belt, especially in Kaduna and Plateau State, which periodically over –whelm the capacities of local authorities to restore order. Third, electoral violence at the local state and national levels, which subverts the integrity of electoral processes and usually claims hundred of lives. Fourth, militant groups, criminals and pirates in the oil - rich states of the Niger Delta and off shore zones which target the government, private companies, ordinary citizens, in addition to stealing oil and destroying infrastructure. Finally, strains on resources and environmental devastation which sap Nigerian” capacity to feed and care for its citizens.

The spate of violence and insurgencies occasioned but discontents in Nigerian provide detailed evidence of contemporary insecurity in the country (Kwaja, 2013). The country’s internal security challenges have roots in its history, geographical structure, ethno-religion corruption and slow socio-economic development (Udounowa, 2013) Nigeria has witnessed brutal confrontations and massive assault from terrorists groups. The most ruthless blood thirsty and destruction both in terms of demonic brutality, mindless savagery and flagrant disobedience to the principles of peace and stability of the country is Boko Haram.

Hence, by failing to take effective measures to stem the tide of violence, the Nigerian authorities have fostered a climate of impunity. They are creating conditions, conducive to an escalation of violence. As can be witnessed daily, such violence has reached a deadly level that glaringly reveals the incapacitation and helplessness of the Nigerian government particularly with the bombing activities of the Boko Haram sect. Tragically, sometimes in 2011, the then President Goodluck Jonathan lamented that the dreaded Islamic sect, Boko Haram infiltrated his government, executive, legislative and judiciary arms of government as well as the police and armed forces, Now the paradox of Nigerian security is that instead of the state being the framework of lawful order, and the highest source of governing authority, it now constitutes a highest threat to itself. Governance in Nigeria has for decades been characterized by predatory elites and incomplete institutional development. The general attitude is that government positions are avenues to enrich oneself and one” patronage network (Antiwi-Danso, 2012).

As a result ordinary Nigerians are not only disappointed with the on-going lack of services or infrastructure, but they are also disenchanted, if not furious with their government (Forest, 2012). The political economy of oil distribution has shaped the style and quality of governance and levels of corruption in the country. Large oil revenues encourage rent - seeking and lack of accountability since they do not entail the direct relationship with the population that is implied by taxation. Oke (2011) observes that the

Nigerian state is characterized by a confluence of factors. According to him “the Nigerian state remains oppressive, privatized unpopular and unhegemonic. The state is barely able to stand on neutral ground to mediate conflict, because it lacks autonomy from the political class. It is difficult to separate government from the state much less the personalities.

Empowering People as the Panacea for Violence and Terrorism in Nigeria: Some Suggestions

Meeting the needs of our people and nation is the primary aim of the plan for prosperity. As a matter of fact, every Nigerian has the right to adequate water and sanitation, nutrition, clothing, shelter, basic education and health care as well as physical security and the means of making a living. The empowering plans most include plans for creating jobs, creating affordable housing, improving health care services, strengthening the skill base, protecting the vulnerable and the promotion of peace and security.

- (i) **Job Creation:** At 5.3%, the rate of urbanization in Nigeria is among the highest in the world. Since manufacturing is stagnant, there are few jobs for the growing urban population and urban unemployment is currently estimated at 10.8%. Government at all levels should invest in the people by creating million of jobs, making it easier for private enterprises to thrive by training people in skills relevant for the world of work, and by promoting integrated rural development in collaboration with the states.
- (ii) **Creating affordable housing:** Nigeria as a country needs more houses that average Nigerians can build. The Nigerian government at all levels can also take some of these recommended steps to make their dreams come to pass. (i) Make it easier for developers to buy land on which to build affordable housing (2) cut the cost of building houses by encouraging the use of local building materials, (3) train a new generation of architects in designing low cost housing (4) enable construction companies and local and state government to assume responsibility for providing low cost housing
- (iii) **Improving Health Care services:** The government at all levels should design a strong national health system that can deliver effective, grow quality and affordable services to an average Nigerian. This new policies should target priority diseases such as Malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, reproductive health related diseases and cancer. A strong emphasis on health education will help make Nigerians more aware of their rights and obligations regarding health services as well as promote disease prevention. More support should be given to National Health Insurance scheme and blood transfusion service. The government should establish a strong manufacturing base for manufacture of drugs and reagents. Anti natal, post natal and family planning services should be made available and affordable to reduce material and infant mortality.
- (iv) **Strengthening the skill base:** Nigeria future depends on our youths. The youths are our future leaders and thus strengthening the skill base of the youths cannot be over emphasized. The implementation of the Universal Basic Education law to increase enrolment and provide educated and professional qualities teachers is a welcome development. Government at all levels should bring in more courses than are titled towards vocational, technological and entrepreneurial in nature. Providing social distance learning and making preparations for nomadic education is also encouraged. The university Autonomy act which permits universities to attract private sector funding and institute near mechanism to cover their operating cost should be encouraged. Students should be exposed to mobilization and orientation campaign that emphasize the critical importance of hard work, discipline and selfless service.
- (v) **Protecting the Vulnerables :** Government at all levels should pay special attention to all groups regarded as vulnerable. Government should provide ways to reduce poverty. Programmes that will promote the welfare of these especially in the rural areas of widows, orphans, physically, incapacitated, and mentally sick individuals should be put in place. Unemployment should be reduced by giving jobs (skilled and unskilled jobs) to individuals seeking for such.
- (xi) **Promoting peace and security:** The government at all levels should work a national plan that will reform the security sector, reorient police officers to offer more people friendly service. The government at all levels should also establish an early warning and response system that will detect conflicts and maintain and sustain structures and processes that promote a peaceful culture.
- (xii) **Promoting Private Enterprise:** The private sector is Nigeria engine room of growth. The government at all levels should make certain fundamental changes to create an environment in which business should thrive. Government at all levels should not spend more than it takes. It should also not pay for unbudgeted programmes or budgets and not purchase goods or services

that do not contribute to Nigeria development. Government at all levels should diversify the economy from oil, privatize deregulate and liberalize publicly owned industries, generate employment, develop infrastructure transport and telecommunication infrastructure inclusive.

- (viii) **Improving Infrastructure:** Power alone account for five percent of new business start up costs. Government at all levels should provide more and more reliable power to boost businesses especially small and medium sized business located in the rural and urban areas. Government should set up a new regulatory agency to increase access to electricity in the rural areas. Governments at all levels should provide portable water for domestic chores and economically productive activities, to about 60% of the population.
- (ix) **Promoting Industry:** Government should revive the dying and neglected industrial sector, rely more on social resources and less on imports. Establishment of more local research centers and development strategy that seeks to promote services and technology based small medium sized industries should be encouraged. Government at all levels should be encouraged to stop squandering to natural resources by selling them as crude products, but should be processed in Nigeria: Repairs and replacement of moribund refineries in Nigeria is a welcome development.
- (x) **Improving Agriculture:** Agriculture is the second largest source of national wealth after oil should be given attention it deserves. Government at all levels should source and provide higher yielding crop varieties and provide extra support to agricultural research and training. Credit incentives should be given to farmers. Food ware houses and banks should be refurbished to increase the capacity of storage and move closer to food security.

Conclusion

This paper has look at how investing in the people is a panacea for violence and terrorism in Nigeria. Nigeria which is currently entangled in the web of combustible lingering ethnic religious, ecological economic and socio-political conflicts is in dare need for proactive public policies, agents of peace, meaningful suggestions and conflict management strategies. The scholarly outing is an attempt to suggest some measures if put in place will go a long way to slow down the tide of violent acts and terrorism in Nigeria. Some state governments have already designed and are implementing their own state economic empowerment and development strategy. Other states still need to complete their own at necessary complement to these. Medium term planning who needs to be mainstreamed at the local government levels along with more effective accountability and transparency. For sustainable poverty reduction in Nigeria, the states and local governments also need serious reforms. Everyone has a role to play. If everyone plays it well, Nigeria will surely be great again and a new Nigeria shall surely emerge.

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