Violent Conflict and National Development in Nigeria

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Conflict is inevitable in any organization, however, the dimension at which violent conflicts are being perpetrated in Nigeria is unprecedented. It is to this extent that this study examines the causes, the perpetrators, and the effects of violent conflict on the people and national development in Nigeria. This is with a view to establishing development challenges in Nigeria and proffer pragmatic solutions. The data for the study were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The study revealed that violent conflict in Nigeria could not be dissociated from bad governance manifesting in inequality, injustice, unemployment, and poverty, among others. Furthermore, the study revealed that violent conflict has become economic activities, and people provoke it, in other to have food on their tables and keep their bodies and souls together. The perpetrator of violent conflict as revealed by the study included – the pastoralists, insurgents, bandits, and extremists, the majority of whom are youth. The effects of violent conflict in Nigeria included – dispossession of people of the necessities of life; displacement of people; losses of limb; and loss of life. Furthermore, violent conflict has led to the destruction of few infrastructural facilities in Nigeria; ruined many economic businesses; and chased away foreign investors. The study further revealed that violent conflict brought about an increase in crime rates, and consequently an increase in security spending. The study concluded that violent conflict is a clog to national development, beyond this, it is capable of jeopardizing the corporate existence of the nation. The study recommends that the government and other stakeholders in Nigeria's governance and administration should first of all address the issue of poverty and inequality.

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INTRODUCTION

In every society where people relate and interact, there is bound to be conflict. Put differently, in the course of performing their daily activities and endeavors, people do come in contact with one another. In the course of their interactions, transactions, and relations, there is the possibility that conflict occurs. Since a man must relate with other men in his environment, issues of divergence will always spring up, as a result of diverse interests, which clash with one another, and which induce disagreement or confrontation (Folarin 2013). Apart from this, in any situation where one man tries to outsmart the others, conflict is bound to happen. In essence, the conflict has thus become inevitable and has been part of every society (Adegbami 2020). Conflict has been discovered to be a major impediment to development, while peace is a major ingredient that can facilitate meaningful development in a given society (Federal Government of Germany 2017). Although several explanations have been advanced for the creeping level of development in Nigeria, little to no attention has been given to issues of violent conflict as a major inhibition to national development. It is undeniable fact that the country is bequeathed with abundant resources which are capable of turning the life of the country around, in terms of development in all sectors of the economy and social life. Nevertheless, its inability to nip in the bud various issues that spawn conflict has continued to cost the country much-needed development.

Violent conflict is seen as evidence and a symptom of "state collapse" or "state failure" (Ghani and Lockhart 2008), and a collapsed state breeds political instability, political disturbances, political unrest, and a conflictual environment (Iqbal and Starr 2008). The state does fail when it can no longer manage its internal crises and leave them to escalate into violent conflict which consequently incapacitates the government from rendering its constitutional responsibilities to the citizenry. In such a situation, the government loses its legitimacy. In addition to this, the very nature of the state becomes "illegitimate in the eyes and the hearts of a growing plurality of its citizens" (Rotberg 2003, 1). Thus, it is not surprising that out of ten of the world's poorest countries, eight of them became poor and suffering, or have suffered, due to large scale violent conflict. This is because violent conflicts have their costs on the people, the country, and its socio-economic activities. In essence, violent conflict is found to be a major source of poverty and underdevelopment in developing countries of the world (Stewart 2002).

In the case of Nigeria, the rate at which violent acts are being perpetrated is unprecedented, to the extent that the country always remains in the news on issues relating to violent conflict. Violent conflict cuts across different parts of the country, but in the last 16 years, the 3 geo-political zones of North-West, North-

East, and North-Central Nigeria have continued to feel more devastating cases than other parts of the country (Crisis Group 2020). Violent conflict in its entirety negates peaceful coexistence and security, as well as constituting inhibition to national development (Mulata 2016). It is to this extent that this study becomes important to analyze the effects of violent conflict on national development in Nigeria. To achieve this, this study used both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary data were generated through interviews with selected respondents that have in-depth knowledge of the subject under consideration. And secondary data were sourced from academic journals, textbooks, official documents on the subject matter, and newspapers related to the study.

Apart from the introductory segment, the paper is further divided into five sections. The first section deals with the theoretical perspective of violent conflict, while the second section expounds on the inducing factors of violent conflict in Nigeria. The third section discusses the menace of violent conflict in Nigeria. This will be followed by the fourth section which focuses on violent conflict: implications for Nigerians and Nigeria's development, while the fifth section is devoted to conclusion and recommendations.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE OF VIOLENT CONFLICT

Conflict has become part of human life that can be ignited by the struggle for scarce resources, division of functions, power relations, and role differentiation. Over the years, the concept has acquired a plethora of meanings, as well as generating considerable contradiction and controversy which end up leaving scholars and administrators alike in an uncertain situation about its real meaning and relevance (Bercovitch 1983).

Singer (1949), as cited in Bercovitch (1983), sees conflict as a sort of destructive violence that is occasioned by inefficiency and irrationality. In this context, inefficiency can be seen as a direct result of irrationality. In other words, conflict is bound to occur in a society where there is no competency in the way and manner that daily activities are being carried out. As such, every irrational society is bound to engulf in violent conflict. To Nicholson (1992) and Galtung (2009), conflict involves incompatible or irreconcilable goals that are irresoluble. Conflict does occur as a result of mutually inconsistent acts of individuals or groups, concerning their wants, needs, or obligations. It is a state of disagreement or hostility, between and among people in an organization. Thus, conflict is a situation where two or more different parties are incongruous in their views and act according to their different views without having an accord. It is a state where people are pursuing incompatible goals that can lead to a collision. In his study,

Bercovitch (1983) sees conflict as a social interaction whereby different parties compete for scarce resources or values. Conflict thus means all types of unfriendly interactions precipitated by incompatible objectives among a different set of people. In a similar vein, Diez, Stetter, and Albert (2006) see conflict as a sort of fierce contest between/among people with differing desires, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals. That is, conflict connotes the incompatibility of subject positions. Suffice to say that opposition or incompatibility spawn conflict. Pia and Diez (2007) state that conflict is not at all times violent. However, if proper steps are not taken, it can escalate to destructive violence. Anifowose (1982) sees conflict simply as a weapon to ventilate anger. To him, conflict is a tool used in expressing anger against unwarranted situations.

On the other hand, violence has been part of the human experience, as it is always manifest in various forms in the course of human activities. Violence has continued to bring about a situation whereby a lot of people suffer different degrees of injuries owing to self-inflicted, interpersonal, or collective violence. Beyond this, violence has been responsible for the loss of lives of a large number of people. To Bushman and Huesmann (2010), violence is an aggressive action capable of causing extreme pain, physical harm, injury, or death. To them, violence has no benefit for human beings, but it is harmful to people and society. Violence to Dennen (2005) is seen as "what others do to us." It is synonymous with aggression, which is detrimental to peace and peoples' survival. In essence, violence is not a self-inflicted action, but an action carried against one, by another person. In a similar vein, Chaturvedi (2006) sees violence as destructive action carried out against other persons and properties, which can be deliberate or spontaneous. Violence to Chaturvedi encompasses a different range of actions, vis-à-vis coercion, cruelty, intimidation, repression, riots, revolutions, threat, terrorism, and other forms of warfare. The term violence according to the World Health Organization (2019, para 1) is "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community," which could either result in or has a high chance of causing psychological harm, mal-development, deprivation, injury, or even death. Thus, any act of using force or power by a person or group of people against another person or group is termed violent. In other words, any form of action or behavior by an individual or group of people that threatens, causes, or brings about physical or psychological harm to others could be referred to as violence.

Galtung (1996), cited in Apeloko, Ayeni, and Adegbami (2018), sees violence from the perspective of social order. According to him, each time there is inequality in the social arrangement of society and whenever there is unequal access to socio-economic, political, educational, media, legal, and other related resources, structural violence exists. In his study Garver (1968), cited in Dennen (2005),

perceives violence from the human rights angle. To him, violence has to do with the violation of people's basic rights. Gaver (1968), cited in Dennen (2005), also believes that human beings have a series of rights which they should enjoy without restriction. However, any violation of these rights either in part or in whole, in the form of restriction, is referred to as violence.

Helman and Ratner (1992) in their work titled "Saving Failed States", attributed cases of violent conflict rocking the Western Hemisphere, part of Europe, Africa, and Southeast Asia to poor governance and poor economic management. These brought the affected countries to a stage where they cannot sustain themselves among the comity of nations. In their words:

> Civil strife, government breakdown, and economic privation are creating more and more modem *debellatios,* the term used in describing the destroyed German state after World War II. (Helman and Ratner 1992, 3)

Thus, violent conflict was the aftermath of cases of human rights abuses, which has escalated to the point that peoples' right to life is even threatened. The snowball effect was the violent conflict that has continued to endanger these countries as well as threatening the political and economic stability of neighboring countries where the people continue to run to as refugees (Helman and Ratner 1992).

Having discussed the theoretical perspective of violent conflict in general, the next section will be devoted to expounding some of the factors which induce violent conflict, with a particular reference to Nigeria.

VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NIGERIA: EXPOUNDING THE INDUCING FACTORS

Several actions and activities have been found to have always triggered violent conflict. However, behind every issue of violent conflict in Nigeria are men, who grouped themselves as insurgents, pastoralists, and bandits among other violent groups. Thus, for this study, factors such as insurgents' activities, armed banditry cataclysms, farmers/herders conflict, poverty and inequality between/among different groups, unemployment, ethnic diversities and differences, failure of the social contract, culture of impunity among the public officers, and activities of religious extremists are discussed.

Insurgents' Activities

Insurgents and their activities are one of the major causes of violent conflict in Nigeria. The insurgencies in Nigeria have continued to grow in strength and complexity, as well as becoming a thorn in the side of Nigerians and Nigeria. The number of insurgent groups in Nigeria for some time has continued to increase, until recently when it has subsided a bit. The insurgencies in Nigeria include but are not limited to: the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), and Boko Haram.

Out of the insurgent groups, Boko Haram remains dreadful and was designated a terrorist group by the United States in 2013. Boko Haram has carried out about 1,639 large scale acts of violent attacks in Nigeria, with the death toll of about 14,436 people, 6,051 of which sustained various degrees of injury, with more than 2,063 hostages across the northern parts of Nigeria (Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation 2018, cited in Okolo and Akubo 2019). Different reasons have been canvased for the upsurge of insurgencies in Nigeria, which include inequality, or the wide gap between the elite and the masses; unfulfilled political and economic promises; high unemployment rate, poverty, injustices, human rights abuses; and poor service provisions, among other reasons. All of these issues lead to frustration and make people aggressive, consequently bringing about the floating of the insurgent's group, which many people are driven to join for self-assistance and sustenance.

Armed Banditry Cataclysms

The incessant cases of armed banditry have become a daunting challenge, particularly in Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, and the Niger States in the North-West part of Nigeria. It has also become a matter of concern to the public because of its recurrence, crime-tainted dimension, as well as the threat it poses to peace and security, especially in the affected States, and its impending spread into other parts of the country. The patterns of banditry in Nigeria can be categorized into four types. They are: cattle rustling, village raid, highway robbery, and kidnapping (Okoli and Ugwu 2019). Banditry activities have always resulted in violent conflict whenever the dastardly activities are being carried out, and this phenomenon has always led to the stealing of livestock; assaults, injuries, and deaths of people; destruction of properties; and large-scale displacement; as well as creating sustained fear in the heart of inhabitants. Within a spate of eight (8) years, several casualties have been recorded, while several millions of Nigerian naira have been lost through bandits and banditry activities. According to the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP):

> …armed banditry recorded a death toll of over 1,058 people in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, and Niger States between January and December 2019…a total of 6,319 deaths including women and children between June 2011 and May 2019 in the State. Additionally, an estimated 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 children orphaned, and 190,340 others internally displaced between June 2011 and May 2019 in Zamfara State. In Katsina State, over 2,000 people have been killed, 500 communities destroyed and over 33,000 people displaced. Further reports also revealed that over 10,000 cattle were lost, while 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses were destroyed within 2011 and mid-2018 in Zamfara State. Also, the State recorded the loss of 147,800 vehicles and motorcycles between June 2011 and May 2019. In November 2019, an estimated 4,000 people were also internally displaced in Shiroro LGA of Niger State alone. (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding 2020, 1)

Therefore, to curb this menace, the government has been negotiating with several groups of armed bandits operating in the region and consequently reached a deal with them to curtail their activities. However, according to the WANEP (2020), despite reaching out to the bandits by the government, their activities persist.

Farmers-Herders Conflict
Violent conflicts between herders, also referred to as pastoralists, who are largely of Fulani ethnic extraction from northern Nigeria, and local farmers in agrarian communities in the central and southern parts of Nigeria have taken a precarious turn in recent years. A new and more dangerous phase to the issue are the "new factors assumed to underpin conflicts, such as political, religious and ethnic drivers," (Erondu and Nwakanma 2018, 16) which have continued to threaten the country's security and stability. In recent years, the herders' conflict against the farmers has become more coordinated and sophisticated. Given the incessant, offensive, and destructive attacks of the herders on their victims, the Global Terrorism Index (2015) has ranked the Fulani's herdsmen as a militant group. Not only this, but the Fulani's herdsmen also became the fourth most deadly terror sect in the world after the Boko Haram, ISIS, and al-Shabaab, in that order (Independent 2015; Global Terrorism Index 2016).

The Fulani herdsmen are said to have murdered several thousands of people, especially in the central and the southern parts of the country. Herders recently have claimed far more lives than the Boko Haram insurgency, such that, in the first half of 2018 only, more than 1,300 casualties were recorded in the violence involving

herders and farmers, while hundreds of thousands are being displaced, a situation which has continued to sharpen ethnic, regional, and religious divides in Nigeria (Olagbaju and Awolusi 2019). On the major causes of farmers' herders' conflicts, the International Crisis Group (2017), states that issues of

> …land and water use, obstruction of traditional migration routes, livestock theft, and crop damage – tend to trigger these disputes. But their roots run deeper. Drought and desertification have degraded pastures, dried up many natural water sources across Nigeria's far northern Sahelian belt, and forced large numbers of herders to migrate south in search of grassland and water for their herds. Insecurity in many northern states (a consequence of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast and of less-well-reported rural banditry and cattle rustling in the north-west and north-central zones) also prompts increasing numbers of herdsmen to migrate south. (International Crisis Group 2017, i)

Thus, the unauthorized entrant of the herders into people's farmlands in ethnic regions other than their own and excessive destruction of these farmlands, a means of farmers' livelihood and sustenance, coupled with the lack of proper and acceptable mediation mechanisms, breed disagreement easily. And unsettled disagreement usually escalates to violent conflict that easily aggravate existing fragile relations among the country's diverse ethnic and religious groups, consequently undermining national unity, stability, and development. The above view is corroborated by an interviewee who asserted that:

> In our community, the Fulani's herdsmen from time to time came to our farmlands to feed their cows, anytime they visit, it always results in one problem or the other. The last time they were here, apart from the fact that they destroyed our farmlands, they killed six people, while many others sustained serious injuries. I took a loan from the cooperative to develop my farm, all is gone now. I am even afraid to go back to that farm because they can come again.[1]

Poverty and Inequality Between/Among Different Groups
Poverty and inequality between/among different groups that make up Nigeria did prompt violent conflict. Poverty is undeniably rampant in Nigeria to the extent that all available indicators are pointing to that fact. For instance, in its 2019 report, the National Bureau of Statistics, the official statistical authority in Nigeria, stated that

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[1] A retired civil servant, now a farmer, in Uzo-Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State, South East, Nigeria.

40 percent of the country's population, that is about 83 million people, live below the poverty line of ₦137,430 (about $381.75) per year (World Bank 2020). The high number of people living in poverty has led Nigeria to be referred to as the poverty capital of the world (Brookings 2018). The Borgen Magazine (2020) captured the Nigeria scenario thus:

> Nigeria, a third-world country in Africa, is known as the poverty capital of the world. The nation just exceeded India with the largest rate of people living in extreme poverty. In Nigeria, about 86.9 million people live in severe poverty, which is about 50% of its entire population. (Borgen Magazine, 2020)

A large number of the Nigerian population remain in poverty, just as the menace continues to rise, as a result of colossal corruption being perpetrated in public offices across the country. This has frequently made the people aggressive and accordingly resulted in violent conflict. In essence, poverty serves as a motivating factor for conflict, either at an individual or group level. A poor individual or group can foment trouble that can be heightened to violent conflict, specifically to derive some benefit in order to survive or earn means of livelihood (Nicholson 1992; Galtung 2009).

Unemployment
A great number of youths, because of unemployment, engage in violent conflict as economic activity, and as such, perform such illicit activities as trading in arms and ammunition as well as hard drugs, which are considered ingredients of violent conflict. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020), as of the second quarter of the year 2020, the unemployment rate among young people between the ages of 15 and 34 years was 28.2%. This shows a considerable rise from 25.7% in the third quarter of 2018. This age bracket falls within the active part of the population that is normally involved and used to foment violent conflict. This stance is corroborated by one of the interviewees who states thus:

> The high rate of youth unemployment is directly linked to violent conflict in Nigeria. Many of the youths' population having completed their various courses in the higher institutions, and without rewarding jobs cannot see anything wrong in violent conflict, in as much the exercise can bring food to their tables, with which they can keep their bodies and souls together.[2]

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[2] A Lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Southwest, Nigeria.

In the same vein, another interviewee, who went down memory lane a bit concerning the situation in which the country finds itself, states that:

> …few years after Nigeria's independence, graduates, especially from the university, did get jobs easily, the artisans have things to engage themselves with, the farmers were doing fine and people were living comfortably…The problem started in the mid-80s. The economy started falling, as a result of government inept, while the population continues to increase geometrically with its attendant consequence of unemployment, poverty, inequality, and injustices. The failure of the successive government to resolve these issues even up till now prompts violent conflict in Nigeria.[3]

Ethnic Diversities and Differences
Ethnic diversity and differences also breeds violent conflict in Nigeria. The fierce struggle and competition, especially for domination in the areas of politics and economics, has been a dangerous issue generating conflict among diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. The opinion of one of the interviewees for the study corresponds with this finding. According to him:

> The struggle for dominance among diverse ethnic groups is the main cause of violent conflict in Nigeria. Each of the ethnic groups does struggle to lord itself in governance, to control the state power, allocate resources, and head selected government agencies and parastatals. This easily triggers violent conflict, especially in every general election year.[4]

Failure of the Social Contract
The high increase in violent conflict in Nigeria is also due to the failure of the social contract. A social contract is based on the relationship between the political structures and the betterment of the people. It is the coming together of people to form the political destiny of a nation, and the recognition of the effectiveness of freedom in determining social action (Falaiye and Okeregbe 2016). Steward (2002) claims that the stability of society is grounded on the contract between the governed and the government. People accept the government as long as it provides the necessary services to them, while the contract can breakdown when the government fails in the provision of social services. Since the country became independent in

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[3] A Lawyer based in Lagos State, Nigeria, and who specializes in conflict resolution and management.

[4] A Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration, Gombe State University, Gombe, North-central, Nigeria.

1960, it has not recorded a breakthrough in the area of rendering effective services to the people. This causes violent conflict as the deprived citizens on many occasions troop out to register their grievances, to which the government responds by sending security agents to quash the protests, a step which on several occasions aggravates rather than ameliorates the situation.

Culture of Impunity Among Public Officers
This culture of impunity among public officers is also believed to have negative consequences on the provision of social amenities and infrastructure development. As part of the efforts and measures to correct the impunity and laxity in public offices, people do embrace the demonstration. Most of the time, the demonstration ends up in violent conflict as public officials, because of their abysmal performance in office, surround themselves with security agents for fear of being attacked by the aggrieved people.

Activities of the Religious Extremists
The activities of the religious extremists also bring about violent conflict in Nigeria due to its vastness and complexities. Apart from the fact that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country, it is also a multi-religious country that often encounters unprecedented religious violence. Although Islam and Christianity remain major religions in the country, the resentment between the two religions has become one of the major issues confronting the country. Ordinarily, religion is expected to be one of the key factors for the integration of diverse ethnic groups. However, in Nigeria, it has become a tool or weapon for fomenting trouble, as a result of "narrow-mindedness, misunderstanding, fundamentalism, and fanaticism of religious adherents." (Afolabi 2016, 23) Other reasons for religious extremism in Nigeria include socio-economic differences, poverty, a parochial interpretation of religious beliefs and the fear of domination by religious majorities (Okunade and Njoku 2013). Violent conflict resulting from religious extremism has led to the death of many people and caused varying degrees of physical and psychological damages to others. Thus, religious extremism and fanaticism, which are seen as major derivatives of terrorism in contemporary times, is a threat to the security and stability of the country. Although there are sources that confirm that politicians are behind the fueling of various conflicts in Nigeria, names of some politicians have also been mentioned as financiers of the illicit activities. Over the years, however, none of the names so mentioned have neither been arrested nor prosecuted (Adesoji 2010; Waldek and Jayasekara 2011).

MENACE OF VIOLENT CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

Nigeria gained its independence on October 1, 1960, after a series of protests and agitations by the nationalist movement and several meetings and constitutional conferences between Nigeria's representatives and the British colonial representatives. However, six years into Nigeria's political independence, the country went into war. The war which is variously referred to in political history as the "Nigerian Civil War", "the Biafran War", and "the Nigerian-Biafran War" was a war fought between the federal government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra. The war which started on July 6, 1967, and ended on January 15, 1970, was a devastating one that shook the country to its foundation and claimed the lives of millions of people (Garba and Garba 2005; Julius-Adeoye 2017). Conflict could be said to have resulted from tension, suspicion, mistrust, and mutual distrust among different ethnic groups that were forced to live as a country. This is in addition to the military *coup* and a *counter-coup* that took place in Nigeria on January 15, 1966, and July 29, 1966, respectively (Adegbami 2015). The 30-month civil war between the federal government of Nigeria and the Igbo (Biafran) secessionists, later ended in January 1970, with "no victor, no vanquished". This was followed by post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives, which were tagged the 3Rs: "Reconciliation," "Rehabilitation," and "Reintegration." (Onuoha 2018)

Since the end of the Nigerian civil war, violent conflict has remained part of the relationships between and among the diverse ethnic groups. This is because some of the problems – ethnic eccentricities, ethno-religious identities, ethnic militias, and parochial political sentiments – among other issues that resulted in the civil war, have not been resolved. To tackle some of these problems, successive administrations after the civil war instituted and embarked on different programs and policies to ensure peace and unity, in others to preserve the country as an indivisible entity. Notable among these programs was the introduction of the quota system, and later federal character principle, (Ibrahim 2006), the purpose of which was to prevent a particular ethnic group from monopolizing or dominating leadership in the government or be left out from the economic and political opportunities of the country. Thus, the federal character principle is implemented to control and regulate every facet of public affairs (Ayoade 2003; Agbodike 2003; Abubakar 2003). For instance, the policy is used for admission into the government schools and universities; for civil service appointments; and for recruitment into the military and police. All of these processes are tailored along with statism (Adegbami 2015). However, the principle of federal character, rather than cementing diverse ethnic groups, further exposes "the fixation on ethnic sharing of national opportunities and resources made Nigerians more aware of their ethnic

differences." (Siollun 2020, para 7) For that reason, the six decades of Nigerian independence has continued to witness daunting challenges of violence and conflict despite the various policies that successive governments put in place to keep the country as an entity. The next section is devoted to analyzing the implications of violent conflict on Nigerians and Nigeria's development.

VIOLENT CONFLICT: IMPLICATIONS FOR NIGERIANS AND NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

It is not news that Nigeria from time to time is again afflicted with violent conflict. The issues that trigger violent conflict in Nigeria include political, ethnic, socio-economic, and religion, among other issues. While violent conflict remains unabated, its implications on Nigerians and Nigeria's development are immeasurable and unquantifiable. Violent conflict is a precarious issue obstructing every phase of the development process in Nigeria. Its damaging effect on the economy, especially on the means of livelihoods of Nigerians, especially those who are inhabiting conflict-affected areas, is worrisome. Conflict is responsible for the low welfare of people, and consequently imposes costs on an individual's economic prospects (Odozi and Oyelere 2019), such that, when one's health is declined, the cost of securing good health is already imposed.

Violent conflict in Nigeria has resulted in a large number of internally displaced persons. Unlike some nations of the world, where natural disasters have led to peoples' displacement, Nigerians are mostly being displaced by violent conflict. According to UNHCR (2020), as of 2019, over 3.3 million Nigerians have been displaced in north-eastern Nigeria alone, not to mention other parts of the country. Similarly, according to the Internally Displaced Monitoring Center (2020), a total of 2,583,000 people have been displaced internally in Nigeria, as of 31 December, 2019. Most of the population at the Internally Displaced Persons' camps are women and children, while most of the women are widows and most of the children are orphans (Mohammed 2018). The widows and orphans at the IDPs' camp are abused, physically and mentally tortured, educationally abandoned, faced with socio-economic difficulties, and have no access to basic nourishment (Zastrow and Ashman 2010; Badiora 2017).

Violent conflict also puts pressure on the health facilities and personnel. In Nigeria, whenever a violent conflict occurs, it always results in casualties, both death and injury. It has brought serious burdens and emergencies to the health sector. The fact that the activities do lead to the destruction of health care facilities and infrastructure has further heightened the pressure on the health personnel, as it

requires rationing of the remaining facilities and resources among the victims. Violent conflict has always led to a situation where children are exposed to armed conflict either directly or indirectly. This can leave children injured or harmed, and the injury or harm sustained may persist across such children's lives and may even be transferred to subsequent generations given birth to after the conflict has ended (Kadir, Shenoda, and Goldhagen 2019). Beyond this, health personnel are always at risk in the course of performing their daily activities during periods of violent conflict, as many of them on such occasion have met their untimely death (Adegbami 2013).

On businesses, a peaceful environment attracts both local and international investors, as nobody would want to engage or set up a business in a hostile environment. Conflict has led to a decrease in trade, investments, and production (International Monetary Fund 2014), and has led to the relocation of businesses. Besides, the resources which would have been channeled toward building the infrastructural amenities for the betterment of Nigerians are frequently diverted to build the security system (Nwagboso 2012). Thus, violent conflict has become a conduit pipe for draining the country's resources.

Violent conflict also brings about disruptions to school activities. Violence and attacks against civilian populations and fear of fresh attacks are keeping teachers away from continuing their teaching-learning activities. This has forced many parents to stop sending their children to school, especially when school children are been kidnapped by the insurgent's group in the course of perpetrating their violent activities. UNICEF (2015) confirmed that almost 600 teachers have been killed during violent activities in the northern parts of Nigeria, while over 1 million children have been forced out of school in recent years. This position of UNICEF is corroborated by Molini, Azad, and Maio, who chronicled the far-reaching impact of Boko Haram violent activity on education in Nigeria. According to them:

> There are different possible channels through which Boko Haram affected school enrolment. One is the reduction in household income which might have induced households to withdraw children from school to start working or to join self-protection militias/vigilantes' groups. The other is the reduction in the number of available schools and teachers, especially in secondary school. These two mechanisms would be consistent with the larger negative estimated effect we found for students older than 15, who are of working age and are more likely to be in secondary school. (Molini, Azad, and Maio 2019, 1)

On the country's economic development, the violent conflict did not only impede the progress of economic development but has also brought about an increase in the level of poverty and negatively impacted the various sectors of the economy of Nigeria. Violent conflicts on many occasions have dealt a drastic blow to Nigeria and Nigerians by impeding their economic activities, vis-à-vis obstructed market and trading development, shattered the productive assets, thwarted investment, and restricted the trust between/among market actors (Mercy Corps 2020). Violent conflict disrupts economic activities by creating fear in the minds of the people, which has led to the postponing of investments. It has also led to the breakdown of political institutions and weak enforcement of the law (Mueller and Tobias 2016), and as such, led to the destruction of business properties, loss of resources, and closing of businesses. All conflictual activities and violent practices are detrimental to the general development of the country. It is only when there is peace that development can take place and that without peace no meaningful development can be achieved.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Violent Conflict has negative consequences on the development of any nation. Going by the analysis of the social contract, the state exists to provide for the needs of the people. This study has clearly shown that insurgents' activities, armed banditry cataclysms, farmers-herders conflict, poverty and inequality between/among different groups, unemployment, ethnic diversity and differences, failure of the social contract, a culture of impunity among the public officers, and activities of the religious extremists, among other reasons, have induced conflict in Nigeria. In Nigeria today, a large number of people are living from hand to mouth and many people are hopeless, helpless, and hapless. The resultant effects are frustration and aggression, which have been leading to violent conflict year-in and year-out in Nigeria. Most of the youth population, who were at the center of all violent conflict in Nigeria, repeatedly joined the illicit activities to keep their bodies and souls together and provide food for their tables. This study has thus concluded that as long as inequality persists, and a large number of people living in poverty and penury continue to increase, the numbers of frustrated, aggrieved, and aggressive people will continue to rise, and as such, violent conflict will remain. This study thus recommends that the government and other stakeholders in the Nigerian government and administration should first of all address the issue of poverty and inequality. This can be achieved through quality governance, by putting in place committed, visionary leaders to man the affairs of the country. Similarly, the records of would-be leaders of the country must be properly vetted and scrutinized before they can be allowed to compete for coveted public offices.

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