

CIVIL UNREST IN THE SOUTH: EXPLORING THE IMPACTS AND THE DWINDLING OPTIONS FOR NIGERIA.

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Abstract

The contemporary Nigerian social landscape is more than ever before sprinkled with incidences of civil aggression and a series of violent attacks carried out by both known and unknown gunmen. Of course, it is no longer orchestrated by the dreaded Boko-Haram sect alone as they are presently augmented by the emboldened and more pervasive killer herdsmen. This academic enquiry attempts to scrutinize the impact of these heinous attacks on the civil and social fabric of Nigeria, with empirical data generated from secondary sources. The study employed a qualitative method of data collection and analysis with time series research design and the theory of the failed state as its analytical framework. It however, revealed that there is a positive relationship between the high death rate in contemporary Nigeria and the activities of these known and unknown gunmen, as well as its negative impact on Nigeria's economic trajectory. Among other recommendations offered by this study, it insists that government should activate and embrace value reorientation built upon compulsory regard for human dignity, respect for human life, liberty and security of the people and property.

Keywords: Unknown gunmen, Migrant bandits, Boko-Haram
Unemployment, Hunger statistics, Poverty headcount.

Introduction

It is no longer news in the atmosphere of social discourse that the civil and social fabrics of the geographical expression called Nigeria have been stretched beyond their limits due to existing socio-economic and security challenges in the country. What has remained trending in the socio-political and economic discourse is that a lasting solution to the ailing economic

structures and security failure in the country is still not yet in sight. Exactly, the reason this academic enquiry was embarked upon, with the sole objective of identifying, analyzing and bringing into focus what seems to us the available options for Nigeria, to restore trust and peaceful coexistence that has been stretched beyond its capacity at the moment. As the outlaws in both the northern and southern parts of the country continued to unleash mayhem on the innocent citizens unabated, the citizens can't help but wonder where the sovereignty of the Nigerian state is located at the moment. The contemporary Nigerian social landscape is more than ever before sprinkled with incidences of civil aggression and a series of violent attacks carried out by both known and unknown gunmen. Of course, it is no longer the dreaded Boko-Haram alone that is tormenting the northern Nigeria inhabitants as they are presently augmented by the emboldened and more pervasive killer herdsmen, that are now gradually encroaching on the southern territory of the country, of cause, with a tint of indirect help by the federal government in contemporary times.

It may sound out of place, but the phrase *with a tint of indirect help by the federal government* is here used since the federal security agents, most times, instead of arresting the killer herdsmen that are continuously attacking and committing genocide against lawful Nigerians on daily bases, to discourage such heinous acts, time and again, have chosen to arrest those who defended themselves against their menace even when the evidence is clear, under the pretext that they took the law into their hands, irrespective of the fact that they were defending their dear lives (Ogbulu, 2021). In the end, the killer herdsmen will go scotch free to prep for another attack or enjoy their plunders in the forest.

Federal security agents tend to respond faster anytime the killer herdsmen are killed or ambushed by the locals under the pretext of restoring law and order but not when the locals are being attacked. This attitude has continued to generate mixed feelings and doubt among citizens towards the commitment of the federal government and their agents to justice and equity among the Nigerian populace (Ogbulu, 2021). Though the police have paraded members of the dreaded sect, probably to assuage the rising tension and doubts in the country fact is that those paraded must be insignificant to the sect or thereabout as the attacks and killings have continued undiscouraged. Thirty-six people were killed in two villages this February in two simultaneous attacks by killer herdsmen in northern Nigeria just to mention the recent ones that quickly come to mind, at least at the time of this study. The attack claimed eighteen lives each from two villages affected which are located in different states within the region, one in Kaduna and the other in Katsina state respectively, including several houses that were burned down in the process (The Cable, 2021).

Also in August 2021, thirty-six people were killed in a village raid in Plateau State, close to the central Nigerian city of Jos, this is excluding the twenty-two people that were killed earlier with several houses that were burnt down in the same state, precisely on the 14th day of the same month by the

killer herdsmen (Reuters, 2021). Though Benue and Plateau state so far has a greater number of historical attacks by the killer herdsmen in the north that is not to say that they are the only state in the region that is still under siege since even the Sokoto caliphate has had their fair share of the menace. In recent times unknown gunmen have also enveloped the southern part of the country and are gradually turning it into the present situation of the north-east, west and north-central Nigeria, where the killer herdsmen renamed bandits and their newfound friend (Boko-Haram) are busy increasing the IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) camps just as they continued to attack villages on daily bases, increasing casualties and kidnap victims with little or no resistance from the federal security agents.

On the 5th of June 2021, eleven people were killed with their houses burnt down in a town or community located in Oyo state called Igangan by these unknown gunmen (TRTWorld, 2021). Also in the Modakeke community located in Osun State in south-western Nigeria, five rural farmers were ambushed and killed by unknown gunmen, an incident that was confirmed by the federal security agent in Osogbo who claim they are doing all they can to maintain law and order in the state (Huaxia, 2021). However, the motives of the killer herdsmen in the north seems to be land grabbing in form of displacing and replacing inhabitants in the region as confirmed by Benjamin Mzondu, the lawmaker representing Makurdi and Guma Federal Constituency in one of his press release where he lamented that out of the twenty-one council wards in his federal constituency, that ten council wards have been displaced while their ancestral homes, as well as lands, have also been taken over by the killer herdsmen (Salem, 2021). In contradistinction to the above Benjamin's concern, the desires or motive of the unknown gunmen in the south appears to be tainted with political underpinnings instead.

The southern unknown gunmen, unlike their northern counterparts that concentrate on the rural private citizen, seem more interested in the government infrastructure and federal security agencies since inception. A good number of security operatives have been killed in a planned attack by unknown gunmen. An attack at the Obosi divisional Police Station located in Idemili North local government of Anambra state in May 2021 destroyed the station and claimed the lives of two police officers. In the same month, between the 7th and 9th about thirteen police officers were reportedly killed in a separate attack in Rivers and Akwa Ibom state by unknown gunmen, thus excluding the two soldiers that were killed in Nasko, a community located in Niger State, precisely in Magama Local Government Area. In both situations, the police stations were set ablaze just as they did in Ebonyi State, though, along with the Federal High Court situated in Abakaliki (Okutu, 2021; The Cable, 2021). This precarious security situation in Nigeria has led some regions to seek self-help in form of *Amotekun* in the west, ESN (Eastern Security Network) in the east as well as *Hisbah*, in some parts of the north. In fact, prior to the establishment of the regional outfit, about twenty-three states in Nigeria were already operating official neighbourhood security systems to

complement the overstretched and failing federal security structure (THISDAY, 2020). It further highlighted that the Government of Sokoto State is also among the states that established a local security outfit to protect the locals against the killer herdsmen or Book-Haram in the state. The Sokoto security outfit is known as *Yan Banga* and is tasked to operate in virtually all the villages in the caliphate.

In south-eastern Nigeria, even the political parties are not spared as the unknown gunmen have made this year's party campaign almost impossible in Anambra state. Party faithful from both sides of the spectrum is under threat as gunmen storm the APC rally in Anambra state as well as one of their meeting places in Uruagu Ward 3, Nnewi, killing one person and injuring many. Just as they invaded Afor Nnobi Junction, on the same day, the Alor, Idemili South version of the invasion got several men of the vigilante killed (Ujumadu, 2021). Just like the security situation in the northern part of the country, the southern part has become helplessly immersed in the shackles of unknown gunmen. The killer herdsmen renamed bandits have continued unabated to terrorize the whole southern region that falls within their reach, killing some and kidnapping some for ransom (Ikhtalar, 2021).

North-Central Nigeria has also been infiltrated by the dreaded Boko-Haram following the unhampered proliferation of their kind, embolden by the inaction of the federal security agents. From the Northeast, their hitherto haven, they have permeated the entire northwest and are still very eager to continue if left unchecked. Nigeria citizens in their enduring sorrow like the inhabitants of the northeast, west and central have experienced terrorism in its speculative variety, from Boko-Haram to killer herdsmen, from the killer herdsmen to the migrant bandits. What is understandable in all these is that from the north to the south in contemporary times both known and unknown gunmen are relentlessly expanding their territory and leaving a trail of discomfort, hardship and unparalleled economic disaster to the populace in their wake, while the leaders continue to profess peace that is very difficult to differentiate from war. This study will attempt to assess its impact on the corporate existence of the country as well as existing viable options that can bring the situation under control if adhered to by the policymakers and chat a way for peaceful coexistence without which there can't be any form of development in Nigeria.

Nigeria: A Country Besieged with Known and Unknown Gunmen

The activities of the unknown gunmen in the south, as well as the unparalleled crises of different dimensions between the killer herdsmen and the rural communities in northern Nigeria, have become too recurrent to ignore. Particularly in the north central geopolitical zone, or more appropriately the Middle Belt Region, Benue state, for instance, has been at its epicenter since the recent intensification of the attack in 2018. Starting from the seventy-three persons massacred on New Year's Day in Logo and Guma local government areas of Benue state by the killer herdsmen. There is hardly a

week that passed without any incident involving killings by the killer herdsmen. The state has continued to record recurrent attacks from the killer herdsmen that are now renamed bandits in a manner that has created humanitarian crises in the region. Farmers are consistently being forced out of their farms and their homes to live in the ever-increasing IDP camps just to see tomorrow. While their farms and farm products are constantly abandoned to fate, completely unattended. This situation has also enlarged the population of internally displaced persons to about five hundred thousand persons and over three thousand eight hundred deaths as of July 2018 (Duru, 2018).

There is no doubt that most of these criminals are known but these different names are given to them probably for political reasons, or due to ethnicity bordering on ineptitude in national security management. Whatever reason triumphs, it brought a situation that enhances the mortal attack on innocent Nigerian citizens which has continued with minimal resistance by the federal security personnel. Justice, on the other hand, appears to have eluded the families of the victims as governments both state and federal only verbally condemn the criminal act, sometimes on national television and continued to promise that the perpetrators shall be brought to book. This government promises is fast becoming part of the crime itself as people are becoming familiar with it and its expected outcome, just as they are getting used to the violence against them. The government's promises to bring the perpetrators to book never pan out, either as a result of non-commitment to the fact or a sign of failure in Nigeria's security system. These realities led to a surge in the trends of crime and criminality across Nigerian society.

It has been pointed out that within the first quarter of 2018, between January and April over 930 (nine hundred and thirty) able-bodied men, women and children were murdered by the killer Herdsmen in the Middle Belt Region of Nigeria, the study further opined that if Benue state is isolated between January 2013 and December 2017 it will be revealed that the State alone has lost over 1354 rural dwellers to the menace of herdsmen attack (Onyishi & Oji, 2019). That statistic of course excludes the famous attack on the Catholic Church in the state. Meanwhile, before the killing spray in Benue state, around 2010, the government of the state enacted a law proscribing open grazing and prescribing ranching in the state as an alternative, just to assuage the recurrent attacks on the rural farmers by the killer herdsmen. But this policy was strongly and openly resisted by a Fulani trade or cultural organization known as Miyetti Allah who threatened to ignore the law and invade the state with its members across the region to demonstrate their resentment against the government policy (Duru, 2018). This threat wasn't a hoax as the state experienced increased attacks both on the rural and urban dwellers by the killer herdsmen after the bill was signed into law in 2017.

Even with the increased attacks, still, no high-profile arrest has been made, at least from the quarter that has allegedly made good of their threats for proper investigation. With this development in the region, one can't help but wonder whether there is a parallel government in the region or whether

the law of the state has a double standard, one for the Fulani ethnic group and the other for the rest of the citizens. These attacks more often than not present fatal consequences to most rural communities that are usually the victims of the killer herdsmen attack. The attacked communities are always dislodged from their ancestral homes and other inheritances are usually endangered, private properties worth billions are often destroyed including human lives. For instance, the Mbatoho Chile community in Mbalagh Council Ward of Makurdi LGA was invaded by killer herdsmen on the 27th of February 2018, killing many and rendering over five thousand Tiv natives who are the ancestral owner of the community homeless (Duru, 2018).

This pattern of displacement by replacement in form of land grabbing by the killer herdsmen has long shifted to other parts of the region, especially Jos, Plateau state, where the recurrent attacks are almost analogous to that of Benue state, not long ago. From Mzondu's perspective as cited in (Salem 2021), there can be no justification on earth, to necessitate the mass killing of women and children in the manner they are being done in present-day Nigeria by the same people. The burning of an entire community and the deliberate aim to wipe out an entire people from their ancestral home, as evident in Nigeria since 2018, when the massacre increased or gathered momentum that has continued ever since. While the sitting government continue to fold their arms, even when different groups in the country including the lawmakers have beseeched them to take responsibility and end the mayhem. The narrative has remained the same. What is monstrously dangerous is that the federal government and its security institutions appeared to be encouraging the killer herdsmen through their inaction and utterances, for instance, in the case of the Benue massacres Idris Abubakar the immediate passed IGP (Inspector General of Police), instead of looking for a countermeasure tagged the planned annihilation against an indigenous population communal conflicts even when the invaders have no reason to be in a village that is far away from their home.

As if that is not enough, the then Defense minister Dan-Ali blamed it on the enactment of anti-open grazing law in the state even though the same model of killing is not going on in other states that have such laws in place, also a senior presidential adviser Mr. Femi Adesina advised the indigenous people of the state to either share their land or continue being killed by the killer herdsmen (Duru, 2018). With the prevailing inaction coupled with the above utterances coming from high places of government, the citizens appear confused as to the commitment of the government to its fundamental functions which include the security of its territories from both internal and external aggressions.

What is clear however, is the fact that the affected communities were left to bear the burden of the continuous attack by well-armed militant Fulani herdsmen, with the rivers of blood that flowed freely in the rural communities of the state but would be abruptly restrained by the federal government security structure the moment they plan any form of reprisal against their attackers (Ogbulu, 2021). The situation is, however, different in the southern

part of Nigeria where the unknown gunmen are been hunted by all means by the same federal security that appeared helpless with the activities of the killer herdsmen in the north. This may be due to the fact that the attack is no longer focused on the rural community of the region alone but is gradually shifting to the security personnel themselves, as about sixty-seven security agents comprising prison wardens, the Nigeria Navy, as well as Nigeria Police personnel, lost their lives to the unknown gunmen between December 2020 and March 2021 including twenty-five police stations that were set ablaze in the process (Vanguard News 2021). The attacks on security personnel also affected the NSCDC (Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corpse) and the Nigeria Army as soldiers that were on stop-and-search duty at their checkpoint in Ebonyi state were also killed in April by unknown gunmen (Eze, 2021). The resultant effect of the actions of the unknown gunmen was suffered by the inhabitants of the southeast regions, particularly that of the Imo state.

The security agent particularly the army appeared to have declared war against the Imo residents, guilty or not guilty as a consequence of the activities of the unknown gunmen, innocent people are shot dead by the army just for breaking traffic or checkpoint rules in the state, in fact over one hundred people were unconstitutionally killed by the institution that is supposed to protect them (Onyejiuwa et. al 2021). Nigeria seems to be fighting a war in her backyard, only it is against her citizens who mostly do not even understand why they are under attack by the army and other security organizations. The worst is the Nekede/Naze Junction incidence along Owerri/ Aba road, as a reaction to the death of their colleague at the hands of unknown gunmen, the Nigeria Air Force opened fire on passers-by and commuters killing many innocent people on the spot and injuring many as they run for their lives.

In addition to that gruesome incident was the killing of Oguchi Unachukwu, a German-based businessman and indigene of the state before his wife and little children on 31st May 2021 by the Nigeria Air Force as he was heading to Sam Mbakwe Cargo Airport on his way to Lagos en route to Germany where he lived until his murder that faithful day (Onyejiuwa et. al. 2021). The spat of terror that has engulfed millions of Nigerian citizens due to the protracted acts of violence in their ancestral communities is unprecedented and may spiral into an uncontrollable situation if an appropriate measure is not taken by the government. Interstate travels, particularly by road have become a nightmare with celebrations if destinations are reached without incident, while intrastate activities are approached with caution and nervousness with many looking above their shoulders for any form of unfriendly movement.

Theoretical Framework

The 'theory of failed state' as articulated by William Zartman (1995) is employed as the framework of analysis in this study. The basic tenet of the theory posits that the state, in the final analysis, is a service provider, in other

words, should strive to ensure the comfort and security of the population within her territory. A state according to Zartman is deemed collapsed when the basic functions of the state are no longer performed within its territory. A similar alternative is to describe states that have not been able to establish the features associated with statehood as 'failed states'. They are characterized by social, political and economic failure as argued by Rotberg (2003).

Both Zartman and Rotberg distinguish between a variety of services that states may provide, ranging from security to the rule of law, the protection of property, the right to political participation, provision of infrastructure and social services such as health and education. According to Abiodun et al. (2018), common characteristics of a failed state are when a government is so weak or ineffective that it has little practical control over much of its territory, non-provision of public utilities or services, widespread corruption and criminality; refugees and involuntary movement of populations, and sharp economic decline. The provision of security is the most fundamental service states provide, in the sense that security is a condition for the provision of all other services such as socio-political and economic development, including infrastructures.

The theory also argues that state failures serve as the breeding ground for violence as many extremist groups will be uncontrollable, just as is evident in Nigeria. Clarke, (2015) notes that failing states are invariably the product of a collapse of the power structures providing political support for law and order, a process generally triggered and accompanied by anarchic forms of internal violence. It is the collapse of state institutions, especially the police and judiciary with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos. The Nigerian state may be prepared to wage war against the detractors but non-state actors differ fundamentally from state actors; the former are moving targets and mostly faceless. They depend on highly decentralized structures that are semi-autonomous and can act and survive on their own.

The list of internal challenges is extensive and growing though no region of the world is completely unaffected the Nigeria situation is getting out of hand. It is as a result of these failed states that most people take laws into their hands, and start committing various crimes, which make it possible for the movement of small arms and light weapons across the Nigerian borders by both known and unknown criminals. The international community's track record in this regard is not good. First, it has failed to prevent the slow collapse of states in Central and West Africa, despite a clear understanding of when and where such events would occur and the availability of forecasts predicting and explaining their causes and manifestations as in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Congo, Sudan and Liberia.

Methodology

This section will present a theoretical explanation of the research design or methods employed in this study. The researcher will present the

systematic steps taken in gathering the relevant facts, analyzing them and drawing conclusions to achieve the study objectives. The steps therefore, include research design, methods of data collection, as well as methods of data analysis, the research design, is seen as “the logic or master plan’ of research, it elucidates how the study is proposed to be carried out. It presents an exposition of how all the essential parts of the study, measures, treatment or programs, work together to address the research problem or questions. The research design employed in this study, however, is the **time-series** research design. In many ways, the single-subject approach is similar to a time series analysis in that the stability and changes in behaviour are studied across time (Box & Tiao, 1965).

Time series analysis is characterized by repeated measurements of the dependent variable over time with an introduction of the independent variable at a particular point in time (Box and Jenkins, 1976). Trends or patterns of behaviour are observed both before and after the introduction of the independent variable. The sequence of analysis is comprehensively highlighted in this design. Our first step will be to identify the variables, which is the unit of research that change when the situation changes. In this *time-series* design, “the quasi-independent variable is the *x* variable, which is the variable that is being manipulated to affect a dependent variable’ but the predicted outcome would be observed in the dependent variable, which is denoted as the *Y*. Using a time series analysis the dependent variable is observed over a long period for any variation or changes that might occur as a result of the manipulation of the *x* variable.

Methods of Data Collections and Analysis

A qualitative method of data collection was employed in this study. The strength of this method is its ability to provide textual descriptions of how people experience a particular research issue. This method provides facts about the human side of a particular issue. That is the usual, conflicting beliefs, behaviours, emotions, opinions, and individual relationships (Devizin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative methods of data collection are also very potent in identifying palpable factors, such as norms, gender roles, socio-economic status, ethnicity and religion whose part in the research problems may not be readily obvious. When used together with quantitative methods, qualitative methods can assist to elucidate and comprehend better the complex reality of a given situation and the insinuations of quantitative data (Behard, 1995).

Also, the qualitative methods of data analysis were employed in this analytical study, these methods of data collection and analysis can go in *pari pasu*, interactively because the result of the analysis will assist and, or help guide the subsequent collection of data. Qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis derive, inform or complement each other, with results that help the analysis to a higher level synthesis of the information being sought (Dunnin, & Saumik, 2009). The qualitative method of data analysis as perceived by Bogdan & Binlen (2003) is a process that advocates “working

with data, organizing them into meaningful units, coding them, synthesizing them and searching for patterns" (2003, p.33). The objective of the analysis of qualitative data is to unveil patterns, concepts, meanings and themes as they exist without any manipulation. However, to reduce threats to validity, this study employed multiple approaches to data analysis. Consequently, we employed the use of line graphs, tables and percentages to analyze our hypotheses. This approach will assist in the clarity of information and easier understanding of the data and facts presented.

Results and Discussion:

The Impacts of Known and Unknown Gunmen on Nigeria

The known and unknown gunmen turned Nigeria into what could be described as a killing field between 2015 and 2021 as no fewer than 28,846 Nigerians, according to prevailing studies, were slaughtered through various attacks orchestrated by unknown and unknown gunmen, which including but not limited to Boko-Haram insurgency, killer herdsmen attack, kidnapping, armed robbery as well as the faceless killers in the south among others (Ndujihe, 2018; Onyishi & Oji, 2018; Statistica 2021; Eze, 2021 and Reuters, 2021). It is gathered from the analysis of this study that there is a positive relationship between the high death rate in contemporary Nigeria and the activities of these known and unknown gunmen. Preliminarily, the costs of these vicious killers as well as Book-Haram activities in Nigeria, particularly the rural farmers of the middle-belt region and the State Government Revenues is devastating, these states in the region record different degree of losses in IGR due to various attack on their rural farmers (see table 2). In addition, the current activities have dislocated several farmers and have continuously discouraged them from going back to their farms any time soon, should the situation remain the same.

Table 1: Trends of Fulani Herdsmen Attack and Recorded Deaths 2010 – 2021 (tsnds)

| DEATHS BY ACTOR = FULANI MILITANTS | VICTIMS = CHRISTIAN POPULATION STATES (BENUE, KADUNA, PLATEAU, TARABA) | VICTIMS = NIGERIA TOTAL |
|---|---|------------------------------------|
| 2010-14 | 5,890 | 7,551 |
| 2015-17 | 3,452 | 4,722 |
| 2018 | 2,484 | 3,286 |
| 2019 – 21 | 4,253 | 6,725 |
| TOTAL: 2000-21 | 16,079 | 22,284 |

Source: ICON 2021; Statistica, 2021.

With all these records of violence, it may not be out of place to consider Nigeria as a country at war since the conventional threshold required for a country to be referred to as such has been attained and surpassed in the

present activities of the various armed group that have seized the control of the country and humbled the Nigeria security structure. It has been argued that the desideratum for an armed conflict to be classified as civil war is upon their record of one thousand deaths from the resulting attacks (Guseh & Oritsejafor, 2019). It's no secret that Nigeria has recorded more than that number required only from the killer herdsmen independent of the unknown gunmen, dreaded Boko-haram and the recent bandit attacks on the Nigerian people (see table 1 and figure 2).

Extant studies have revealed that the Boko Haram terrorist group alone has claimed about 3,426 to 3,753 between June 2017 and June 2018 (Campbell & Harwood, 2018). These protracted attacks have much a negative impact on Nigeria's existence; it has decimated consumer confidence which has drastically reduced consumer spending in the economy. The insecurity associated with these groups also creates uncertainty that discourages foreign investment in the country. The resultant insecurity also affects the national economic output negatively, as it has a direct impact on unemployment trends, *vis a vis* the rural Nigeria farmers that are usually the target of the killer herdsmen.

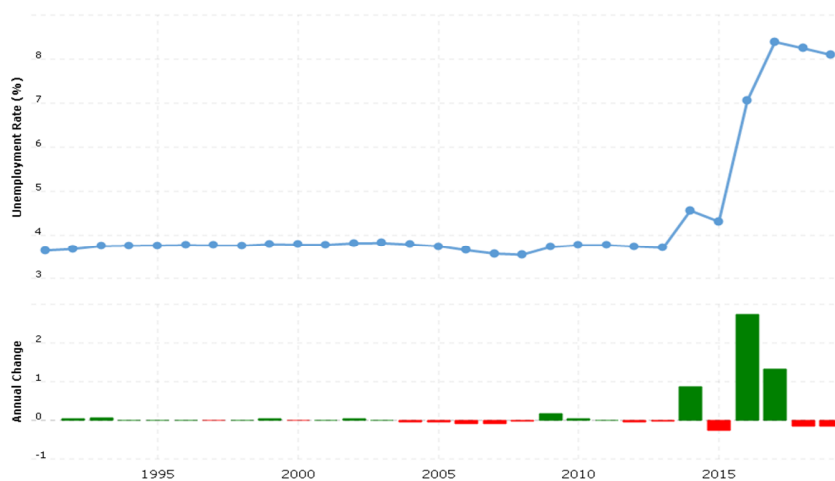


Figure 1: The Nigeria Unemployment Rate and their Annual Percentage Change 1991 – Q1 2021 (%). **Source:** World Bank (2021).

The consequences of these killer groups in Nigeria have increased social uncertainties which include violent deaths, intra and inter-community conflicts and other fatalities, including the Boko-Haram activities in the north as well as the migrant bandits that recorded 3,425 deaths in 1,191 incidents (Ukoji et al, 2019). All these insecurities combined has stretched the civil and social fabrics of the Nigerian nation and steered an obnoxious kind of unemployment trend that has continued to climb as the rural farmers abandon their farms for fear of death while the various attack increases in magnitude.

A review of the data presented revealed that both unemployment trends, hunger statistics and poverty incidence in Nigeria tend to increase as the coordinated attacks by known and unknown gunmen on innocent Nigerian citizens increases (compare figures 1, 3 & 4 with table 1 and figure 2). For instance, the existing Nigeria's unemployment trend and their annual change have continued to climb since 2015 (see figure 1), just as the red line in the graph spiked within the same period under study indicating a rise in death as time progresses (see figure 2).

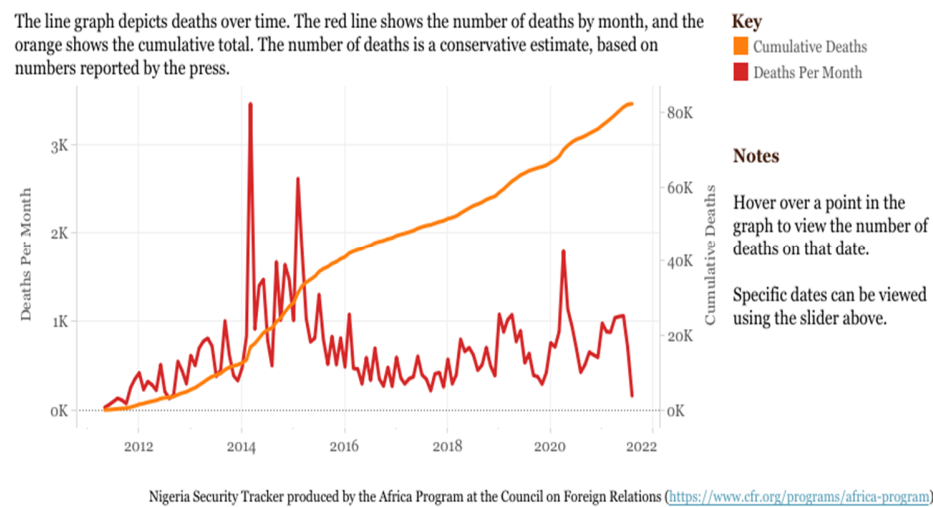


Figure 2: Number of Boko-Haram Victims in Months and the Cumulative Total 2010 – 2021 (tsnds)

The figure as shown in the graph has risen from 4.3% in 2015 to 8.9% in the Q1 of 2021 just as the orange line in the graph indicates the cumulative behaviour is relentlessly approaching the eighty-three thousand deaths mark in the cumulative calculation within the time under study. Consequently, the hunger statistics in the country have continued to rise as farmers are killed on their farms while the remaining ones have to abandon theirs for fear of death. The percentage trend of the hunger statistics has abandoned its negative route that was maintained for a considerable time and assumed a positive position as a result of the rising insecurity in the country orchestrated by the known and unknown gunmen (see figure 3). Even though the government has continued to pay less attention to the security reality of the country is apparent that the known and unknown gunmen have crippled the Nigeria security structure, increase the hunger statistics, its annual percentage change as well as poverty headcount percentage of the population, including the unemployment trend as is evident in figure 1, 2, 3 & 4 as well as table 1 of this study.

Table 1: Economic Cost of Small Arms Proliferation violence in Nigeria (Selected States)

| State | Cut Point | Total IGR Lost | Predicted Effect (Avg. Estimate) | Predicated Effect (Conservative) |
|---|-----------|------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Benue | 2015 – 20 | 361,839,070.00 | -47,704 | 0 |
| | | | -44% 0% | 0% |
| Kaduna | 2000 – 21 | 527,448,060.00 | -64,955 | -29,570 |
| | | | -22% | -12% |
| Nasarawa | 2014 – 21 | 194,366,400.00 | -27,746 | -6,180 |
| | | | -45% | -15% |
| Plateau | 2013 – 20 | 270,109,090.00 | -207,051 | -73,543 |
| | | | -75% | -51% |
| Total | | 1,353,762,620.00 | -347,456 | -109,294 |
| | | | -47% | -22% |
| Percentage of Synthetic Predictions | | | 96% | 90% |
| Source: Mercy Corps (2014); NBS (2020) | | | | |

Nigeria's current unemployment rate remains one of the country's most challenging socioeconomic encumbrances of autarchy and has continued to increase the hunger statistics. Figure 3 above present a historical review of Nigeria's hunger statistic between 2000 and 2021 when the activities of the known and unknown gunmen in the country are presumed manageable to when they have become unimaginably catastrophic see figure 2 and table 1 above. This revealed that between 2001 and 2014 the hunger trajectory sloped to 6.9% in 2006, from 9.0% in 2000. These situations no doubt threaten food security as the trajectory began to climb just as the activities of the known and unknown gunmen gathered momentum.

There is no doubt that the resultant insecurity from the activities of the known and unknown gunmen comes with the internal displacement of rural farmers, in other words, the economic activities in the affected regions. The realities of economic activities in the middle belt region and other affected areas as a result of the killer herdsmen and the known and unknown gunmen attacks are no longer news in the country anymore. The trajectory of the hunger statistics remains reasonable till 2014 when it increases to 9.8% as is evident in figure 3 above, and has continued on that path as the killings and other security issues associated with the known and unknown gunmen continued to ravage the countryside.

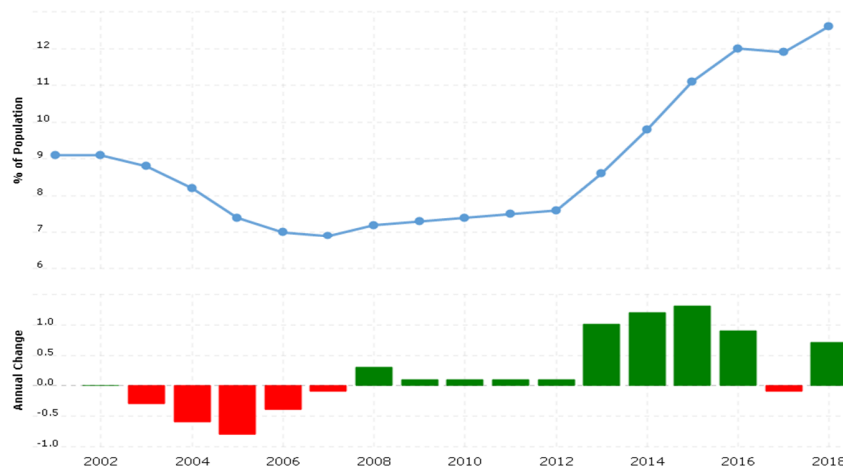


Figure 3; Nigeria Hunger Statistics and the Annual percentage Change 2001-Q1 2021(%).**Source;** World Bank 2021

The Q1 of 2021 already recorded 12.9% while the trend has continued on the upward position as a result of the recurrent attack on the farmers by the killer herdsmen and their kind (see table 1 & figure 2). There is no doubt that no nation can ever achieve food security independent of agricultural development in that society. To do that requires first and foremost the provision of security to the concerned farmers, which starts with the control of the killers' herdsmen and their kind, protected source of farming materials, the abundance of crop and livestock as well as prolonged opportunities for the profitable employment of labour, including arable lands, food utilization and food quantity as well as quality to meet local consumption, national reserves and export (Ayinde, 2019). to achieve economic autarchy food security must be secure at five different levels which include the household, the individual, the national and international level, at the national level which is our concern here it is only achieved when all the citizens irrespective of social status continuously enjoy physical and economic access to adequate nutritious and safe food, to satisfy their dietary requirements as well as favourite foods for an energetic and healthy life (International Crisis Group, 2017).

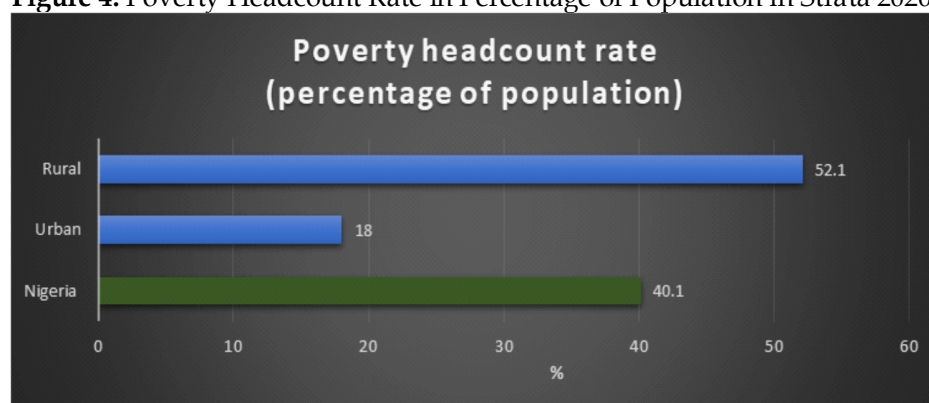
Table 3: Poverty and Inequality Indicators in Nigeria in 2020

| | Poverty Headcount Rate, in Percentage of Population in Strata | Poverty Gap Index, in Percentage of Poverty Line | Gini Coefficient |
|----------------|---|--|------------------|
| NIGERIA | 40.1 | 12.9 | 32.1 |
| Urban | 18 | 4.5 | 31.9 |

| | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Rural | 52.1 | 17.4 | 32.8 |
| Source: NBS Nigeria Living Standards Survey, (2020). Note: The estimates did not include Borno State. | | | |

But it is difficult to achieve that under the violent situation created by the killer herdsmen in the north as well as the unknown gunmen in southern Nigeria. Achieving the above postulate means the achievement of poverty reduction in Nigeria which has continued to increase as the attacks on rural farmers continues in the farming communities. The poverty situation in Nigeria is underpinned by the high unemployment rate, calculated at 8.9% in 2020 (World Bank, 2021). In contemporary Nigeria, about 40.1% of the citizens were classified as poor. This means that an average of four people in every ten in Nigeria can only access about N137, 430 per annum as their real per capita expenditures, it also means that over 82.9 million Nigerians are considered poor by the national standards (see table 3). Though this number did not take Borno State into account as they are considered non-random and non-representative since the sample was drawn from a household that is safe to visit in the state and does not represent the whole state due to security problems associated with unknown gunmen.

Figure 4: Poverty Headcount Rate in Percentage of Population in Strata 2020



Source: NBS Nigeria Living Standards Survey, (2020). **Note:** The estimates exclude Borno State

Between 2018 and 2021 which was the period of this survey, concentrated insurrectionary attacks in the northeast have continued to increase poverty headcount with attendant food needs as well as displacement of persons in the region (FEWS NET, 2019; 2020). This is also true of many households that are victims of the killer herdsmen, unknown gunmen and Boko-Haram in the central and northern states of Plateau, Katsina, Adamawa, Zamfara, Benue, Taraba, Nasarawa and Kaduna. Due to the security failure in these states engendered by the activities of the known and unknown gunmen, the households no longer engage in their usual livelihood activities including

farming as there is no safe access to farms and farm produce as well as the market for them, including other related income opportunities in the region (FEWS NET, 2019) thereby increasing the poverty headcount as well as the poverty gap index (see figure 3 & table 2).

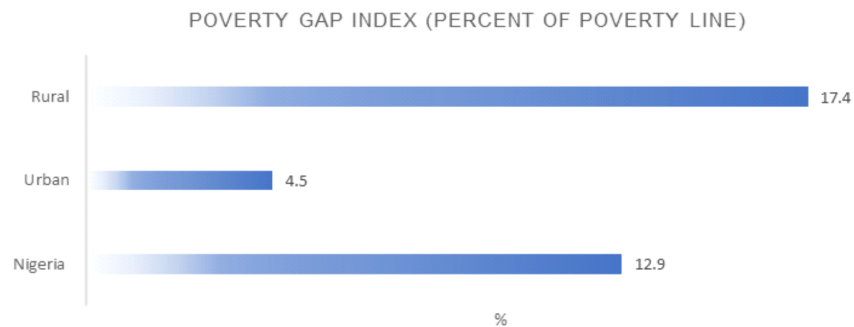


Figure 5: Poverty gap index in percentage of poverty line 2020

Source: NBS Nigeria Living Standards Survey, (2020). Note: The estimates exclude Borno State

The national poverty trend is rooted in welfare aggregate regionally, adjusted per capita consumption expenditures across all households. Based on that, it is not impossible to use and, or apply the national poverty line to the consumption cumulative to estimate the inequality and poverty indicators across all states in Nigeria. Of particular interest and policy use are three indicators, they include: poverty gap, poverty headcount ratio and Gini index (see table 3, and figures 4 & 5). The headcount ratio as here presented describes the proportion of the population of the household's dwellers where the value of per capita total consumption expenditure is below or equal to the poverty line, poverty gap on the other hand estimate or measures the depth of poverty on the country, therefore, the dissimilarity could be below the line. The Gini index is an arithmetical computation of expenditure distribution in the country within a given time. It is generally used as a measure of economic inequality. It ranges from near 0, which would indicate perfect equality and 100 -perfect inequality (NBS 2020).

A cursory look at table 3 will reveal the position of Nigeria between 2020 and Q1 of 2021. In addition, the country also experienced a very low SDGs Sustainable Development Goals Index ranking or score as a result of the security failure engendered by the activities of the known and unknown gunmen, with 43rd position among the 42 African countries which is about $47.38/100$ %, a position that left Nigeria behind countries such as Sudan with 47th and Comoros with 52nd positions respectively (Otekunrin *et al.* 2019b). The Annual percentage of Nigeria's GDP growth rate is not spared from the security implication of known and unknown gunmen activities in Nigerian

society, but that will not be discussed here as it has been treated exhaustively in our previous article.

The Dwindling Options for Nigeria

There is no doubt that Nigeria at the moment is walking on a precipice, that the present socio-economic realities embers potentials for breakup along ethnic lines, because they are defined, not by their similarities but by their differences. This situation is made possible by the early political elites in their quest to control the state power wrestled from the colonial masters. History revealed that elements of distrust among the nationalist vanguards during the early stage of the movement emerged and began to grow just as the prospect of achieving their political aim started taking shape. It appeared that this distrust continued to grow long after their political aim have been realized. Hence, the manifest political situation in Nigeria was infested with distrust among the citizen of the country which led to a trendy agitation by some of the federating regions for the total restructuring of the whole political system in order to create more political space and freedom for the people of their regions or outright dissolution of the union called Nigeria. This situation requires a shroud political leadership and a certain level of diligence to control the political situation and put the country back to a constructive development path devoid of ethnic favouritism because that is one of the things that can assuage the already existing tension and put the minds of citizens at rest. Unfortunately, such an option was not taken by the early political class, instead, coercion is more often than not employed by the Nigerian state to enforce political conformity and control the dissenting political expression of the citizens and political oppositions.

The weaknesses and ineffectiveness of this option are beginning to manifest in various forms, such as the prevailing attacks on innocent citizens by known and unknown gunmen, including the secessionist movement and the prevailing total collapse of security systems. This trend will surely continue if drastic measures are not taken to discourage the political class. Fortunately, the present trend can still be reversed with committed political classes that are free from ethnic bondage. This study is of the view that a new nationalist political elite devoid of ethnic bigotry is what is required to save Nigeria from the present situation. Because they are bound to produce a leader that can change the Nigeria value system and produce a fraternal political culture that has eluded the country for so long.

The contemporary socioeconomic as well as political situation in Nigeria indicates that there is a need to revive, reinforce and re-channel those moral values and virtue ethics that were prevalent in the early stage of Nigeria's nationalist movement in the 1920s and through the late 1950s. These values must be codified to the point that the citizens, old and young will imbibe them to guide their social relationships and public conduct. Without a nationally shared value, it will be difficult if not impossible to secure primary allegiance to Nigeria and secondary to the region or ethnic affiliation which is

what is lacking in the contemporary Nigerian state. As we have already emphasized, Nigerians maintain stronger allegiance to their ethnic lineage than to their country, a reality that must come to an end if the country hopes to make any headway in this twenty-first century.

These values must be built on the following principles: (i). Basic human rights; every citizen of the country whether from east, west, north or south deserves to enjoy the right to life, liberty and security of persons within and outside the country. These values can only be achieved if good governance, transparency, accountability, equity, fairness and truth, form the basis upon which the political leaders govern the people, in other words, what is required is good government. To achieve this, the people must come together to decide the type of government they want, whether the parliamentary or presidential system of government or even a unitary system.

More importantly to decide whether they want to stay together or go their separate ways. Whatever the outcome should be an agreement among the federating units or regions and should not be imposed on any region by any region of the federation. This coming together of the various ethnic groups in form of a constitutional conference or whatever name is given to it must touch all the nooks and crannies of the country, to involve both the majority and minority groups within the country. And the national conference as a matter of necessity must have a sovereign status both in character and substance to resist the manoeuvres of the egotistical political elites who will want to maintain the existing status quo irrespective of its observable failure to the past and present generations in all ramifications.

This study is of the view that a sovereign national conference will usher in good governance to the country and assuage the already existing tension among the federating units because it will be people-oriented as it will emanate from the people unlike the existing military-imposed constitution that has no iota of contribution or resolution of the people to which it is meant to regulate.

(ii) Good government; It is also contended that it is only a government born of such negotiation that can be sure to provide security for all and sundry irrespective of region, ethnic and religious affiliation, since it shall be conceived upon the notion that the title of the state to obedience rest on its performance of some basic function in which security and order are at the forefront, not just to a particular ethnic group but to the country as a whole. This government will understand that anything contrary to the accepted canal of social intercourse will have consequences. That the days of business as usual in the scheme of governance have long gone. It must be responsive to the will of the people not to a propertied few who are privileged to share the same ethnic identity or political ideals. The nature and structure of the existing federal system should also be an important issue in such a sovereign conference since its weaknesses have attracted the attention of most of the federating units. Even though Nigeria has continued to claim a federal state

system, the actual practicality of the basic principle of federalism remains in doubt.

There have been calls from a reasonable percentage of the federating regions and other concerned groups within the country for greater federalization in Nigeria's political and economic structure but the government of the day which appeared to be representing only their interest and that of their cronies have consistently ignored these calls. These calls are bordering on the state control of those resources found within their territory, the establishment of the state-controlled police force and other forms of decentralized measures that can make the federating units competitive and secure the future of the country as a unit and put it back to the development route. These calls should not be ignored any longer since the existing one has no potential for the type of development the people are craving for.

(iii) Availability and security of jobs; there is no doubt that there is a correlation between unemployment and insecurity. This relationship is cyclical since a closer examination will reveal that they have mutual relations, as insecurity creates unemployment so is unemployment creating insecurity and they both negate development in any organized society. Therefore, part of the solution for the existing security challenges in Nigeria is the provision of employment for the ever-increasing Nigerian youths since they constitute over 90% of the detractors and can easily be used by the religious extremist and, or the selfish political class to achieve ends that always create insecurity in the country.

These youths therefore, have to be engaged in a challenging as well as demanding employment to the point of considering these criminal activities as dangerous and a distraction to their civic duty, because at the moment they do not see it that way but as something one must do to pass time and if lucky, succeed in life or be recognized by the fellow men. Hence, there is a need for the contemporary government to create enabling and even playing ground for job opportunities and competition among the citizenry. At least to discourage youths from engaging in religious extremism, kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry and other forms of social vices.

Nigeria as a matter of urgency needs to reduce the percentage of unemployed youth to the barest minimum as soon as possible because doing so will also address the issue of poverty by prioritizing those economic policies that are human-oriented and abstain from those that create economic problems for the people. On the other hand, these new moral values and virtue ethics must also guide the citizens to recognize the fact that they have duties to their country and their communities which they must perform to get the best of their government, and are also subject to institutionalized laws and regulations which promote the general welfare and the rights and freedoms of everyone within the sovereign territory.

Conclusion

This study examined the ongoing killings in the south carried out by both known and unknown gunmen (Boko-Haram, killer herdsmen, kidnapping, armed robbery, bandits, faceless killers, and so on) who have been given different names, most likely for political reasons, or due to ethnicity bordering on ineptitude in national security management. The scenarios have continued unabated, resulting in an increase in the number of internally displaced persons to approximately 500,000 people and over 38,000 deaths as of July 2018. The situation is becoming more pitiful as thousands of ethnic groups have been invaded by killer herdsmen who have killed many and driven Tiv natives from their ancestral homestead.

Cases of land displacement by replacement in the form of land grabbing by the killer herdsmen have also been reported in other parts of Nigeria, including Adamawa, Plateau and Benue states. What worries Nigerians is that the federal government security structure has not put a stop to any form of reprisal against the community members by the attackers (Ogbulu, 2021). However, in the southern part of Nigeria, the unknown gunmen are being pursued by all means by the same federal security that appeared helpless in the face of the activities of the killer herdsmen in the north.

The paper was anchored on the failed state theory, which states that the state is a service provider and should strive to ensure the comfort and security of the population within its territory, but when the basic functions of the state are no longer performed within its territory, the state is assumed to have collapsed. In other words, a failed state is one that has not been able to establish the characteristics of statehood and is characterized by social, political, and economic failure (Rotberg, 2003).

The impact of these known and unknown gunmen's nefarious activities has had a devastating effect on state government revenues, with varying degrees of records in IGR. The prolonged attacks have had a significant negative impact on Nigeria's existence; they have decimated consumer confidence, resulting in significantly reduced consumer spending in the economy. In addition, the insecurity associated with these groups creates uncertainty, which discourages foreign investment in the country. The resulting insecurity has a negative impact on national economic output because it has a direct impact on unemployment trends, particularly among rural Nigeria farmers who are usually the target of the killer herdsmen. A review of the data presented revealed that as coordinated attacks by known and unknown gunmen on innocent Nigerian citizens increase, so do unemployment trends, hunger statistics, and poverty incidence in Nigeria. The country's hunger statistics have continued to rise as farmers are killed on their farms, forcing the remaining farmers to abandon theirs for fear of being killed. Nigeria's current unemployment rate remains one of the country's most difficult socioeconomic burdens of autarchy, and hunger statistics have continued to rise, as illustrated in figure 3. The consequences of these killer

groups in Nigeria have increased social uncertainties, including violent deaths, intra- and inter-community conflicts, and other fatalities, including Boko-Haram activities in the north and migrant bandits, who have killed 3,425 people in 1,191 incidents (Ukoji et al, 2019).

The current socioeconomic and political situation in Nigeria suggests that we need to revive, reinforce, and re-channel our moral values and virtue ethics that were prevalent during the early stages of Nigeria's nationalist movement in the 1920s and through the late 1950s. These values must be codified so that citizens, both young and old, can use them to guide their social relationships and public behaviour. These values must be founded on fundamental human rights, good governance, and job availability and security.

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