Democracy, Violent Conflict and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract: There seems to be a debate on the validity of democratic peace theory. Whilst, some scholars and schools of thought have argued that democracy engenders peace, others have argued exactly the opposite. In the Nigerian context, democracy appears to have been characterized by violence, this paper examines democracy and violent conflicts and in origins and its implications for development with a particular focus on the Nigeria's Fourth Republic violent ridden. This paper therefore concludes that the nature of competition for political power, multi-ethnic nature of the polity as well as corruption, unemployment and poverty are some of the factors which make democracy in Nigeria Fourth Republic violent ridden. The researcher therefore, recommends among others the need to cut down on remuneration/ allowances of political office holders and emphasize the re-orientation of political elites towards shunning divisive politics.

Keywords: Democracy; Violence; Conflict; Development; Identify Politics.

Introduction

There are growing body of literature on the relation between democracy and violent conflict it is argued that democracy is a panacea to violent conflict. In fact, it is one of the measures the Nations (UN) often advocate in their intervention efforts in war torn countries (Paris, 2004). However, others argued that democracy rather than been a solution to conflict is a major driver of conflict (Keane, 2010). Election, an integral feature of democracy, has equally generated much controversy. For example, Rapport and Weinberg (2001) and Hoglund (2006). Contended that competitive election facilitates peaceful transfer of power and makes it possible to assign accountability to those who govern. However, democracy comes at a price because violence attend most elections. Thus many people lose their lives in connection to competitive elections (Hog Lund, 2006).

Nigeria's fourth republic appears to be very chaotic, incessant violent conflicts ranging from religious identity to communal, Elaigwu (2005) identified (17) seventeen major violent conflicts in Nigeria from May 1985 to May 1st 1999. However, from May 31st 1999 to June 2005 he identified at least one hundred and twenty one (121) cases of conflicts in Nigeria. He attributed sudden increase in violent conflicts in the country to a strong central government; popular agitation for decentralized structure; dissatisfaction with the distribution of available resources; communal conflicts and demands by some sub-national groups for greater self-determination (Eliagwu, 2005). The continued that, the years of military rule suppressed these issues from exploring into uncontrollable conflagration. He likened the Nigerian polity as throttle of wine, properly corked and airtight. With the dawn of democracy and the opening of the bottle the wine which explosively popped up (Elaigwu, 2005). It appears that, the dawn of democracy provided the atmosphere to ventilate bottled up frustrations, grievances and fears generously and often times recklessly (Adebanwi, 2004).

Though there are several works on conflicts in Nigeria, few appears to link violent conflict in Nigeria to democracy with particular focus on the forth republic. For example Haliru (2012), focused on

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ethnicity, Onapajo (2012), focused on religion and political violence, Saheed (2012) emphasized economic dimension of social conflicts in Nigeria. It is against this background that, this paper focuses on democracy and violent conflicts in Nigeria's fourth republic and its attendant implications for national development.

Democracy, Conflict and Development: An Analytical and Conceptual Framework
Democracy
To Sodaro (2001), the essence of democracy is that, people have the right determine who governments them, hold them accountable for their actions and also impose legal limits on the government's authority by guaranteeing certain rights and freedom to their citizens. The concepts connotes acceptance of the people's will as supreme in the governance of public affairs (Odulami, 2008). Democracy also means government established by and with the consent of the people, almost always by the constitution, leaders are chosen by people in free and fair elections; the government and its leaders obey the will of the majority of those who elected them to make laws (Pius, 1986). Democracy also means the sovereignty of the wishes and aspirations of the electorate in decision making (Adeyemo, 2009).

These views above suggest that, democratic governance must reflect the wishes of the people and that people have the right to vote and be voted for via elections. Saliu and Lipede (2008) however observed that, this brand of democracy appropriately termed liberal democracy which cannot be said to be representative enough as it emphasizes material conditions before citizens can adequately participate in the democratic exchange. The emphasis on minimum level of education and property acquisition before qualification for political offices puts the elites in a vantage position to dominate the vast majority.
This lends credence to the statement credited to (Fukuyama, 1992:43) that "… primal democracy alone does not always guarantee equal participation and rights" Saliu and Lipede (2008) noted that it is unfortunate that, this brand of democracy that put the elite in a vantage position at the expense of the masses is in vogue, especially in transition countries and Africa in particular. Thus, the emphasis on liberal democracy paves the way for masses to be manipulated by the elites and this finds expression in mass violence by the poor in Nigeria conflict.

The term conflict is taken, from the Latin word "conflict us" meaning "strike together" conflict means clash, confrontation, contention, a battle or struggle or quarrel (Nwolise, 1997). Cosec (1956 cited in Otite, 2001) defines conflict as a struggle over values and claims of scarce status power, and resources, in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize injure or eliminate their rivals. It has also been noted that conflicts arises as a consequence of the striving of man, the social being who in the course of promoting some of his objectives, either intentionally or unintentionally upsets and direct to negative uses, instead of strengthening along beneficial line, some of the arrangement that ought to be for the benefit of man (Nwangbo, 2005). Conflict becomes violence when it is accompanied with threat and actual destruction of life and property, Keane (2010) sees the relationship between democracy and violent conflict as exemplified in the democratic process. The relationship between democracy and violent conflict is captured under theoretical discourse below.

Development
Development has political economy and social dimensions, Todaro (1980 cited in Joshua Oni & Agbude, 2012:164) for instance viewed development as: a multidimensional process involving changes in structures, attitudes and institutions as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty". It also includes perception of individuals or groups of self-worth and esteem as a respected member of the society; and freedom in the sense that individuals and society at large have an expanded range of choice, not only material necessities for self-reproduction but also in the ability to have a say in, if not to determine the method and process by which values are allocated in the society (Ogwu, 2002 cited in Joshua et al., 2012:164).

Violent Conflict
The human society is a collectivity of economic, social and political activities of individuals. This gives them access to the basic necessities of life. Thus, man by nature is a dependent creature, who depends

on his environment and others within it for food, shelter and clothing. Therefore, no group or human community no matter its level of development can be an island unto itself. The dialectics of human existence ordinarily dictates that each group or human group consciously and unconsciously relate with each other in the interest of self-preservation. According to Okpeh (2006), it is easy to understand why human groups necessarily depend on each other. This makes conflict interaction and interdependence not just a fact of life, but on which is universally constant and basic. This presupposes that interdependence is a central feature of all human societies. They depart from each other solely on the extent and degree of these interdependent relations. Thus, it is argued that group relationship must necessarily entail conflict. Hence, the "natural anarchy theorist, Hobbes (1958) argues that the natural state of man is that of war in which every man is pitched against every man, thus making life solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short on account of groups different and conflicting interest.

A variant of this theory espoused by Karl Marx in his Da Capital sees conflict as the dominant character of human relations. In his materialist conception of history, he points that, the history of human society is the history of class struggle. This is predicated on the assumption that individual interest in the society differs and as such human society and the relations in it are logically antagonistic and conflicting. Consequently, what prevails in the society is not order, solidarity or consensus, but struggle between groups for control of the means of subsistence. While the two perspectives see conflict as integral to human and group relations in the society, the Marxist sees it as the engine that drives revolutionary transformation and development. In a sense conflict is either being equated with competition or treated as a derivative of competition. Ayokhai (2010) notes that the prefix of violent to conflict complicates it and take it well out of the realm of competition since it entails the taking up of arms by a group against another within a state or against the state itself. For instance, such violent groups in the Niger Delta includes the Movement For the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement For the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Egbesu Boys of Africa to mention but a few.

Identity Politics
The concept of identity politics as a subject of intellectual discourse may be relatively new but the phenomena itself is not new in the intergroup relations. Efforts have been made to conceptualize it. Generally, it is agreed that there are two types of identity politics, these are formal and informal. According to Cohen (1997) identity political is said to be formal "when an ethnic or tribal grouping is formally recognized and identified as a state or a local government area within a federal framework", in this case, a great part of the political organization of the grouping is officially and formally institutionalized and its political activities tend to be controlled by the constitution and usually predictable. On the other hand Cohen (1997) added that identity politics is said to be informal "when a group of people, either on the basis, of ethnicity or religion and some other identifiable identity takes political action outside the official framework of economic and political power within the state". This second type appears to approximate the idea of identity politics operationalized in this paper. Therefore, such groups as the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and the Egbesu Boys of Africa operating in the Niger Delta are in this category. Their other counterpart outside the Niger Delta and among the dormant ethnic groups includes the Jamiyya Mutane Arewa, Ooduwa People's Congress (OPC), Afenifere and Ohaneze Ndigbo. In this research therefore, identity politics shall refer to political activities within the state in which considerations of ethnicity, cultural and religious, among others predominate relations among groups and or between groups and the state.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Literature Review
Democracy and Violent Conflict
Scholars do not agree with regards to the role of democracy in peace and conflict or violent conflict. Democratic theory as enunciated by Russet (2007:2) hinges on the fact that democracy leads to and engender peace as peace cannot be achieved in the absence of democracy. Thus, it can be deduced from democratic peace theory that the more democratic countries are the more peace we have in the world. In fact, Moaz and Russet (1993) Renmel (1998) argued that, the possibility of two democratized countries engaged in militarized conflict is extremely, low, domestic norms and institutions prevalent in

democratic politics have advanced to be responsible for peaceful relationship among democratic conflict. There seems to be no such constraints when they engage in dispute with non-democratic countries.

Rummel (1977) added that, while about 36 million people have been killed in battles in all foreign and domestic wars in the last century, at least not less than 119 million have died through government genocide, massacres and other mass killings while about 115 million of these figures were killed by totalitarian government (not less than 95 million of these 115 million mentioned above were in the communist countries). He concluded that democratic freedom promotes non-violence. However, democracy has its dark side that sups with the devils of political violence, or it is claimed that democracy kills (Keane, 2010:2) violence is inherent in every effort to establish and maintained democracy. The practice of democracy everywhere rests with foundational sets of violence (Keane, 2010). Reynal Duerol (2004) argued that partly democratic countries are more prone to civil war than full democracies. Therefore, it appears that violence prevention or reduction does not rest solely on democratic status of a country alone. It has equally been observed that although democratic countries may not go into war with other democratic countries, however, they are often embroiled with internal conflict which is often precipitated by electoral contest.

Keane (2010) christened this as "democratization of violence. He further added that the idea of democratic countries engaging undemocratic countries in war on some issues like American war in Afghanistan and in other countries only to introduce democratic governance after subjugating them is tantamount to democratization of violence. There is a convergence in views by Hogland (2006) and Horowitz (1985) that competitive elections, results in ethnicization of electorate, instead of bringing their differences to win votes (Weinberg 2001 cited in Huglund, 2006). Thus, in plural societies voters tend to vote according to their ethnic identity and thus the election results become almost identical to that of the ethnic census. This could cause trouble for post electoral politics in such a country and thus become a cause of ethnic conflict (Taleski, 2011).

Rapoport and Weinberg (2001) stated that, the situation immediately after election is often very sensitive as the acceptance or otherwise of the outcome of the elections by contenders can produce out breaks of violence as it was the case in East Timor after the 1999 referendum of independence. From the above, it can be inferred that, although the universal position is that, democracy midwives peace however democracy alone cannot bring about peace at evidenced in some countries undergoing democratization such as Cote D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo and old Sudan among others. This is because elections are cardinal features of democratization which often generates conflicts in partially democratic countries.

Implication of Violent Conflict to Nigeria's National Development
Conflict has a high direct and indirect cost in the Nigeria's National Development. In fact, violent conflict seems to be the pathway to poverty and a major challenge to the development of most countries embroiled in conflicts in Africa. In Nigeria, various violent conflict the country has experienced are taking a heavy toll on the country's development. Adeyemo, (2006 as cited in Saheed, 2012) submits that the insecurity of lives and properties which tends to foreign economic relations to jumps start the economy is one of the major implications of persistent conflicts in the land. In the same vein, Saheed (2012) noted that victims of ethno-religious conflicts while taking refuge in refugee's camp are cut off from optimal engagement in economic activities in that condition, they cannot make meaningful contributions to the development of the country. Beanu (2009), observed that between 2003 and early 2004, over 30,000 people died in election related violence in the Niger Delta perpetuated by youths, with properties worth hundreds of millions destroyed. It has equally been noted that Nine thousand (9000) people have lost their lives in fight between the Ijaw gangs (Jiwondo, 2011). It is also on record that since 1999, there have been over 90 violent ethno-religious conflict in the country with over 100,000 lives lost in the process (Nwanolue & Iwuoha, 2012). The able bodies wasted in senseless ethno-religious and other types of crisis in the country can no longer contribute to the socio-political and economic development of Nigeria.

Similarly, properties lost to various conflicts and compensations paid by the various government cannot be ploughed back to developmental objectives. In fact, a total of N150 billion oil revenue has been deferred and properties worth billions of naira destroyed in communal clashes nationwide (Yahaya, 2005). The government of Delta State in 2003 spent N200 million to maintain soldiers station in Warri to maintain peace (Adebanwi, 2004). Indeed, conflicts have led to loss of assets both by victims and the diversion of public funds from development to pay compensations to victims. For example, it is estimated that assets with N59, 672, 000 were lost to the Jos crisis in 2001, while government compensation to victims was about N13, 938, 000, assets lost to Kaduna crisis of 2001 amounted to N50, 625,000, with government compensation at N32, 716,000. The Kano crisis of 2001 resulted in the loss of assets worth N59,756,000, while compensation totaling about N22,65,800, assets lost to Jos crisis of 2004 was estimated at about N102932,000 while N85,121,000 was paid as compensation to victims (to mention just a few) (Yahaya, 2005). Added to the above is the fact that continued insecurity in the country has not only discouraged transnational corporations to invest but has equally caused the established ones to divest by way of folding up their business (Afegbua, 2010).

Democracy and Violent Conflicts in Nigeria's Fourth Republic
Although conflicts in Nigeria predates the inception of civil rule in 1999, the frequently of conflicts in all the geo-political zones at one time or the other in the present democratic dispensation calls for concern. Osita (2007) heaps the blame of the Nigeria's violence conflict on corruption and the abrupt termination of the late General Abacha, one of the ruthless military dictators Nigeria has ever had. His demise triggered spontaneous culture of "revivalism and agitation among different social grouping" (Osita, 2007:21). This is because pent up aggression under the ruthlessness of Abacha's regime now found expression among the various ethnic groups. Added to this, is the fact that, the long period of repressive military rule has led to the militarization and bastardization of the psyche of the Nigeria's (Adigun, 2003) which have culminated in the emergence of ethnic militias in several parts of the country such as the Oodua Peoples' Congress (OPC), Bakasi, Boys Egbesu boys and the reemergence of Boko-Haram in Northern Nigeria. Salawa (2010) opined that, the emergence of ethnic militias and the deep divides between the various ethnic groups, makes religious intolerance more violent and bloody with more devastating consequences using the ethnic militias as the executors of the ethno-religious agenda. Salawu (2010) also noted that over 400% of ethno-religious based conflicts are credited to the fourth republic of Nigeria.

Harris and Reilly, (1998) cited in Haliru (2012) have also argued that conflict originating within states can largely be traced to potent identity based factors, translating to differences in race, religion, culture, language and so on with perceived imbalance in the distribution of economic political and social resources. This is very relevant to the Nigeria situation. In instances shortly after the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential election, the perception of some groups in the federation over the disequilibrium in Nigeria's body politics became acute. The Ogonis felt neglected, the oil producing state felt cheated, the northern minorities felt left out, the West felt robbed, the core North felt they only held the title but not real power which has been elsewhere, the East has always felt oppressed and marginalized. These feeling resulted in the formation of ethnic militias by some of the groups to redress their unhappy positions in the federation (Agbaje, 2003). Their activities have been a threat to peace and security in the country. Also there seems to be a divisive interplay of politics, ethnicism and religion which has consequently given fillip to the rising micro-nationalism and militancy of various ethnic and religious movement in a bid to correct perceived forms of marginalization, oppression or domination. Hence the escalation of ethno-religious conflicts that now looms large in the country.

Adagba et al. (2012) have equally noted that the interplay of ethno-religious conflict and politics in Nigeria, boils down to perceived and real loss of power by an elite stratum, the quest for political power among those who won it before, those that lost it and those who want it back. In addition, politicians are known for playing ethnic cards for their selfish interest or political gains. That is, inciting their own ethnic group against their opponent ethnic group. The violence of and that trailed the release of the 2011 presidential election in Nigeria, in the northern parts of the country, (the home of the major presidential aspirant who lost) epitomized the nature of contestation for power in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is the conclusion that, there is a positive correlation between natural resources endowment, the struggle to appropriate a fair share of revenue derived from it, or sometimes its total control, the emergence of various groups communal, ethnic, supra-ethnic) that advanced the common interest of their members and the outbreak of violent conflict in the Niger Delta. It is the argument, however that, this correlation is not a function of any factor latent in nature resources endowment. While the-effort to gain access to a part or total control would naturally generate conflict among competing groups, whether it degenerates into violent conflicts or not is however a function of the overall political culture of the society. However, political culture is itself determined by the elites' disposition to governance. In the case of the Niger Delta, it is the Nigeria elites, perception of governance, particularly, its patronage orientation and violent response to conflict among others that led to the degeneration of identity politics into violent conflicts. Though the seeds of violent conflict would appear to have been planted under the civilian elites among the first republic, it was under military rule that it was nurtured to fruition.

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