THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIO – ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CRISIS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Social crisis could be corruption, ethno-religious, war, genocide or political which effects are destruction of properties, waste of resources and hence, inefficient utilization of resources. Though, Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural and human resources, however the country has always been in one crisis or the other ranging from corruption, ethnic and religious to political crises. This study therefore, examines the geography of global social crises in Nigeria.
KEYWORDS: Crisis, Society, Economy, Politics, Impact, Values.

Introduction

During 2008-2009, the world experienced its worst financial and economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. The cri-sis followed the effects of the food and fuel price hikes in 2007 and 2008. In 2009, global output contracted by 2 per cent.

This 2011 Report on the World Social Situation reviews the ongoing adverse social consequences of these crises after an over-view of its causes and transmission. While a deeper, more prolonged global recession has been averted by coordinated stimulus measures, the recovery is nonetheless fragile and uneven. The economic slowdown has reduced social spending in most developing countries while the turn to fiscal austerity has undermined social spending in developed countries.

The Report points to the rapid rise in unemployment and vulnerability, especially in developing countries without comprehensive social protection in the wake of the global economic crisis. Tens of millions more people fell into, or were trapped in, extreme poverty because of the global crisis, while the number of people living in hunger in the world rose to over a billion in 2009, the highest on record.

The global economic downturn has had wide-ranging negative social outcomes and set back progress towards achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. Given the fragility of the economic recovery and uneven progress in major economies, social conditions are only expected to recover slowly. The increased levels of poverty, hunger and unemployment will continue to affect billions for years to come.

The Report strongly underscores important lessons from national responses to the global crisis, the importance of inclusive social policies and the need for universal social protection. A key conclusion is that countries need to be able to pursue countercyclical policies in a consistent manner.

What Is Crisis?

A crisis is any event that is, or is expected to lead to, an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society. Crises are deemed to be negative changes in the security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning. More loosely, it is a term meaning "a testing time" or an "emergency event".

Conceptual Framework
The Global Social Crisis in Nigeria

In March 2014, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navi Pillay, stated that Nigeria was "currently facing its most daunting set of challenges for decades." The country is split between Muslims and Christians, with an area called the middle belt edging the predominately Muslim north and Christian south. Ten percent of the country follows indigenous sects, constituting over 174 million people, and close to 350 ethnic groups speak 250 languages. The country is also divided along economic lines. As of February 2014, CFR recorded poverty levels at 72 percent in the north, starkly contrasting the 27 percent in the south and 35 percent in the Niger Delta. These divisions and inequalities, and the existence of vulnerable peoples, alongside ongoing battles against insurgent groups and high levels of corruption, have contributed to the current security crisis in Nigeria. Human Rights Watch (HRW) and the CFR Nigeria Security Tracker purport that over 25,000 people have been killed in the country since 1999, and events since the start of 2014 have reached unprecedented levels.

In April 2014, Amnesty International published a briefing expressing concern over actions by both Boko Haram, the Nigerian militant Islamist group, and the Nigerian state security forces that may constitute "war crimes" and "crimes against humanity," urging the immediate investigation of violations of international humanitarian law. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) also warned of the gravity of such acts, stating, "indiscriminate violence heightens the risk of further mass atrocities, including possible crimes against humanity."

Targeted violence, increased lawlessness, escalating sectarian tensions, the state's inability to protect, and its military's own contribution to human rights violations, has raised significant alarm as to whether the international community is bearing witness to mass

atrocity crimes - or could in the near future. In May 2014, one month after Boko Haram's abduction and continued detention of 276 schoolgirls, the International Criminal Court Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, said that crimes committed by Boko Haram fell within the jurisdiction of the Court, which has authority over cases of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide.

Inter-communal & Political Unrest

Jos, the capital of Nigeria's North-Central Plateau State, is located in the middle belt. The middle belt has areas on each side of it comprised of distinct, majority religious identities. Between 17-20 January 2010, Muslim-Christian tensions turned violent in Jos, with at least 400 people killed and 18,000 displaced before the military restored order. According to a statement issued by Nigerian Civil Society on the crisis, by 19 January, "the incident had escalated into mass violence, in which residents from different communities In the city systematically attacked one another." Media reports indicated that hate messages transmitted through cell phones incited individuals to such attacks. **In** response, Human Rights Watch (HRW) stated, "This is not the first outbreak of deadly violence in Jos, but the government has shockingly failed to hold anyone accountable." Reports by HRW also surfaced accusing the Nigerian military and police units of responding to the violence with excessive force against civilians.

On 7 March 2010, HRW reported a massacre south of Jos that left at least 200 Christian villagers dead. The International Crisis Group recorded two other attacks on villages by Muslim Fulani gangs the same day that were in "apparent retaliation for January] violence," raising the day's death count to 500, mostly Christian women and children. Such events led the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P) to suggest that these atrocities may "rise to the level of crimes against humanity."

The unrest persists in the region. HRW's World Report 2013 addressed further episodes of inter-communal violence in the Plateau and Kaduna States of the middle belt. Over 360 people were killed in 2012 in these locations, with victims "hacked to death, shot, and burned alive - in many cases simply based on their ethnic or religious identity." The report also mentioned discriminatory state and local policies towards "non-indigenes" people, which "continue to exacerbate inter-communal tensions and perpetuate ethnic-based divisions." On 16 March 2014, Fulani Muslim herders attacked three Christian villages and killed more than 100 civilians in Kano. The New York Times reported that middle belt violence is typically separate from Boko Haram activity (refer to Section Ill), but "analysts say there is a risk that the insurgents will try to stoke the conflict in central Nigeria." While recorded attacks have been linked to specific ethno-religious groups, an NPR article warned of attributing this violence to religious or ethnic hatreds, explaining that social, economic and political factors underpin the area's cycles of violence.

Ethnic and Religious Crisis in Nigeria

Ethnicity refers to a social identity formation that rests upon culturally specific practices and a unique set of symbols and cosmology. A belief in common origins and broadly agreed common history provide an inheritance of symbols, heroes, events, values and hierarchies, and conform social identities of both insiders and outsiders (Adeyemi,

2006). Religion on the other hand, is a particular system of belief in and worship of a God or gods. Ethnic and religious intolerance can lead to conflicts which can negatively impact the growth of the economy.

Religious, ethnic and political unrest have triggered series of violence in Nigeria, resulting in lose of lives and properties, and threat to the unity of Nigeria. It is estimate that over hundred thousand Nigerians have lost their lives in ethno-religious crises that have engulfed the country since the enthronement of democracy in 1979. The number of those injured triples the dead, while those displaced are put at millions (Yusuf, 2009).

Boko Haram Crisis in Nigeria

The group originated in 2002, in the capital of Nigeria's North-eastern Borno state, Maiduguri, under the leadership of Islamist cleric Mohammed Yusuf. It is commonly referred to as Boko Haram, which colloquially translates to 'Western education is sin.' According to CFR, and with "aims to establish a fully Islamic state in Nigeria," Yusuf's followers consisted predominately of individuals from the impoverished north:

Islamic students, clerics, and the unemployed. Prior to 2009, the small group of Islamists openly challenged the state with impassioned speeches. Kyari Mohammed, in 'The Message and Methods of Boko Haram: explains it was not until July 2009 that the group moved from this "dawah (proselytisation) phase to violent armed struggle." Yusuf was summarily executed while in police custody, and following this development, the group not only grew more radicalized, but it also broke into factions. Abubakar Shekau is the current leader of the militant group.

Regarding the methods of violence utilized in this new phase, Boko Haram has adopted targeted assassinations, suicide bombings, and hostage-taking, with an increasingly global reach. Since the middle of 2010, the group has targeted media outlets, journalists and schools, as well as kidnapped both locals and foreigners. The group's strength and resilience has succeeded in posing a significant threat to the government. CFR highlights that, "Boko Haram fighters often are, indeed, better armed and equipped than the government's forces." Crisis Group furthers that wealthy politicians and businessmen funded the group in the past, before, as a former member of Nigeria's State Security Service (SSS) puts it, "they lost control of it." Nevertheless, Boko Haram's political ties have allegedly continued.

In July 2009, following an alleged disagreement with police forces, 14 Boko Haram members were shot in a joint military and police operation. The military suppressed the group's reprisal revolts in six northern states, with the crackdown leaving over 800 dead, the majority of which were sect members and civilians. Attacks continued, culminating in the 30 July 2009 execution of Yusuf in custody. From August 2011-June 2012 Boko Haram violence significantly escalated, with the suicide bombing of a UN building, and multiple attacks on security facilities, banks, and churches, resulting in high numbers of civilian causalities. In October 2012, Human Rights Watch released a report accusing Boko Haram's "widespread and systematic murder and persecution" as likely amounting to "crimes against humanity." The second Boko Haram instigated 'State of Emergency' was declared in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, May 2013, and from June-October 2013 multiple confrontations between Boko Haram and state forces resulted in hundreds of deaths. In September 2013, Boko Haram was suspected of an attack on a college that killed 40 students. Crisis Group then reported in December 2013 that 200

insurgents, dressed in military uniform, coordinated an attack on state military targets in Maiduguri, and later that month, several hundred fighters attacked military barracks outside Bama.

In early 2014, the frequency and scale of Boko Haram attacks, mainly targeting civilians, increased significantly. In Februa ry, the group killed at least 59 people, when they opened fire at a high school in Yobe State. In March, at least 75 people were killed in Maiduguri blasts, attributed to Boko Haram. In April, Boko Harm gunmen abducted 276 schoolgirls from their dormitory in northeastern Borno state, merely hours after more than 70 people were killed in a bomb attack near Abuja. In May, three separate attacks, a Boko Haram assault on the town of Gamboru Ngala on the Cameroon border (at least 336 deaths), a car bombing in Jos (at least 118 deaths), and an attack on a military base in Yobe State (49 deaths) killed more than 500. Throughout June and July at least another 2,000 casualties were recorded in multiple attacks, among which was the Gwoza massacre killing at least 200, mostly Christian, in several villages in Borno State and a series of attacks in the Middle Belt of Nigeria, killing around 171 people.

Nigerian State Conduct

President Jonathan signed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act in 2011, amended in 2012. The bill authorizes the death penalty, upon conviction, for any individual convicted of stated terrorist acts. State security officials have also gained extra powers, without legal encumbrances, including two declared states of emergency (the first initiated in December 2011 in Borno, Yobe, Plateau and Niger states, and the second, May 2013 until present in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe states), and the cutting of cellular service in May 2013. Despite these added measures, the Nigerian government has failed in its responsibility to protect its citizens from deadly incidents, which possibly classify as 'crimes against humanity.' Security officials have proven unreliable, allowing Boko Haram "freedom of movement" and access to vulnerable targets, and "the majority of the insecurity burden will continue to be shouldered by the public," states Serrano and Pieri, if a new approach to this ongoing crisis is not initiated. For in fact, out of desperation from the lack of protection offered by the state, local youth vigilantes have taken the responsibility upon themselves, forming the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF).

Leading international organizations' reports on Nigeria's human rights situation in 2012 and 2013 have provided consistent and repeated mention of documented atrocities by Nigerian military and police forces (JTF), including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary dragnet arrests, illegal and arbitrary detentions, and torture. Amnesty International stated in its Annual Report 2012 that, "hundreds of people were unlawfully killed, often before or during arrests on the street. Others were tortured to death in police detention," adding that few police officers had been held accountable. In its World Report 2013, Human Rights Watch repeated the same allegations against Nigeria's forces, and supported such impunity claims, explaining that authorities had not yet prosecuted the relevant individuals for unlawful killings dati ng back to 1999.

The Nigerian government's handling of the insurgency has significantly contributed to the radicalization of the Boko Haram, pushing "the movement to the extreme end of the spectrum." It is suggested that the June 2009 shooting of Boko Haram members at a funeral procession, just prior to the July uprising, was seen as "a declaration of war," as was the extrajudicial killing of Yusuf. Boko Haram has since identified the civilian population as a key tool for their protection and operational success against the JTF, and as a result the JTF has "resorted to taking vengeance on the whole civilian population." This indiscriminate response has garnered Boko Haram greater support in the community, even with their knowledge of the group's own role in atrocities. The state's inability to protect its population, marred by the JTF's lack of distinction between civilians and combatants, has had the effect of increasing Boko Haram's confidence in their endeavors, as well as its membership numbers.

Weak political leadership by President Jonathan has also contributed to the escalation of the conflict. The president was often poorly informed and did not grasp the gravity of the situation, failing to provide political guidance in order to navigate a n effective counter-insurgency. Moreover I the Nigerian military is increasingly overwhelmed, as it is not appropriately trained and strongly undermanned to fight an insurgency that spans 150,000 square kilometers. In dire need of security sector reform, the army is experiencing a high rate of desertions and accounts of Nigerian soldiers fleeing military bases in fear of Boko Haram attacks are a testament to the need of military strengthening. Most of all, Nigeria must cooperate more closely with regional actors and accept assistance from neighboring countries.

Conclusion

The conflict in Nigeria is an example of a state's inability to protect civilians from organized killings conducted by a non-state insurgency group. Boko Haram has extended its influence and ideology beyond the country's borders its own movement has been building in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and it has been linked to armed groups operating in Mali such as Ansar Dine, AQIM, and MUJAO. Furthermore, the violence has caused a severe refugee crisis, with 3.2 million Nigerians forced to flee their homes. Approximately 1.6 million are internally displaced, while another 1.6 million are refugees seeking safety in neighboring countries such as Chad, Cameroon and Niger.

The country is set to hold presidential elections in 2015. Previous national elections in 2011 resulted in over eight hundred deaths, creating a volatile environment that allowed Boko Haram to gain greater influence. Many northern Nigerians view President Jonathan's presidency as illegitimate, arguing that he disregarded a power-rotation agreement that would have ensured a Muslim president.

As the inter-communal violence, political unrest, and corruption demonstrate, Boko Haram attacks are not the only issue facing the country, and many analysts suggest that the government's counter-insurgency actions will continue to fail for reasons beyond that of being outgunned. Nigerian analyst Chris Ngwodo suggests Boko Haram "is an effect and not a cause; it is a symptom of decades of failed government and elite delinquency finally ripening into social chaos." The crisis in Nigeria has rapidly become a complex national, regional, and global issue, requiring a comprehensive response if action to protect populations is to be effective.

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