

ASSESMEN OF THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF ETHNIC MILITANCY IN NIGERIA

Madumere Victor

Department of Political Science and International Relations

University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

Abstract

From the period of independence till now, the Nigerian federation has been engulfed by large-scale social crises and violence. These may be attributed to the failure of the Nigerian state to deliver on the fundamental principles of state policies. Between 1990 and 2021, the upsurge of ethnic militia and political violence across the country assumed unprecedented dimension. The paper examines the phenomenon of ethnic militancy and also seeks to determine how issues and grievances surrounding political and economic deprivation, marginalization, environmental degradation and neglect have led to the upsurge of ethnic militancy and violence in the country. The mode of production perspective of Marxist Political Economy theory is used as theoretical frame work. The paper contends that the up surge of militancy groups across the country is a direct consequence of years of misrule, injustice, social inequity in the allocation and distribution of socio-economic and political goods. Against this backdrop, it is recommended that political leadership should rise above ethnic and primordial sentiment in delivering social goods to the citizenry to avoid exclusion in the affairs of governance.

Keywords: Militancy, Political Economy, Marxism, Ethnic Milancy, Resource Scarcity

Introduction

The phenomenons of ethnic militia agitations in Nigeria are certainly not new in the country. Their emergence dates back to 1966 when Isaac Adaka Boro staged Ijaw revolution to protest the marginalization of the Niger Delta by the Nigerian state. Although, the violence that erupted during the period was suppressed within days by the Nigeria State yet the issues rubbed them re-echoed some months later and changed the country into 30 months bloody civil war between 1967-1970. (Etekpe, 2007). Ethnic suspicion, political marginalization, oppression, inequity and social injustice were perceived and alleged as part of the process of managing, allocating and distributing economic and political goods of the country. Between 1990 and 2012, the upsurge of ethnic militia and political violence across the country assumed an unprecedented dimension. In the South-west geopolitical zone, the activities of the O'dua People Congress (OPC) had no limits to the observance of the law. (Obulor, 2013). (Baridapdoo,2004).The group engages itself in arbitrary killings, harassments, wanton destruction of properties and armed confrontation with the Nigerian security forces. The group's agitation centers on the political deprivation of the zone by the Nigerian State.

In the South-East Zone, the activities of the movement for the actualization of the sovereign state of the Biafra (MASSOB) and indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB). As the name of the groups implies, the groups seek to actualize the old dream of a Biafra State for the Ibo. Its agitation centers on self-

determination of the Ibos from the present geo-political framework of Nigeria which they perceived as an instrument for the political and economic marginalization of Ibos. To match its threats with action, MASSOB and IPOB hoisted the old Biafran flag in some strategic places across the zone; printed the Biafra currency; declared public holidays; issued sit-at-home order to the people of the zone, and prevented a good number of the people from participating in the registration of voters exercise carried out throughout the country in 2006. (Obulor, 2013)

In the South-South zone comprising mainly the people of the Niger Delta region, the activities of the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) become very prominent. Indeed, their activities almost paralyzed economic and social activities within and outside the region. Aimed with sophisticated guns and ammunitions, the group launched attack on oil installations and personnel of the oil multinationals in the region. They also engaged in Kidnapping, abduction and shooting encounters with members of the Nigerian police force and armed forces. Their agitation centers on self-determination of the Niger Delta people from the Nigeria State which they perceive as the main instrument of oppression and insensitivity to the age-long Night of the region from where wealth that sustains the country is derived. (Peterside, 2005). In the North, the activities of some political and fundamentalist groups such as the BOKO HARAM self which has now developed into an unmistakable terrorist group formed in 2002 in Maiduguri, the Boronu State capital as a protest movement against Western education, the group led by Mohammed Yusuf dismissed Western education as evil and sinful and vowed to stop its spread in the North(Etekpe, 2007). It eventually crystallized as a terrorist group having cells in most state of the North and engaging in serial bomb attacks, assassinations, suicide bombing and frequent clashes with the Nigerian security agencies.

No doubt; the upsurge in ethnic militia and political challenges to national security, political stability and national integration in the country (Azaiki, 2003). The open display and actual use of sophisticated arms and ammunitions by the various militia groups in unleashing harm to people and properties, have not only posed serious and disturbing security problems for the country and its people but Nigerian State, in its claim to having the exclusive and legitimate right to the use of force and violence.

Theoretical Framework: Marxist Political Economy

Political economy is essentially the study of social formations in relationship to the laws that govern the processes of production, distribution and exchange. It is a material science which provides historical explanation to material conditions of existence and the contradictions that arise from the interactions of social forces within a given mode of production (Nikitin, 1983). The system of social production and reproduction which is a perspective of the political economy approach generally begins with some assumptions, an understanding of which clearly explains the fundamental causes of social crises and violence in any human society. It is necessary therefore for us to rely wholly on the summary given to it by Ake (1981) and Ogban-Inyam (2005), both of them borrowing from Marx. State thus:

1. Survival and security are the fundamental needs human beings
2. To survive and have security therefore, human beings must engage in the process of production and reproduction of their needs; this is done in association with other human beings

3. Every social relation of this kind generally produces either tangible or intangible goods such as food, shelter, pain, violence or pleasure, etc
4. The process of production and reproduction of any value may be political, economic, psychological etc
5. In every system of social production and reproduction, the decision of what to produce and its distribution to whom, how and when is always taken by somebody or a group of persons who also controls the entire process.
6. Those that take decision and control the process of social production are favoured and feel satisfied in the system. They generally, tend to protect the system.
7. Those that do not partake either in the decision process or control the system are generally dissatisfied in the system and would always want to change it.
8. In order to meet his needs, each individual would struggle to attain or remain in a favourable position in the system
9. Allies and opponents are defined in the process of the struggle for survival
10. Violence and crises result from the struggle among individuals, to either change/improve or retain their position in the system.
11. In the process of this struggle for survival, instruments of all kinds are employed by the two divides. These include both violent and non-violent means such as arms and ammunitions, machetes, blackmail, lies, kidnapping, manipulations, etc.
12. A social production and reproduction system in which all accept their position in its unlikely to be violent and vice versa.
13. It is in this regard that this work is anchored within the context of the peripheral capitalist character of the Nigerian social formation. More specifically, this study derives essentially from the systemic operations and practices of a pseudo-capitalist system in Nigeria in which the patterns and forms of politics and governance largely determine and give currency to poor material conditions of existence and consequently, social crises and violence.

The nature of Nigerian's incorporation into the international capitalist system entrenched some disturbing features that have remained unresolved. These include: perverse political practices; economic dysfunctions; and social discontinuities (Obulor, 2018). All these have now posed enormous problems for politics and governance in the country. More disturbing in this regard are: the creation of imbalance in political structures in largely unproductive, dependent and predatory; and the creation of a militarized society (Peterside, 2005). Underlying these problems however are issues that relate to the system and processes of social production and reproduction in the country. Consequently, inequity and injustices in the allocation and distribution of social goods have constituted serious basis for the emergence of ethnic militias and violence (Suberu, 1996). In summary therefore, the various militia groups in Nigeria have raised charges of economic deprivations, political marginalization, environmental degradation and neglect, internal colonialism and general operator of the prevailing system of social production and reproduction in the country. Much more than these is the challenge these charges have posed on the legitimacy of government.

This paper departs essentially from the misconception that militancy in the Nigeria is a result of breakdown of community values. Rather, it views the problem within the context of the social production system, which has created situations of mass poverty, alienation and dissatisfaction. Again, in doing this, we consider the character of the Nigerian state as a primary source violence in the system.

One fundamental factor that has defined and sustained the present character of the Nigerian state is oil. As earlier noted, the ascendancy of oil in the Nigerian economy in the 1970s and the huge revenue earning derived from it had two major implications for the Nigerian state. First, the Federal Government became stupendously richer than the states and local government councils. Secondly, it became too powerful and coercive in character (Femi, 2008). The result is that the competition for control of the Federal Government contending social forces became unbridled and lawless. It remains to add that militia violence in Nigeria can be explained largely in the context of the prevailing objective conditions in the country. Here again, Ake (1978) offers useful explanations. He notes that the objective conditions in Nigeria (as in Africa) are characterized by mass poverty, unemployment, a highly unautonomous state, an unproductive bourgeois class and a worsening economic condition. According to him, these conditions are capable of sensitizing social forces to opt for revolution. Perceived socio-economic and political marginalization have already encouraged the emergence of ethnic social forces that have now become veritable revolutionary forces in the country.

Conceptual Clarifications of Ethnic Militia

An ethnic militia may be defined as an organized group of young men and women from an ethnic or regional group that are organized to engage in armed struggle against the authorities of the state in order to secure political economic and social benefits.

O'Dua People Congress (Opc):

The OPC is a Yoruba socio-political organization whose activities cover the entire South-West geopolitical region of Nigeria; that is Lagos, Osun, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo and Ekiti States.

The OPC was formed in 1994 ostensibly to champion the cause of the Yoruba, following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections widely believed to have been won by one of their own, Chief M.K.O Abiola (Ikeoha, 2007). As Kayode Akinjide observed in an interview, this development was seen in no small measure as a calculated design by the Nigerian State to deny the entire Yoruba people of their stake in the Nigerian enterprise. It was received as a clear case of political deprivation, marginalization and rejection of the Yoruba in corporate Nigeria.(Kayode, 2007). To this extent, Gbenga Olajuwon observed regrettably that the group had lost faith and every sense of fulfillment in the country's corporate existence (Gbenga, 2007). This became very clear in the words of one of the founding fathers of the OPC when he stated thus: The OPC became necessary when it was clear that military rule could not help the Yoruba nation develop its full capacity in all areas of national Endeavour(Weekly Treasure Magazine 2005). Furthermore, it was argued that: The sentiments of geo-political structure, tribe and religion will connive to make it difficult for all the different people to have equal access to the office and wealth of the nation.

Following the annulment of the June 12, 1993 election, the choice for the Yoruba was clear: access to the office and wealth of the nation or self determination (Shola, 2007). It was in this regard that the OPC became the militant body of the region in order to bring about social justice for the people of the region. (Dimeji, 2007). The OPC threatened to destabilize country through bomb blasts targeted at every strategic places of national interest and to cause serious social unrest that would make the country ungovernable.

To match its threats with actions, the OPC under the factional leadership of Chief Ganiyu Adams engaged the Nigerian state and its security operatives in violent clashes with a promise to sustain them until the June 12 1993 presidential elections were revalidated. This commitment drew large scale support for the OPC from other civil society organizations and pro-democracy agitators throughout the country. Although, factionalized under the two leaderships of Dr. Frederick Fasheun and Chief Ganiyu Adams, the OPC is still strongly committed to the charter of social justice for the South West region (Folarin, 2008). Its activities range from sensitization of the Yoruba race on the possibilities of self-determination in an unfriendly Nigeria, to outright and overt hostilities against any perceived threat to Yoruba interest (Femi, 2008). The OPC still remains a major social force in the South West region having its cells in many parts of the region and waiting for any political eventualities that may erupt. Its objective still remains the pursuit of Yoruba nationalism and self-determination. For now, the OPC engages in providing social security through vigilante activities in all the neighborhood areas notorious for armed robbery attacks and criminal activities throughout the region (Ola, 2008).

This is widely believed as a move to providing an alternative to the failure of the Nigerian State (popularly termed a “failed state”) in guaranteeing safety of lives and property.

Movement For The Actualization Of The Sovereign State Of Biafra (MASSOB) and Indigenous People Of Biafra (IPOB):

The aftermath of the 30-month Nigeria- Biafra Civil War of 1967-1970 actually produced the victors and the vanquished. The victors were the Hausa-Fulani and the Yoruba while the vanquished were the Ibos and the minority Niger Delta People (Okowa, 2005). The disastrous effects of the war had attendant human and material loses that devastated the people and land of the Ibo. This called for urgent reintegration and reconstruction of the people and the region back into the Nigerian federation. As Ralph Uwazueuike observed, 37 years after the war the process of reintegration and reconstruction in the region has not yet begun (Uwazuruike, 2009). According to one Chinedu Okparanta, this point it at the very heart of the alleged marginalization of the region (Okaranta, 2009). For the Ibos, several instances could be cited to support the charge of marginalization of the area by the Nigeria State. These include the argument that the region had not had its fair share of the leadership of the country compared to the other two major components. Ndigbo feels that:

Nigeria started as a tripod, comprising of the East, West and North. The North had the presidency for Thirty-five years. The West will by next year (2007) Have it for twelve years. But we had ruled for only six months. (The week Magazine, 2006)

Another instance of marginalization as argued by the leadership of Ndigbo is in the area of creation of states in the country. As the argument goes, while other geo-political zones of the country namely, the North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-West and South-South have a minimum of six states each, the South East has only five states. The zone also records the least number of Local Government Areas and seats in the National Assembly. All these are reflective in the share of

revenue allocation that goes to the States and Local Government areas of the zones in which it also records the least share as, observed (Uzodinma, 2007).

Furthermore, the zone alleges that until the Chief Obasanjo administration in 1999 it had been systematically excluded from the occupying important political and military positions in the country, especially during the 35 years of Northern/Military hegemony (Irukwu, 2007). More disturbing to the people of the zone is the neglect of the region in terms of the provision and repair of social infrastructures in the region since the end of the civil war in 1970. Throughout the South East region, erosion is a menace devastating roads, houses and farmlands. This has caused the people untold hardships over the years with little or no hope of attention on them (Ikeoha, 2007). As the argument goes, The Igbo have not had the best of times within Nigeria. The level of infrastructural development in the South-East is the lowest in the country. (Tell Magazine 2006). It is therefore in consideration of all these that the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) and the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) were formed by some aggrieved people of the area. Declaring his support for MASSOB, the former leader of the defunct Biafran State, Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu, maintained that MASSOB was formed in response to mass frustration of Ndigbo resulting from the injustices of the Nigerian federation. He enumerated such acts of frustration as the pain of defining oneself as an Igbo; the discrimination against the Ibos in admission processes to institutions of higher learning in the country; discrimination of Ndigbo in employment opportunities; and frustrations in business engagements arising from unfavourable government policies targeted against the Ibos and their goods that are sometimes banned even when they are on the sea. He contends that MASSOB has provided the Ibo man a counter measure against the onslaught of the Nigerian state since the end of the Civil war. According to him:

*After the war, Ndigbo were disarmed and really
Helpless in front of brutal forces of so called law and
Order. If nothing, the existence of MASSOB has
Dampened the enthusiasm with which those force
attacked Ndigbo. (Ogadimma, 2008)*

The Niger Delta People'S Volunteer Force and the Struggle for Human and Environmental Rights Abuse

The Niger Delta region lies in the Southern most part of Nigeria. it is the third largest wetland in the world and covers a total of 70,000 sq km It consists of a number of distinct ecological zones, coastal ridge barriers, mangrove swamps, fresh water swamps, forest and lowland rain forest. (Azaiki, 2003). The region comprises the present Delta, Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom and Cross River States (although this definition only makes sense geographically. The political definition of the region now includes nine states namely: Bayelsa, Rivers, Akwa Ibom, Cross River, Edo, Abia, Imo and Ondo states). Oil was discovered in the region in 1957 at Oloibiri however, extraction did not start until 1958 when Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) started production in commercial quantity from the field.

The Niger Delta region suffers from serious environment degradation and ruin as a result of oil exploration and exploitation. These include air pollution caused by gas flaring and emissions which in turn cause acid rain; oil spillages; industrial pollution; bush burning and erosion; noise pollution; bio-diversity depletion; poor farm yield and poor health conditions of the people (Azaiki, 2003).

However, our focus in this study is on the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF) led by Alhaji Mujaheed Asari Dokunbo. Our choice of this group as encapsulating the objectives and demands of all others is instructive for some reasons. First, the group evokes the feeling and attachment of the people of the region to the old aspirations of the Isaac Adaka Boro struggle to emancipate the Niger Delta from the oppressions and marginalization by the Nigerian State. This is why its name is adapted from that of the Boro-led Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) of 1966. (Daily Independence 2005).

Secondly, the leadership of the NDPVF is seen to be the most vocal and articulate at the commencement of violence against the Nigerian State and the oil multinationals. This led to the detention of Alhaji Asari-Dokubo in prison for some years by the Nigerian State. Thirdly, at the peak of its activities, the group is seen to have enjoyed more followership than any other in the region. This notwithstanding, MEND has sustained the struggle and has recently become more vocal than even the NDPVF, especially after Alhaji Asari Dokubo was subdued and released.(Obulor, 2013).

As the name suggests, the NDPVF is in principle a reinvigoration of the ideas of the defunct Niger Delta Volunteer Force (NDVF) led by late Isaac Adaka Boro in 1966.(Tell Magazine, 2006). The NDPVF is guided by the principles of social justice, equity and true federalism. Its ultimate aim is to assert the self determination of the Niger Delta region in an unfriendly corporate Nigeria. for the NDPVF, the liberation of the Niger Delta from internal colonialism, poverty and neglect orchestrated by the Nigerian state has become critical a matter of gun and blood. (Opuwari,2009). According to the group, the time has come when the people of the Niger Delta should take their destiny in their own hands. In a joint statement issued under the auspices of MEND in 2006, the groups gave an ultimatum to all the oil companies operating in the region to vacate or face enormous consequences of failure to do so. In the statement, the groups warned the oil companies to “leave our land while you can or die in it... Our aim is to totally destroy the capacity of the Nigerian government to order the arrest and subsequent detention of Asari Dokubo (The Guardian, 2005). He was eventually charged for treason and later granted state pardon. Since his release after three years of detention, Asari and his NDPVF have been on the quite side. Even the Reformed Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (RNDPVF) formed after his incarceration only exists in name, lacking in bite.

BOKO HARAM:

Originally known as the Yusufiyya sect, Boko Haram literally means that “Western education is evil and a taboo” (Saadn, 2005). As it were, the sect admonishes its adherents to reject western education and possibly oppose its further spread in the North. Since its formation in 2002, the leadership of the sect has repeatedly vowed to make the country ungovernable through violent attacks targeted at public properties and the Nigerian Security Agents. To make good its threats, the sect attacked a police station in Panshikara District in Kano in April, 2007, killing 13 policemen and setting the station ablaze. It also claimed responsibility for the murder of Abba Annas, brother to the Shehu of Borno following a disagreement between them during the 2009 Ramadan period.

The sect had on its own fixed a different prayer time for its members during the Ramadan fast, a move seen as challenging the authority of the Shehu of Borno (Nigerian Journal of Seminal Justice, 2006). The sect also engaged in attacks on traders in Maiduguri who were mostly Ibos and non Muslims. The sect continued to engaged itself in series of robbery attacks at the bank and private individuals which eventually pitched it against the Nigerian Security forces. This culminated in the arrest and detention of its leader, Mohammed Yusuf and his death in 2009 while in Police custody. This development did not deter his followers who vowed to avenge his dealt and promised many more violent attacks in the country. However, a combination of stringent security measures put in place by the state and Federal Government drove the sect members into temporary hiding while still maintaining some subtle attacks on the public. This lasted until the April 2011 presidential election which witnessed the emergence of Acting President Goodluck Jonathan as the winner against the insistence by leaders of the Northern political forum that he should not run for the presidential election or risk failure at the election. The Northern Political Forum (NRF) under the leadership of Alhaji Adamu Ciroma orchestrated winning the election but failed. Their actions further underscore our thesis of Northern political disaffection against President Olusegun Obasanjo and president Goodluck Jonathan who are of Southern extraction. But more fundamentally in this regard, were the threats by some Northern politicians to make the country ungovernable should Dr. Goodluck Jonathan emerge as the winner of April 2011 presidential election (Tell Magazine, 2006).

Thus, as soon as INEC declare him winner of the election the entire North became engulfed with political crisis that claimed many lives and properties reminiscent of the civil war. This had hardly died down before Boko Haram intensified its violent activities in the Northern part of the country fuelling suspicion of political infiltration into the group. Thus, barely one month after President Goodluck Jonathan was sworn-in, Boko Haram sect recorded its first suicide attack at the premises of the Nigerian Police Headquarters, Abuja on June 16, 2011. The attacker killed several people, including visitors, drivers, members of the Police Mobile Force (PMF) and destroyed several cars (Newswatch Magazine, 2011). This was followed by another dastardly suicide attack at the United Nations building, Abuja on the 11th of September, 2011. Insinuations that the bombings by Boko Haram were politically motivated came to the lime light when one of the Boko Haram kingpins, Aliyu Tishau granted an interview to the Nigerian DEFENCE Intelligence Agency after disappearing from the custody of the security agencies. In the interview, published in the (*Newswatch Magazine*, October 10, 2011) Tishua claimed that some Northern politicians had infiltrated the group and created factions within it to cause havoc in the country. He maintained that some politicians from the Northern parts of the country were behind the Boko Haram problem in the country.

Having acquired a political colration, Boko Haram has ascillated between the fight against western education which they view as evil and the demand that at least the entire Northern part of country be sharia compliant. Worried by the bomb blasts, President Goodluck Jonathan decided to set up a Presidential Committee headed by Ambassador Usman Gaji Galtimari to look into the demands of the sect and make necessary recommendation to the Federal government. More fundamentally, the committee's reports identified some of the remote and immediate causes of security challenges in the country which are in tandem with our thesis that poor material conditions of existence is a recipe for ethnic crises and political violence across the country. According to the report, these includes

1. High level of poverty and illiteracy existing in the North-East

2. Massive unemployment of youths, both skilled and unskilled
3. Existence of private militias that were established, funded and used by politicians and individuals and then dumped after having been trained to handle arms
4. The presence of a large number of almajiris who together with those mentioned above could easily be used as canon-fodders to ignite and sustain crises.
5. The influx of illegal aliens resulting from porous and unmanned borders, coupled with provocative and inciting preaching by some religious clerics
6. The extra-judicial killing of the sect leader, Mohammed Yusuf, and some members of the sect by security agents
7. Weak governance and failure to deliver services in the wake of huge resources accruing to state and local governments.

The report was submitted to the federal government during which Vice President Namadi Sambo promised that it would be implemented.

What is certain from the following is that the federal government would as usual readily buy-in to any deal with the sect provided that would help stop the series of bombings and suicide attacks unleashed by the sect on the country. At the same time, what is not certain is the willingness of the federal government to understand the language of the Boko Haram sect on the urgent need to approach issues at stake in a more fundamental and holistic way. To be precise, the crisis generated by Boko Haram could be adequately understood and resolved when viewed in the context of their resentment against failures of leadership and governance in the country, which over the years have combined to produce mass poverty, unemployment, corruption and injustice (Peterside, 2005). This is much the same language of the OPC, MASSOB and the Niger Delta militants. To the Boko Haramist therefore, the failure of both leadership and governance as well as institutions in Western education and culture only means that Western education by implication has failed to bring about the need progress and development in the country and therefore has become a taboo.

Ethnic Militias and the Nigerian Economy

Nwankwo (1987) examines the interrelationship between class, power and violence in Nigeria. He contends that Nigeria is characteristically a bourgeois state factionalized along the lines of the military and civilian politicians. His findings is that the bourgeois concept of democracy complicates the understanding of systemic violence and do in fact legitimize its deployment in the contest for state power. It is little wonder that the entire soci-economic and political process in the Nigerian social formation is, characterized by militarization and violence. In explaining the concept of violence in a once colonized social formation, Fanon (1980), holds that violence is necessary and desirable. For him, it serves as a means to individual and social liberation. He defines liberation as release from restraint or bondage, to be set free. Freedom, according to him, is the conscious determination of a people to act with a view to removing any obstacle that may stand on their way for survival. This position is no less true for the mass of impoverished Nigerians whose final salvation lies in their avowed commitment to revolutionary struggle which is erroneously termed as militia violence.

Related to the nature of social production and reproduction system is the class character of militia violence in Nigeria. According to Lenin (1965:421)

Class are large groups of people differing from each other by the place they occupy in a historically determined system of social production, by their relation to the means of production, by their role in the social organization of labour, and consequently by the dimensions of which they dispose and the mode of acquiring it.

Put simple, social classes by their nature, operate in a definite socio-economic system in which the dominant class appropriate the labour of the subordinate class and from which arises opposition, conflict and violent in the society. A cursory look at the Nigerian peripheral social formation will reveal a difficult attempt at class differentiations. The co-existence of different modes of production have thrown up a number of social classes that are sharply distinct like those in the advanced capitalist social formations. There are the foreign bourgeoisie, local bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, the proletariat and the peasantry. This difficulty is further compounded by the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian system which provides opportunities for upward mobility of members of the classes from one strata to another (The Guardian, 2005). Thus, it is pretty to adequately differentiate a Nigerian petty transforms themselves automatically to the higher statum of the divides.

An office clerk in the Nigerian system could suddenly turn out a big estate owner and having other landed properties and business enterprise in choice cities and locations courtesy of official corrupt practices. The mobility trend could also be downward in the long run as in when access to state power is blocked, terminated or not sustained over time (Okawa, 2006). The reality on ground therefore is that the entire Nigerian society has been polarized into main classes, namely; the stupendously rich people and the impoverished and depraved poor or what may be further carried as the extreme rich and extreme poor. In this situation, the relationship between the two classes becomes one of antagonism and violence. The economic sector has been the worst hit since the commencement of hostilities by ethnic militias in the country. In the South-West region, especially in the Lagos and Ibadan areas which are known for heavy commercial activities, the operations of OPC, while they lasted, stranded economic activities. There were numerous crises of disruption of market activities, burning of markets and general acts of lawlessness. Cooperate organizations in the private and public sectors of the economy were not left out from the air fear that surrounded the region. Associated with all these were unquantifiable loses in financial, material and human lives.

The same level of carnage, lawlessness and wanton destruction of economic and commercial activities by MASSOB were witnessed in Awka, Aba, Onitsha areas in the South-East zone. Yet no where were these loses more evident than in the Niger Delta region where oil production activities were massively stalled and various small, medium and large-scale industries and general socio-economic activities were paralyzed. Port Harcourt city which previously enjoyed 24 hours social life became a shadow of itself. Many companies and embassies operated under low capacity and fear, eventually, relocating to other cities or close down operations completely. Frequent attacks on oil installations and stoppage of oil production activities in the Niger Delta contributed to a conservative total loss of 250,000 barrels per day (Azaiki, 2006. In Bayelsa State alone a total financial loss of N2,791.297 (US\$21,479) billion was recorded between 1990 and 2006. Within the same period also, Nigeria lost a total of about 872,000 barrels of crude oil per day arising from various attacks on oil installations and flow stations (Etekpe, 2007). The total revenue loss to the country was put at N2 billion every day.

The crisis in the Niger Delta had tremendous negative impact on the international oil market. From a paltry US\$ 54 per barrel previously, international market price of crude oil then rose to US\$154 per barrel. This situation elicited serious international concerns as it threatened food security. More worrisome, foreign investors were discouraged from investing in the country due to insecurity in the Niger Delta region. This situation prompted the United States of America, Britain and other European countries to severally warn their citizens on the risks involved in travelling to Nigeria. This development, no doubt, posed enormous problems to the country in terms of loses in employment generation and in other benefits that are associated with foreign investments.

Conclusion And Recommendations

This work set out to inquire into the phenomenon of ethnic militia violence by the OPC, MASSOB, NDPVF and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Earlier explanations on the problem did not pay sufficient attention to the system of social production and violence in human societies. To grasp the problem adequately, we adopted an analytical framework within the social production and reproduction perspective of the political economy. But more fundamentally, we adopted the empirical research method to determine how issues of political deprivation, socio-political marginalization and environmental degradation, poverty, underdevelopment and total neglect of the people have singly or collectively led to the emergence of the OPC in the South West, MASSOB in the South East, NDPVF in the Niger Delta and Boko Haram in the North. Our hypotheses were that there is a corresponding relationship between the system of social production and reproduction and social violence in the country; and that there is a significant correlation between the character of the Nigerian state and the emergence of ethnic militia groups across the country.

This study has also been inspired by a need to provide policy makers in the country with an in depth understanding of the problem of militia violence; the danger it poses to economic and political stability and national development; the need for the urgent upliftment of the material conditions of existence of Nigerians; and the need to enthronize social justice and equity in the country's social system.

The study was based on an appreciation of the dynamics of the Nigerian economy which through richly endowed in natural and human resources, had been poorly managed over the years. The results is mass poverty and general disillusionment and dissatisfaction at the levels of both the individual nationals and the geo-political groups. We discussed the nature and character of the Nigerian state as deficient fundamentally in its allocative and distributive role of socio-economic and political goods. More fundamentally, its violence character is reminiscent of its colonial experience. Like the colonial state, the post-colonial state is not anything different. Persons and groups tend to lay total claims to power and authority, especially in the economic and political spheres. This also defines the nature of politics in the country as violent. All these are further reproduced in bad governance and in the entrenchment of poverty, underdevelopment and crises in a cyclical continuum.

The study shows that:

1. Both the individual nationals and ethnic groups in the geo-political zones are dissatisfied with the existing system of social production and reproduction in Nigeria. For instance,
2. OPC violence in the South West region was the consequence of political deprivation of the region by the Nigerian state.

3. MASSOB violence in the South East region is a consequence of marginalization of the region by the Nigerian state since the end of the civil war.
4. Militia violence in the Niger Delta region is a consequence of years of total neglect of the region that produces the resources from which the country's financial wealth is derived
5. Book Haram in the Northern parts of the country is a consequence of poor material conditions of more than 75% of the people after many years of bad leadership and poor governance.
6. Militia groups across the country are not common criminals in the first place as often alleged. They are revolutionary groups engaged in the struggle to change the existing bad conditions of the country in which unwholesome methods including criminality, abduction and permissible military engagement and weapons of all sorts are allowed.
7. Militia violence across the country will reduce drastically the material conditions of Nigerians are uplifted.

From this study, it is suggested as follows:

1. There is need to expand the productive base of the country from the present mono-economy of petroleum resources.
2. There is need to restructure the state to make it less attractive for class and ethnic competitions
3. The practice of the true federation is long overdue and cannot be compromised.
4. There is the urgent need to erect sound economic structures so that Nigerians could engage in genuine productive ventures which would invariably uplift the material conditions of the citizen, enthroning social justice and equity in the polity.
5. There is the urgent need to enthroning a credible electoral system from which genuine and visionary leaders, accountable to the people's will emerge.
6. The federal government should as a matter of emergency, embark on rapid infrastructural development throughout the country.

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