CURRENT SOCIO-POLITICAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NIGERIA

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INTRODUCTION

Current Nigeria's socio-political and cultural environment is in a state of lawlessness and decadence. This is because from our traditional system to the long period of military interregnum into politics, those in authority exercise control over their subjects. Rules and laws made for the smooth running of the society seem to be for the poor and marginalized groups. Ruling elites who share the same ideology are not subjected to the sanctions the law recommends except in rear cases. Agents of law enforcement can upturn the law in favour of a member of the ruling class. The custodians of our cultural values have become of the offenders of what was entrusted to them to preserve for the society (Ofomegbe, 2022).

Human socio-political thoughts, behaviours, practices and ethnic consciousness are shaped by cultural orientations, and cosmic realities are viewed and interpreted from cultural windows. As an indispensable fulcrum of existence, culture forms the interiority of the being of a people and subsequently shapes their existence (Patterson, 2000). As such, socio-political and cultural setting in Nigerian setting is the basis of ethnic homogeneity, consciousness, practices, disagreement and conflict. Political and cultural conflicts are again more susceptible to Nigeria because of the country's cultural heterogeneity, political bigotry and ethnicity which are fertile in contradictory systems, values, understanding, sense of superiority and right that overshadow the few overlapping similarities among people. This condition is however exacerbated by the glaring fact that Nigeria roams in poor governance and leadership failure, lacking strong and functional institutions that supposed to checkmate political and cultural excesses and cushion the effects of cultural relations and diffusion (Chinwuba, 2020) in our democratic experience since our political independence in 1960.

THE CHALLENGES OF NATION BUILDING IN NIGERIA

Nigeria as a British creation also has its own share of problem building a new identity for over 250 ethnic nationalities that hitherto existed independently and distinctively in culture and tradition but were forcefully brought together. History has shown us that countries like India, China, Pakistan, Turkey, South Africa, Ghana, etc who were as fragmented as Nigeria have successfully created their own identities through the instruments of nation-building (Unya & Onyemauwa, 2018, p. 2). The challenges that have affected the process of nation building in Nigeria connote impediments relating to, or involving a combination of social and political factors which are capable of crippling investments and declining growth in the economy. Social challenges refer to problems that people have interacting with people in society or engaging in normal social behaviours. On the other hand, political challenges relate to with government or politics and may include issues related to party politics or a political system or social, environmental or other issues determined by the citizens (Obamuyi & Fapetu, 2026).

While other nations and their leaders knew that nation-building is a long and challenging political process, which involve leaders, together with the citizenry, Nigerian leaders saw nation-building as an elite project (Unya & Onyemauwa, 2018). It is on this note that Gambari (2008) declares that nation-building does not come by historical accident; rather, they are built by men and women with vision and resolve.

The following have been identified as the most serious social political challenges of Nigeria from the period independence to date. They are corruption, inequality and poverty, unemployment, insecurity, politics of bitterness, bad leadership and poor governance.

Corruption

Corruption had emerged as the major obstacle to the development of the Nigerian economy. Basically, corruption is described as efforts to secure wealth or power through illegal means – private gain at public expense; or a misuse of public power for private benefit (Lipset and Lenz, 2000). This definition includes such behaviour as bribery (use of a reward to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascribed relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal

appropriation of public resources for private uses). Corrupt practices are so common and entrenched in the Nigeria's public service to an extent that citizens have accepted it as a way of life. Corruption is seen as the short-cut to accumulate quick wealth in Nigeria. It has contributed immensely to the poverty and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population (Adeyemi and Obamuyi, 2010). Guseh and Oritsejafor (2007) give three reasons why corruption thrives in Nigeria, as follows: a). corrupt leadership lacked the desire and ability to change the moral tone of the country; b). government domination of the economic sphere significantly enhances opportunities and ability to seek rents; and c). civil society accepts or tolerate corruption.

Adeyemi and Obamuyi (2010) as cited in Okoroafor (2020) concluded that the high level of corruption in Nigeria has been aided by the conspiratorial relationship between political appointees and accounting officers. In this realm, there is flagrant and deliberate abuse of best practices and due process all in a bid to steal public funds. It is possible that either the political appointee or the career civil servant stands as the initiator of the dirty deals or ideas but the main issue is that both parties conspire against the State and the welfare of her citizens. The history of governance process in Nigeria reflects active connivance between political appointees and career officers at all levels of administration – Federal, State and Local. The situation is such that political appointees and career officers embark on a stealing spree and also use accounting techniques to cover up their tricks. This is evidenced by the blatant squandering of public resources by the past leaders in Nigeria.

The truth of the matter is that the entire Nigerian political process is hampered by corruption. This also means that accountability has not been rooted in the Nigerian public service. Despite the activities of the Independent Corrupt Practices and Other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Budget Due Process Monitoring Unit, corruption seems to be on the increase in the country. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI), which measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption in a given country as seen by the international b

usiness people, on a scale of 0 (perceived to be highly corrupt) to 10 (perceived to be totally corruption-free country), ranked Nigeria out of the countries that participated as follows: 143rd out of 183; 139th out of 176; 144th out of 177 and 136th out of 174 in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, with index scores of 2.4, 2.7, 2.5 and 2.7 respectively (see Table 3). The values of CPI show that Nigeria has been one of the most corrupt countries, with CPI consistently in the range of 1.0 to 2.7 from 2001 to 2014.

Institutionalized corruption in Nigeria has remained a major cankerworm that until the 21st century, it has undermined Nigeria's quest for national development as funds earmarked for developmental projects often end up in private pockets. Nigeria has to an extent lost the confidence and trust of some of her local and foreign development partners as a result. In 2001, the Transparency International based in Germany listed Nigeria as one of the incurably corrupt countries in all indices of measurement and evaluation. In view of the looting of the state treasury by some former Nigerian leaders and the negative impact created by this development, the administration of President Buhari has since its inception been fighting an anti-corruption war through which millions of naira have been recovered as stolen funds from some former public officers. However, criticisms have continued to trail over President Buhari's anticorruption crusade as there have been allegations that the fight is mainly targeted at the opposition whereas some members of the ruling party whose corruption cases have been mentioned are treated with kid-glove (Alozie, 2017).

This current government under Alhmed Tinubu has continued where Buhari stopped. Akintade (2024) writing for Peoples Gazette on the topic: Tinubu continued Nigeria's massive corruption by appointing treasury looter Atiku Bagudu to cabinet: U.S. Government, states that:

> The U.S. government is concerned that President Bola Tinubu is continuing the massive corruption trend of his predecessors, given his ministerial appointment of Abubakar Bagudu, a corruption-tainted associate of former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha. There was no "significant" difference between Mr Tinubu's nearly one-year performance and that of his predecessor, Muhammadu Buhari, according to a report that outlined the American government's assessment and scorecard of Nigeria's human rights practices (p. 1).

In confirmation of the same trend in looting our national wealth in Nigeria since last federal government of Buhari, Badmus (2024), writing for Osun Defender, states that the ₦44 billion National Social Investment Programme Agency (NSIPA) fraud and the ₦585.2 million allegedly diverted to a private account under the direction of the Minister in charge of the Ministry, Betta Edu is an iceberg of "the unprecedented treasury looting, unbridled stealing and plundering of resources," going on in the Presidency. Simwa (2022) also has observed that corruption also blossoms in the law and police force, so the citizens no longer trust these branches with their safety. This problem is one of the foundations of the general crisis in the country. This is because corruption can leak into various settings and threaten all political institutions, economic sectors, and other spheres of life. And the government, which is supposed to protect the citizens and be the highest branch of society that solves all the problems, is the most involved in the existence of corruption.

Inequality and poverty

In Nigeria, the proceeds of recent economic growth have gone exclusively to the top 10%, while poverty and inequality have increased (Mayah et al, 2017) as cited in Okoroafor (2020, p.4). Acknowledging this fact, President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria in his speech to the General Debate of the 72th Session of United Nations General Assembly in 2017 said that he believes that ―inequality is leading to growing anger and frustration (Buhari, 2017 as cited in Oxfam International, 208, p. 8). The President further remarked that:

> We must be mindful, and focus on the widening inequalities within societies, and the gap between the rich and the poor nations. These inequalities and gaps are part of the underlying root causes of competition for resources, frustration and anger leading to spiraling instability (Buhari, 2017 as cited in Oxfam International, 2018, p. 27).

Mayah et al (2017) as cited in Oxfam International (2018, p.8) laments ―but in Nigeria billions in oil wealth are suspected of being stolen, inequality continues to grow, and 10 million children are still out of school‖. In Nigeria, the richest man earns enough interest on

his wealth in one year to lift two million people out of extreme poverty. Despite almost a decade of robust economic growth in Nigeria, poverty has increased over the same period (Mayah et al., 2017, p. 19).

Nigeria, one of Africa's two wealthiest economies, has overtaken India as home to the world's greatest concentration of extreme poverty, amid warnings that the continent will host nine out of 10 of the world's poorest people within 12 years. The claim comes as concerns mount that the growth in poverty is outpacing efforts to eradicate it. It was made in a recent paper for the Brookings Institution think tank, by three experts associated with the World Poverty Clock – launched in 2017 to track trends in poverty reduction. According to the authors, energy-rich Nigeria overtook India in May 2017 to become the country with the world's highest number of people – 87 million – living in extreme poverty, in comparison with India's 73 million people (Beaumont & Abrak, 2018 as cited in Okoroafor (2020, p. 4).

According to projections by Kharas, Hamel and Hofer, Nigeria has already overtaken India as the country with the largest number of extreme poor in early 2018, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo could soon take over the number 2 spot (Figure 1 below). At the end of May 2018, our trajectories suggest that Nigeria had about 87 million people in extreme poverty, compared with India's 73 million. What is more, extreme poverty in Nigeria is growing by six people every minute, while poverty in India continues to fall (Kharas et al, 2019).
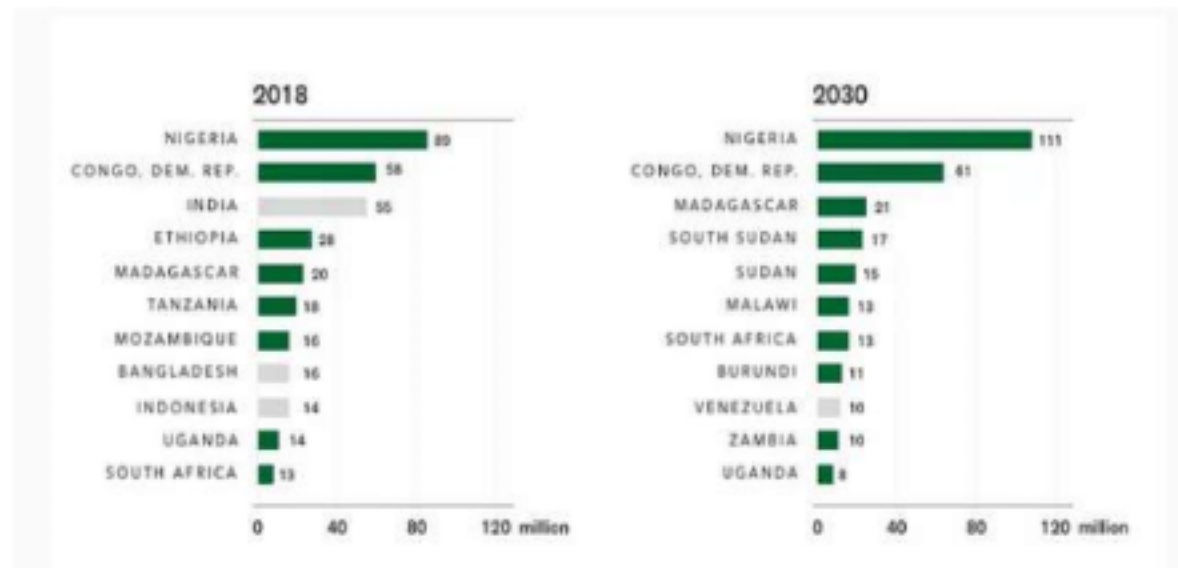
Figure 1: Global Poverty Ranking: African countries will represent 9 out of the top 10 by 2030

Source: Source: Kharas et al (2019) as cited in Okoroafor (2020, p. 5).

Today, Nigeria is the ─poverty capital of the world‖. If it is unable to change its current trajectory, it will be home to 110 million people living in extreme poverty by the year 2030. The second position in World Data Lab's Global Poverty Ranking is currently occupied by the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which will enter 2019 with more than 59 million poor people and end in 2030 with 61 million under current trajectories. By the end of 2030, nine of the 10 countries with the poorest people will be in Africa, up from seven countries today (Kazeem, 2018) (Figure 1).
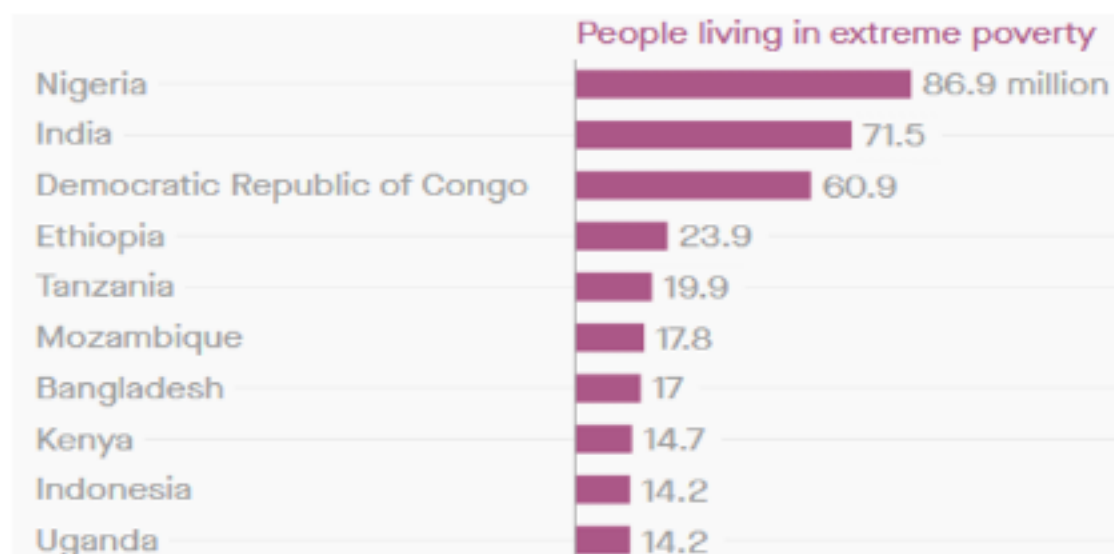

Figure 2: Nigeria has the largest extreme poverty population (June 2018)

Source: Source: Kazeem, Y. (2018) as cited in Okoroafor (2020, p. 6).

It can be observed that from Figure 2, the 86.9 million Nigerians now living in extreme poverty represent nearly 50% of its estimated 180 million population. As Nigeria faces a major population boom—it will become the world's third largest country by 2050—it's a problem will likely worsen. But having large swathes of people still living in extreme poverty is an Africa-wide problem (Okoroafor, 2020).
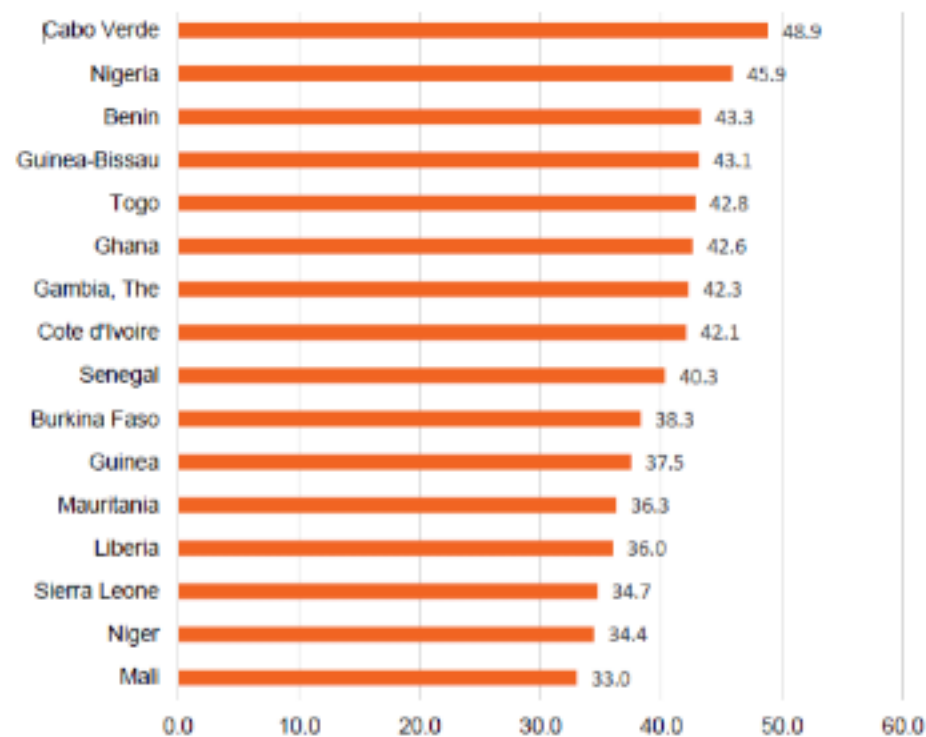
Country	Gini coefficient
Cabo Verde	48.9
Nigeria	45.9
Benin	43.3
Guinea-Bissau	43.1
Togo	42.8
Ghana	42.6
Gambia, The	42.3
Cote d'Ivoire	42.1
Senegal	40.3
Burkina Faso	38.3
Guinea	37.5
Mauritania	36.3
Liberia	36.0
Sierra Leone	34.7
Niger	34.4
Mali	33.0

Figure 3: Average inequalities in West African countries, 2007–17 (Gini coefficient)

Source: Solt. Standardized World Income Inequality Database Version 7 (SWIID 7) as cited in Okoroafor (2020, p. 7).

Religion

Religion in Nigeria functions as a means for the perpetration of violence, fuelling ethnic consciences and solidarity, acquisition of power and socio- economic gains, massive killings and the wanton destruction of lives and vandalizing of property of those considered infidels or who pay allegiance to other religions. This is traced to the acrimony between the two dominant religious-Islam and Christianity which had often resulted in the struggle for power and supremacy, bitter feud and wanton destruction of lives and properties (Ngele, 2008 as cited Emoghene and Okoli, 2020).

Religious terrorism in Nigeria possess a significant threat to national development as it i

s evident in Northern Nigeria where economic and social activities in some of the highly volatile states like Yobe, Borno and Niger have almost been grounded by the stream of killings, destruction of basic means of livelihood of the people and truncating of foreign and local investments; thereby becoming a cock on the wheel of development of the states and Nigeria at large (Emoghene & Okoli, 2020).

The emergence of Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria has affected negatively the political, economic, social and environmental situation of the region and Nigerian economy at large. Since 2011, there were many cases of terrorist attacks which include but not limited to the bombing of UN office in Abuja, Edet House of Force Headquarters in Abuja, Madala attacks, Gwagwalada Park bombing, abduction of the Chibok girls, among so many numerous attacks especially in the North-Eastern Nigeria (Iwuoha, 2014).

Unemployment

Most countries in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) face high unemployment rates, especially youth unemployment. Gyimah-Brempong and Kimenyi (2013) focused on the state of the youth in Africa and observed that the youth population is large and growing, and has high educational attainment and high unemployment rates, with significant regional differences and adverse consequences such as poverty, migration and disease. The high unemployment rates in Nigeria have worsened the poverty level. For instance, the unemployment rate increased from 23.9% in 2011 to 24.3%, 28.5% and 30% in 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively.

Recently, the attempt by over 500,000 youths to secure immigration jobs meant for only 5,000 people led to 16 people being stampeded to death. Thus, economic growth achieved through the rebasing of the GDP failed to translate into creation of job. However, it has been argued that the issue in Nigeria is not unemployment, but under-employment, because most Nigerians cannot afford not to work, but a large share of the population is engaged in low productivity and low paying tasks (Leadership, July 22, 2014). The major causes of the high level of unemployment in Nigeria include government lack of focus an

d mismanagement of the nation's enormous resources, coupled with high corruption and political impunity.

Thus, inadequate planning and insensitivity by the successive leaders, while the flowing "oil and milk" were drying up, made the economy to nose-dive, causing unemployment, poverty and low standard of living. The implications of the hopeless situation are that the active youths are forced into devious activities that persistently threaten the security of the nation. Although, the government introduced many anti-poverty and employment creating programmes like the National Directorate of Employment (NDE), National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP), Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), the SURE-P, YOUWIN, among others, aimed at creating job opportunities toward suppressing the negative impact of unemployment in Nigeria, the job creating programmes will only achieve their desired targets if issues like corruption, mismanagement and policy summersaults are addressed. Therefore, to tackle unemployment in the country, the Nigerian government needs political commitment to improve governance, institutions, policy environment, and the physical and social infrastructure that will put the economy on steady growth (Obamuyi & Fapetu, 2016).

Insecurity

Rising of insecurity is on the verge of being Nigeria's heritage as no single day goes by without acts of insecurity. More worrying is the fact that, for undisclosed reasons, the Nigerian government seems unable to curb this threat or doesn't want to stop it, despite the pronouncement by the President Muhammadu Buhari after winning 2015 election. Nigeria currently appears to be grappling with security problems and these cuts through its six regional regions, but particularly in the North-East, North-West, North-Central, South-South and South-East regions. Residents in these regions now sleep with one eye open while the government that is normally entrusted with life and property security appears confused and unable to do so, (Emmanuel & Emily, 2019). In the North-East is the Boko Haram, North-West and North-Central are experiencing banditry, while in the South-South is kidnapping and militancy and in the South-East, the security challenge is kidnapping and murder

by the 'unknown armed men occasioned by the separatist agitations, and Fulani herdsm
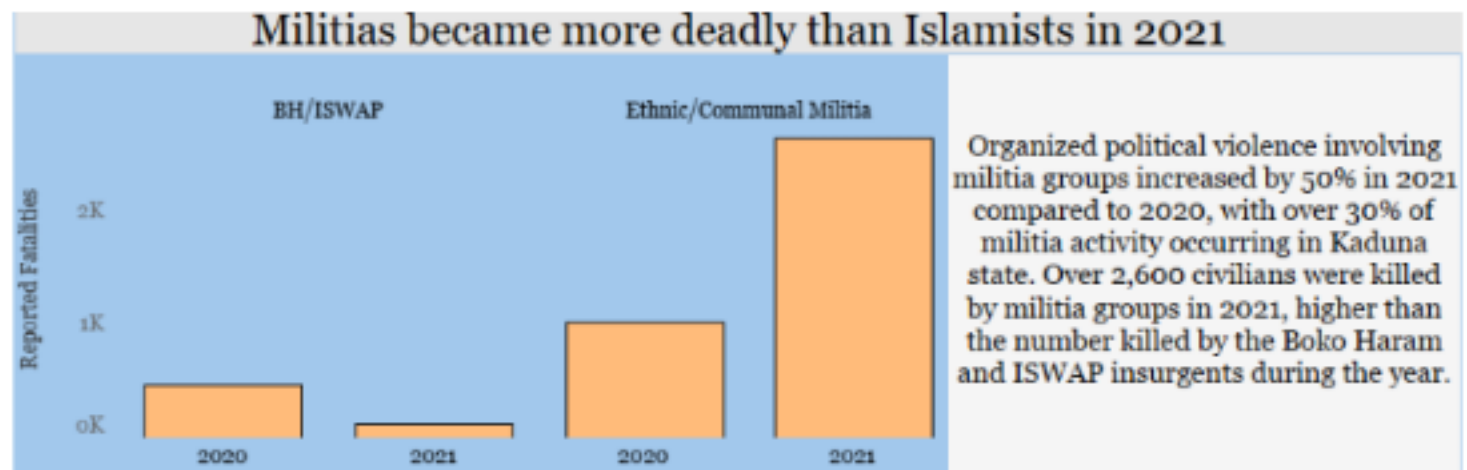en.

Militias became more deadly than Islamists in 2021

Organized political violence involving militia groups increased by 50% in 2021 compared to 2020, with over 30% of militia activity occurring in Kaduna state. Over 2,600 civilians were killed by militia groups in 2021, higher than the number killed by the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgents during the year.

Figure 1: Militias Activities in the North-East in 2021

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2022).

Over the years, several anti-social activities have been identified as threats to nati
onal security. They include kidnapping, armed robbery, attack on innocent citizens and
government properties, bombing of schools, places of worship and market places, amon
g others. The most recent threat to security of lives and property in Nigeria is the insurge
ncy by Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria, which started in July 2009. In July 2014, Human
Right Watch estimated about 2,053 people had been killed in 95 separate Boko-Haram li
nked attacks in the first half of 2014 alone (Uzochukwu, 2014). Anew global study by th
e London-based Institute for Economics and Peace ranked Nigeria 4th on the Glob
al Terrorism Index (GTI) for 2013, primarily arising from terrorist attacks carried out by
Boko Haram. The Global Peace Index ranked Nigeria 151 out of the 162 countries evalua
ted on the reduction of violence and insecurity in 2014. This rating earns Nigeria the 14th
less peaceful country around the world (Obamuyi & Fapetu, 2016).

The causes of insecurity in Nigeria in the opinion of the paper can be among other factor
s attributed to: The menace of unemployment and poverty, elite exploitation of ethnicity
and religious differences, corruption, weak security apparatus, porous border, marginaliz
ation and inequalities in the country, and bad governance and poor leadership. Another f

actor to the uncountable especially in the North-East region of Nigeria is religious extremism and fanaticism by the Islamic oriented and ideological Boko Haram.

Nigeria continues to confront multiple security threats across its territory, with insecurity deepening in northern and southern parts of the country. While a long-running Islamist insurgency and ongoing militia activity, often labeled as 'banditry', continue to impact the northern regions, the Biafra separatist rebellion has been a cause of unrest in the south. During 2021, ACLED records a 22% increase in the number of organized political violence events in Nigeria. The violence resulted in over 9,900 reported fatalities, nearly a 30% increase compared to 2020.
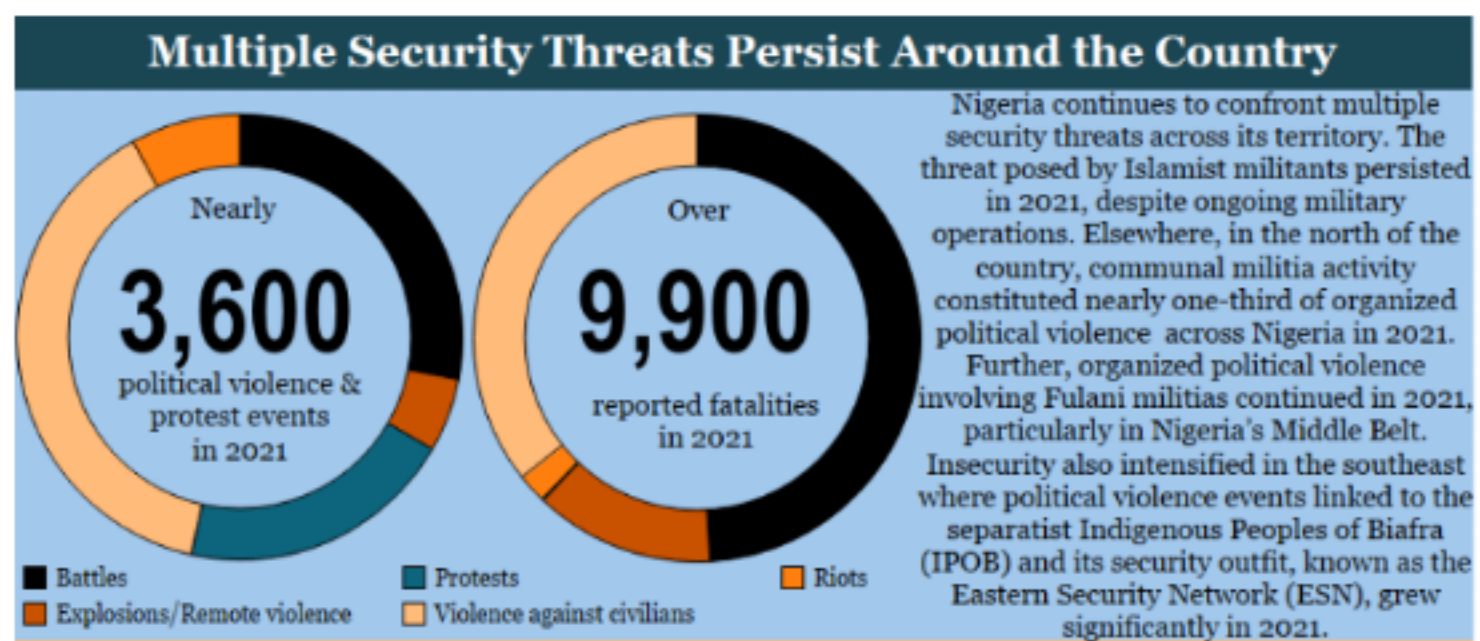

Multiple Security Threats Persist Around the Country

Nearly
3,600
political violence &
protest events
in 2021

Over
9,900
reported fatalities
in 2021

Nigeria continues to confront multiple security threats across its territory. The threat posed by Islamist militants persisted in 2021, despite ongoing military operations. Elsewhere, in the north of the country, communal militia activity constituted nearly one-third of organized political violence across Nigeria in 2021. Further, organized political violence involving Fulani militias continued in 2021, particularly in Nigeria's Middle Belt. Insecurity also intensified in the southeast where political violence events linked to the separatist Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and its security outfit, known as the Eastern Security Network (ESN), grew significantly in 2021.

■ Battles   ■ Protests   ■ Riots
■ Explosions/Remote violence   □ Violence against civilians

Figure 2: Multiple Security Threats around Nigeria

Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2022).

Elsewhere, in Nigeria's north-central and northwest regions,[2] communal militia activity constituted nearly one-third of all organized political violence events recorded by ACLED across the country in 2021. Political violence involving militias, often labeled as 'bandits', started in Zamfara state in 2011 and then over time spilled into neighboring states (Daily Trust, 10 September 2021). In 2021, organized political violence perpetrated by these militias increased by 50% compared to 2020, with 30% of militia activity occurring in Kaduna state. Operating from ungoverned forests in Nigeria, these groups mostly engage in cat

tle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, and pillaging of villages (Al Jazeera, 6 January 202
2). According to ACLED data, these militias killed more than 2,600 civilians in 2021, an in
crease of over 250% compared with 2020. This figure also far exceeds the number of civ
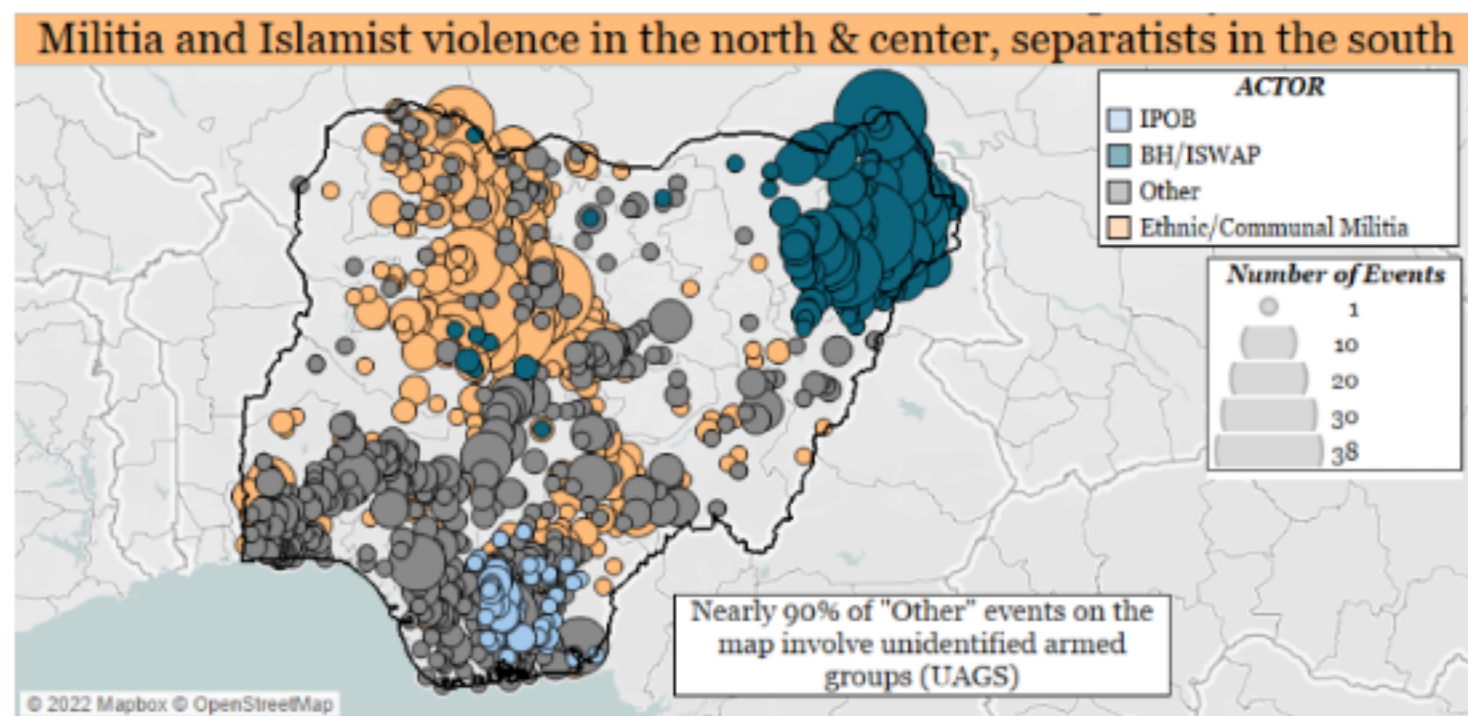ilian fatalities resulting from the Boko Haram and ISWAP insurgencies in 2021.

Figure 3: Militias and Islamist Violence in the North-East, North Central and South
Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) (2022).

Insecurity also intensified in the southeast, where political violence involving the separati
st Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB) and its security outfit, known as the Eastern Secu
rity Network (ESN), grew significantly in 2021. ESN was founded in December 2020 as th
e IPOB paramilitary wing, allegedly to protect the Igbo people against Fulani militias and
state-sponsored violence (Twitter @MaziNnamdiKanu, 14 December 2020). Clashes bet
ween government security forces and IPOB/ESN fighters first escalated in January 2021
following a government directive to "dismantle the formations of the ESN" in the area (In
dependent Nigeria, 28 January 2021). On 18th of June 2021, IPOB leader, Nnamdi Kanu,
was arrested in Kenya and extradited to Nigeria to stand trial. Since then, IPOB has impo
sed regional sit-at-home orders to denounce Kanu's arrest (Al Jazeera, 9 November 202
1), which have often been accompanied with violence. Although IPOB suspended the we

ekly Monday sit-at-home orders in August (Vanguard, 15 August 2021), sit-at-home order

s have since been intermittently reapplied, with elements in the movement continuing to r

egularly enforce them (Vanguard, 11 November 2021). Attacks and abductions targeting

traditional rulers also surged last year, particularly in the south. In December, unidentified

gunmen kidnapped several traditional rulers and killed at least three, with IPOB condemn

ing the killings and the government's alleged indifference toward preventing and punishi

ng these acts (Vanguard, 12 December 2021).

Conflicts over resources

According to Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (2024) conflic

ts between pastoralists and farmers in central Nigeria have expanded to further regions.

Nomadic pastoralists traditionally move south from the northern part of the country to gr

aze their cattle and bring meat to the slaughterhouses in the south. However, the old graz

ing corridors no longer exist. The land has either been built up or is being used for farmin

g. The conflict over land and resources might lead to a rift between ethnic and religious

groups, as the parties involved are mainly Muslim pastoralists and Christian farmers. Inc

reasing desertification in northern Nigeria, high population growth and the lack of econo

mic opportunities for young people are exacerbating the conflict. In December 2023 and

January 2024, the world was shocked by several coordinated attacks committed by arm

ed groups against mainly Christian settlements in Plateau State. Over 250 people were ki

lled. Thousands were displaced. Many schools, religious facilities and homes were destr

oyed.

Politics of bitterness and division

The major negative factors that have prevented development and stability in our political

dispensation in Africa is politics of bitterness due to ethnic and religious divisions. Often

times one sees politicians killing each other, betraying one another because of political p

ositions or appointments. Does politics teach us to destroy one another? Is polities mean

t to eradicate integrity and love for one another? Politicians who destroy and betray each

other do so because they lack ethics of politics and true meaning of politics. The fact th

at you lost your presidential, Governorship or Senatorial position should not make you to develop hatred and bitterness towards your opponents (The Nigerian Observer, 2015).

The level of political bitterness in Nigeria has brought about ethnic, religious and tribal hatred among the major and minor ethnic societies in the countries. And this has posed serious social political and cultural challenge in Nigeria.

Bad governance and bad leadership

Governance has remained a critical aspect of modern political discourse as it touches on virtually every aspect of national life and efforts aimed at improving the lives of the people. Governance therefore involves an integration of efforts of individuals who have been elected or appointed to carry out the will of the state or realize the objectives for which the modern state has been constituted. Good governance for instance binds the state to the pursuit of those policies and programmes that will impact on the lives of the citizens. The quality of governance in any political system has usually affected the form and content of socio-economic transformation or national development (Nwoye, 2005). Bad governance is simply the opposite of good governance. That is, "governance that is not responsive, responsible and accountable to the needs and welfare of the people" (Audu, 2016, p. 32).

It implies a government that is characterized by widespread or institutionalized corruption, abuse of office and failure to deliver the dividends of democracy. Bad governance occurs when the resources of the state are hijacked or manipulated by a few privileged individuals or those at the corridors of power, their sponsors or cronies to the extent that national resources are not evenly distributed. Bad governance has been a major feature of some countries especially those in the Third world to the extent that several years after their attainment of political independence, the people have little or nothing to celebrate or show for it. Bad governance has remained the major drive for mass poverty, unemployment, youth restiveness and economic paralysis in Nigeria.

The failure of leadership and governance in Nigeria manifests in the declining capacity o

f political leaders to recognize systemic risks such as election fraud, terrorist attacks, her
der-farmer conflict, armed banditry, and police brutality and put in place the necessary m
easures to navigate these challenges. In contrast with the current system in which leader
ship is attained through bribery, intimidation, and violence, Nigeria needs an epistocratic
system of governance that is founded on the pedigree of its political leaders and the edu
cation of its voters (Okoi & Iwara, 2021).

Nigerian youth and their political inactivity

In general, young people are very active and dynamic and participate in basically every fi
eld of life, except politics. Unfortunately, their voices are often overlooked and not taken
seriously. They also feel it is not worth starting a political career and exposing themselve
s to all the dangers and threats it can bring. There are plenty of other problems with youn
g people, aside from their lack of political awareness and activity. The unemployment rat
e among the youth is extremely high, and the government's general attitude toward givin
g youngsters actual jobs shows that this trend will continue in the near future. The bigge
st question nowadays is: when will the older people let the youth lead? And when will the
young people also wake up and realise their voices can be heard? This would probably c
hange things for the better if youngsters were not afraid to participate in the political life
of Nigeria (Simwa, 2022).

Ethnicity

Ethnicity has been found to be the most powerful force shaping the political and social r
elations in Nigeria. It brings about conflict and distrust among the three main ethnic grou
ps in Nigeria the Yoruba, Hausa/Fulani and Igbo and has led to equation of the Nigerian
nation by the ethnic groups as a national cake to be share among them (Iyanga, 2018 a
s cited in Emoghene & Okolie, 2020). Ethnicity has had a lot of negative consequences f
or the nation's movement towards democratization to the extent that it remains an enduri
ng threat to institutionalization of democracy and national development in Nigeria. Amo
ng its resultant negative consequences as observed by Babangida, 2002 cited in Salawu
and Hassan (2011), are wastage of enormous human and material resources in ethnicall

y inspired violence, encounters, clashes and even battles, heightening of fragility of the economy and political process, threat to security of life and property and disinvestments of local and foreign components with continuous capital flight and loss of confidence in the economy, and increasing gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities.

THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN NATIONAL COHESION IN NIGERIA

Culture is the way of life of any society, which involves a number of areas such as labour, politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics, law, family, religion, etc. The importance of culture in Nigeria cannot be overestimated. Nigeria culture plays an important role in lives of separate individuals and the society as the whole (Simwa, 2017). Culture therefore bothers more on 'how' a people do things and not mainly on 'what' they do. This 'how' points at the peculiar processes in-between the agents and an end. The 'how' that makes culture comprises of explicit and tacit assumptions and understanding commonly held by a group of people, which serve as guides to their actions, and accords them ground for survival (Ugwu, 2012, Aghamelu, 2005). Though culture is shaped by people's experiences in the environment, it turns to form the deep seated beliefs that are behind people's choices, how they think, their consciousness, character, orientation, belief, art, customs, attitudes, music, literature, social, political, ethical, intellectual, scientific, artistic, technological expressions and processes (Ezeugwu, 2012; Olukaode, 2009).

Culture helps to accumulates, control and organise the human experience. It is basically what makes a person human. Culture unites people, integrates them, and ensures their strength as a community. Unfortunately, in our country, some subcultures oppose each other which lead to the spread of cultural differences in Nigeria. Cultural conflicts can arise within large communities as a result. To prevent this, it is important to control the formation of cultural values in a society. This is one of the tools used by the government to create a more conducive and secured environment (Simwa, 2017).

The role of culture in national cohesion in Nigeria can be seen in the following ways:
1. Culture is essential for avoiding conflicts and for conflict resolution.

2. Culture is an ideal means of communicating across language barriers, empowering people and facilitating social cohesion, including among refugees, migrants and host populations.

3. It prevents marginalisation of people based on their cultural identity, socio-economic status, age and other factors.

4. Cultural participation also improves health and well-being. Living close to places related to societal cultural heritage can improve quality of life, while cultural access is one of the most important determinants of psychological well-being (European Union, 2023).

5. In the course of cultural socialization, the values, ideals, norms, patterns of behaviour become a part of a person's self-awareness. They shape and regulate his behavior.

6. Culture as a whole determines the framework in which a person can and should act. Culture regulates the behaviour of a person in his family, school, at work, home, etc., by putting forward a system of prescriptions and prohibitions.

7. Violation of these cultural laws will lead to certain sanctions that are established by the community and are supported by the power of public opinion (Simwa, 2017).

CULTURAL SECURITY IN NIGERIA'S DEVELOPMENT

Cultural security by Ochalla-Ayayo (2002) is "a culturally safe and secure environment is one where our people feel safe and draw strength in their identity, culture and community. In line with the above definition, Khimulu noted that this is so, because cultural security recognises the legitimate cultural rights, values and expectations of diverse groups of people (2014, p24). Since culture itself is distinguishable among different ethnic variations regarding heritage, beliefs and behaviour, consequently, cultural security speaks to the obligations of those in governance to ensure that there are policies and practices in place, so that all relations with local communities effectively meet cultural needs. Given the multiplicity in definitions, cultural security in this the paper simply means protecting, pre

serving, promoting and transmitting important aspects of our culture from one generation to another generation (Amalu et al., 2023).

Socially, culture builds social cohesion, mobilizing communities around its care and management (Amalu et al., 2023). European Commission (EU, 2022) explains that supporting the role of culture is a vital aspect of building social cohesion. On an individual basis, cultural events such as festivals and ceremonies enhance dialogue and communication. Culture safeguards distinctive cultural forms and processes of their production contribute to strengthen the social-capital of a community and create a sense of stewardship and trust in public institutions (UNESCO, 2010, p.6).

In Nigeria, there are challenges that threatened cultural security as explained below:

Lack of Cultural Intelligence

Cultural intelligence according to Olagbemiro (2014, p. 84) "is the social, political, economic and other demographic information that provides understanding of a people or nation's history, institutions, psychology, beliefs (such as religion), and behaviours." It is the ability to adapt new cultural settings (Mindtools, 2022). Cultural intelligence provides understanding of not only how other groups but acts why (Coles, 2006). One of the key factors that have affected cultural security in Nigeria is lack of cultural intelligence due to the fact that many Nigerians are not culturally intelligent. They are not fully aware of their own culture as well as the culture of others and in essence may find it difficult interacting with peoples of diverse cultures in their schools, workplaces, organisations, neighbourhoods, etc.

Conflict, violence and other crimes

Conflict and violence affect cultural security. According to Viejo-Rose and Sorensen (2015), cultural heritage is affected by armed conflicts. In the course of conflict, violence and other crimes, cultural heritage is looted, damaged and destroyed either as a result of deliberate targeting or as part of the general violence. Most of the heritage sites and monuments have been destroyed by constant conflict and violence across Nigeria especially in t

he northern part of Nigeria where insurgency and banditry has been on the increase. In collaboration to this, Babawale (2012, p.258) states that "the cultural and artistic achievements of the Nigerian peoples of various fields of human endeavour including science and technology are attested by widespread cultural sites, which are increasingly becoming object of systematic plunder, destruction and illicit trade, aided by greed, ignorance and prolonged neglect."

Globalisation

Globalization is the word used to describe the growing interdependence of the world's economies, cultures, and populations, brought about by cross-border trade in goods and services, technology, and flows of investment, people, and information (Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2024). Globalisation is the increased interconnectedness or under-dependence of different societies around the world. All forms of development imply some degree of modernisation, which can only be destabilising for people in traditional societies (Awaah, 2014, p.7). Eze (2014, p.140) rightly pointed out that:

> The current phase of globalization has further alienated the people from their roots as a result of the impact of information and communication technology." Through the globalized media, people all over the world are being made to look the same, profess the same faith, speak the same language, wear the same type of dress, enjoy the same type of music, and eat the same type of food.

Consequently, as we deliberately do away with some crucial part of our culture, that is becoming globalised, we instinctively do away with some essential aspect of our culture (Amalu et al., 2023).

Deteriorating use of Nigerian languages

Language is central to human endeavours and can be an effective tool for national development. The primacy of English language leaves us in Nigeria without doubt that the importance of indigenous languages has been undermined, neglected, and relegated to a point of near dormancy (Amalu et al., 2023). In the view of Amalu (2015, p.38), "these days people prefer to use English in any gathering, even in traditional gatherings than using their mother tongue.) Even in Nigerian Schools Abiodogun and Adebule (2014, p.175) de

cry that "unfortunately, acceptance of English language as medium of instruction in nearly childhood classes is denying us as a nation the opportunity of introducing our culture and ways of life to the young ones using the mother tongue".

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, Ake (1982) remarks that the challenges which the political system like in Nigeria has to cope with perhaps what is referred as crisis of political development. These crises include:

State Building: This is the problem of establishing or maintaining authority of participation and control. The problem of state building may be externally generated, or it might arise internally as determined demands for radical change which might endanger the survival of the status quo. More specifically, the state building problem "occurs when the political elite creates new structures and organizations designed to penetrate the society in order to regulate behaviour in it and draw a large volume of resources from it".

Participation: The problem of coping with "the pressure from groups in the society for having a part in decision-making of the system".

Distribution and Welfare: The pressure from the domestic society to employ the coercive power of the political system to redistribute income, wealth, opportunity and honor.

Nation Building: This is the problem of winning for the political system, the loyalty and commitment of its subjects. The relevance of Almond and Powell's definitional perspective on challenges of political development illuminate in the crises of governance and politics bedeviling developing nation-states in Africa.

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