
THOMAS HOBBS' STATE OF NATURE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The insecurity situation in the country has led many to wonder if Nigeria has not returned to the state of nature where, according to Thomas Hobbes, life was solitary, nasty, brutish and short. The country is facing its greatest challenge ever since the fierce civil war that almost threw her into extinction. Consequent upon the failure of successive governments since 1999, to institute good governance that would secure the socio-economic well-being of the average Nigerian, there has been a resultant political backlash. The prevalence of hunger and poverty are enough dangers to challenge the legitimacy of any constituted authority. Using Thomas Hobbes version of the state of nature, the research showed that the security crisis in Nigeria today is as a result of the failure of the state to guaranty lives and property thus; people have resorted to might is right as a means to survive.

Keywords: Governance, State of Nature and Insecurity

Introduction

The insecurity situation in the country has led many to wonder if Nigeria has not returned to the state of nature where, according to Thomas Hobbes, life was solitary, nasty, brutish and short. The country is facing its greatest challenge ever since the fierce civil war that almost threw her into extinction. The country has had to contain the Boko Haram menace and Fulani herdsmen in the North, the IPOB agitation in the East and the Niger Delta Avengers in the South all these amidst a nasty recession that has made her people poorer. It is in light of these that Remi (2003) asserted that "the lives of Nigerians have never been a better attestation to poverty than it is presently to satisfy the "poor" variable of the Hobbesian "state of nature." The insensitivity, inconsiderateness, crudity, cruelty and the meanness of the leadership and their agents help to fill the slot of the "nasty" variable. The "brutish" aspect of the Nigerian state is seen in the wickedness of the rape of its people psychologically and materially".

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically states that "The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". The word "security and welfare" were not randomly put side by side as it is crystal clear like the biblical 'mene, mene, tekel, urphasin' that a man who is not guaranteed of his welfare cannot feel secured. The growing rate of Nigeria's poverty profile shows that Nigerians have been living in a state of insecurity. The rate of increase in criminal activities in Nigeria is on the rise. Since the country returned to democratic rule, security of life and

property has been so threatened, armed robbery, terrorism and other related crimes is on the increase. This has resulted to high number of casualties on Nigerians and non Nigerians as well as unpalatable consequences for the nation's economic growth and development (Osawe, 2015).

Aside the deteriorating security situation in the country, Nigeria is also confronted with daunting developmental challenges which pose a serious threat to the socio-economic development of the country. These developmental challenges include endemic rural and urban poverty, high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, very large domestic debt, and rising stock of external debt (Ewetan, 2013)

It is in light of this background, that this research work has been structured to look at the factors/conditions that have triggered a spate of violence/insecurity in the country in order to proffer a solution to the security crisis facing the country.

Conceptual Framework

State of Nature

The state of nature is a concept used in moral and political philosophy, religion, social contract theories and international law to denote the hypothetical conditions of what the lives of people might have been like before societies came into existence. Although there are three main social contract theorists; Hobbes, Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau the study is however concerned with Hobbes version of the state of nature.

Hobbes posit that; since all seek to satisfy their desires, and since there is no one summum bonum, or highest good, for men, but rather a constant succession of appetites, what each human most wants is not any particular thing but the generalized capacity to satisfy new desires as they emerge: 'to assure forever, the way of his future desire'. To this end, Hobbes posits that power; consist in 'eminence' and is therefore the marginal advantage of control enjoyed by one human over other human beings. It is a relative and therefore 'zero sum', quality.

Drawing from the above assumption, Hobbes envisioned his own version of the 'state of nature'. This he argues will be a situation of conflict, uncertainty and violence in which the survival of each is threatened by the very means each adopts to secure it. In fact he noted that there is a sinister, if perfectly explicable, asymmetry of such hope: inasmuch as men being proud, will hardly believe there be many so wise as themselves. For they see their own wit at hands, and other men at distance.

The direct consequence of the above is that should any two or more men desire the same thing there will be conflict, violence and perhaps even death. Conflict according to Hobbes can thus arise from any attempt by humans to satisfy their desires, for men's action: 'the notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place' and they may kill another for anything they deem necessary to their life, even.

It is instructive to notice that the cause of violence as posited by Hobbes is derive from the very qualities which are commonly thought of as being the basis of human political sociability, our supposed equality and rationality. Although Hobbes uses the device of a state of nature, the conflict in it does not arise because there are intellectually primitive or beast-like: quite the opposite: it arises from their equality, and a presumption of their equal skill and sophistication at reasoning. Hobbes genius here is to point out how, in the absence of authority, unrestricted competition driven by quite rational individual calculation, brings about an unwished for and disastrous' outcome for all concerned.

In the Hobbesian state of nature men lived without a government and consequently, there were no laws to regulate men. Thus each men is a sovereign and might is right. Three issues emanate from the above condition: **Competition** (where men contend of strive to have equal for endless power for self protection and preservation of the fruits gotten from nature), **Diffidence** (unhealthy quest for endless power for self protection and preservation of the fruits gotten from nature) and **vainglory** (the vain conceit of one's own wisdom and strength which makes men think of having more than any other man in terms of strength, wisdom, reputation).

Ake, C. (1996:8) captured the above realities in relation to the Nigerian State when he noted earlier that:

Much of what is uniquely negative about politics in Africa arises from the character of the state particularly its lack of autonomy, the immensity of its power, its proneness to abuse and the lack of immunity against it. The character of the state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of the state makes the capture of state rules out a politics of moderation and mandates a politics of lawlessness and extremism for the simple reason that the nature of the state makes the capture of state power, irresistibly attractive. The winners in the competition for power win everything, the losers lose everything. Nothing can be worse than losing nothing, nothing better than winning. Thus everyone seeks power by every means, legal or otherwise and those who already control state power try to keep it by every means. What emerges from this is a politics which does not know legitimacy or legality, only expediency. This politics is not conducive to political stability, the rule of law or to democracy, because it is constituted as warfare.

A state where equal rights are given to unequals and/or where the laws governing the distribution of resources are polarized and manipulated in the name of politics is clearly in a relationship with the Hobbesian State of Nature. Extreme value placed on politics in the Nigeria state has plunged her into a condition of fierce guerilla-like competition, unhealthy quest for power and vainglory (where some thinks it's their natural rights to rule others) at the expense of the ruled who are supposed to be beneficiaries. The lives of men pauperized and denied of their rights flood the streets as they leave in continual fear of violent death.

Hardly can one disassociate the Nigerian state from the Hobbesian state of nature as the leaders continue to keep power by all means and undo the state, siphoning monies meant for development into private pocket by all means, while some others do anything (including mean things) in the name of survival. This is rather unfortunate.

The Legitimacy Question, Good Governance and Political instability

Consequent upon the failure of successive governments since 1999, to institute good governance that would secure the socio-economic well-being of the average Nigerian, there has been a resultant political backlash. The political leaders have been generally viewed to be insensitive to the yearnings of the people for a dignified life. The prevalence of hunger and poverty are enough dangers to challenge the legitimacy of any constituted authority. The two challenges, hunger and poverty, in particular, have been complicated by the growing youth unemployment as well as the systematic denial of the right type education to some other underprivileged members of the nation. The attendant frustration has given rise to further insecurity which is manifested in the violent sectarian clashes, ethnic strife, rising case of assassination as well as kidnappings for ransom. This development tends to justify the theory that:

State weakness and poor governance, particularly the state's failure to manage natural resource exploitation effectively and equitably, also strongly influence the opportunity for and feasibility for rebellion as it affects the relative strength of the state being challenged (Development and Cooperation, 2003:443 in Adeniran, 2013).

Nigeria as a nation is at a fast retrogression into a seeming Hobbesian state. The prevalence of conflict, crises, rancor, social disorder, brutality, man's inhumanity to man, and the existential fear of insecurity are greatly unabated. Amidst all these, poverty, and the indiscriminate spread of diseases looms large, depicting this setting in the dark. One cannot but say, that the Nigerian malady is immensely conspicuous; it is nothing, but one calling for urgent remedial attention.

This sad situation we find ourselves is as a result of the government lacking legitimacy. Election results in Nigeria do not reflect the will of the people, but the choice of the elite class. Elections which were suppose to be the hallmark of every democracy is hijacked and thus the government of the day most often times struggle for legitimacy. The tendency of political actors to use violence in the electoral process is defined by the state's capacity to enforce law and order. Sadly, the capacity of Nigerian State to enforce law and order is undermined by the erosion of the states' monopoly of the use of violence. The state's monopoly of use of violence in Nigeria is gravely challenged by the activities of 'cult gangs', 'area boys', ethnic militias, unlicensed vigilante groups, and armed bandits that operate in rural and urban areas (Adewale 2005, Pratten 2006, and Fourchard 2008).

The Nigerian state monopoly of violence is being challenged because it is weak. A country that depends on just one commodity (crude) as a source of revenue was always susceptible to external influence. Outside that, there is also the question of the Nigerian government strongly lacking legitimacy. As earlier stated, the people do not believe that

election results reflect their choices as the process is most often times hijacked. Elections in Nigeria are marred with electoral irregularities such as; ballot snatching, stuffing, vote buying, political thuggery etc. little wonder election results in Nigeria is most often times rejected by all and accepted only by the winner and his followers.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 23.9 percent in 2011 compared with 21.1 per cent in 2010 and 19.7 per cent in 2009. The country has a youth population of 80 million, representing about 60 per cent of the total population with a growth rate of 2.6 per cent per year, and the national demography suggests that the youth population remains vibrant with an average annual entrant to the labor force at 1.8 million between 2006 and 2011. In 2011, 37.7 per cent of Nigerians were aged 15-24 years and 22.4 per cent of those between ages 25 and 44 were willing to work but did not get jobs. The current level of social insecurity is alarming and unacceptable (National Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

The level of unemployed/poor people in Nigeria is quite alarming. Since the inception of democratic governance in 1999, the federal government of Nigeria has done little, if not nothing, to improve on human rights and protection of its citizen's life and property as one of their cardinal responsibilities. Instead they turn to be a threat to the wellbeing and corporate existence of their citizens as part of their mandate and statutory responsibility as contained in the constitution (Ibrahim, 2013). The above scenario has made some resistance group like: the defunct Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), and the present day Niger Delta Avengers to sprang up in the Niger Delta region, The Boko Haram menace in the North and the agitation of the Igbo's in the South East for independence under the platform of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). Nigeria is confronted with the task to stay as one while maintaining peace and order.

Security Challenges confronting Nigeria

Present day Nigeria is confronted with so many security challenges that have threatened her very existence. Those security challenges include but not limited to:

- i. Terrorism
- ii. Militancy
- iii. Poverty

The research will look at the issues confronting Nigeria under the sub headings above.

The Issue of Terrorism: According to Ali (2013) "the fear of insecurity in Nigeria is on the increase and this has been compounded by the rising waves of terrorism since the country returned to democratic rule in 1999. Terrorism in Nigeria has been linked to religious, socio-political, economic and cultural factors. Even though terrorism originated from Islamic fanaticism, it is now driven by factors such as inequalities within the country and lack among Nigerians, in terms of livelihood (economic) resources, education or access to education and good values". The current challenge of terrorism to physical security is threatening the Nigeria society on all fronts. Some foreign observers have linked terrorism in Nigeria to a number of factors which include, political conflicts, unbalanced development that involves horizontal inequalities, religious/ethnic distrust, poor governance linked to leadership failure, and high level corruption (Kufour, 2012; Oluwarotimi, 2012).

In terms of terrorism there is no name more troubling to Nigerians than Boko Haram. It is pertinent to note that the Boko Haram menace would have been contained if not for the

poor nature of the Nigerian security agencies in handling the issue. The extra judicial killing of the group's leader Muhammad Yusuf in the hands of Nigeria's security agents was the catalyst for the group metamorphosing into the deadliest terrorist group in Africa. Ever since the group turned radical it has claimed the lives of thousands of Nigerians. The group has not only made the North East ungovernable, but it has also made the place inhabitable as thousands have fled their homes due to the siege of group. Table 1 below captures the horror of the Boko Haram menace in Nigeria

Table1: Major incidents of boko haram in Nigeria 2009-2011 and 2015

Date	Locale (Community)	Incidents and Effects
10/7/2009	Bauchi town, Bauchi State	Clashed with security agencies and killed 700 persons
18/1/2010	DalaAlemderi ward, Maiduguri metropolis	Bombed Nigeria Police station and killed 4 persons
10/12/2010	Maiduguri metropolis, Borno state	Bombed central market and killed 50 persons and 92 of them was arrested
05/11/2011	Sabo Layi in Damaturu and potiskum, yobe state	Assassinated a Christian bible teacher in the church hall and killed 67 other person in series of bombing
14/12/2011	QriApata area Kaduna metropolis, Kaduna state	Bombed a popular vehicle spare parts market and killed 12 persons, including a pregnant woman
25/01/2015	Monguno village, Borno state	Captured and destroyed the village
03/03/2015	Baga village, Borno state	Seized the village and destroyed multinational joint task force. Killed 2,025 people
25/12/2015	Kimaha village, Borno state	Set fire on the village and killed 114 persons

Source: Etekpe, Koko, and Dan-Woniowei (2016)

The Issue of Militancy

The issue of militancy has been a bone in the neck of the Nigerian government. There has been a high rate of militancy and insecurity in the Niger delta starting from 2006. This can be attributable to several factors including the marginalization of the peoples of the Niger delta, environmental degradation, bad governance and inconsistent policy framework, and the divide and rule policy of the oil companies (Ngozi, Emmanuel and Clara, 2012).

Ejibunu (2007) posits that "the discovery of oil in the Niger-Delta region in 1957 triggered a chain of events that has led to the political and economic marginalization of the inhabitants." "Despite over forty (40) years of oil production in Nigeria and hundreds of billions of dollars of oil revenue, the inhabitants of the Niger-Delta region, especially the riverine (creeks), remain in abject poverty" (Oronto, et al 2003). "Poverty level is about 80% while unemployment level is about 70%. They live without even the most basic amenities such as pipe-borne water and electricity" (Ibaba, 2005). Mukagbo (2004

in Fidelis & Egber, 2013) opines that “in the Niger-Delta region, scenes of abject poverty pervade the area, very similar to what you find in a refugee camp.”

The annals of oil are an uninterrupted chronicle of naked aggression, exploitation and the violent laws of the corporate frontier. Iraq was born from this vile trinity. The current spectacle of oil-men parading through the corridors of the White House, the rise of militant Islamism across the Q’uran belt, and the carnage on the road to Baghdad, all bear out the continuing dreadful dialectics of blood and oil. Nigeria bears all the hall marks of such petrolic violence. To break with this bloody history will require a major political commitment on both sides of the Atlantic (Oronto et al., 2003).

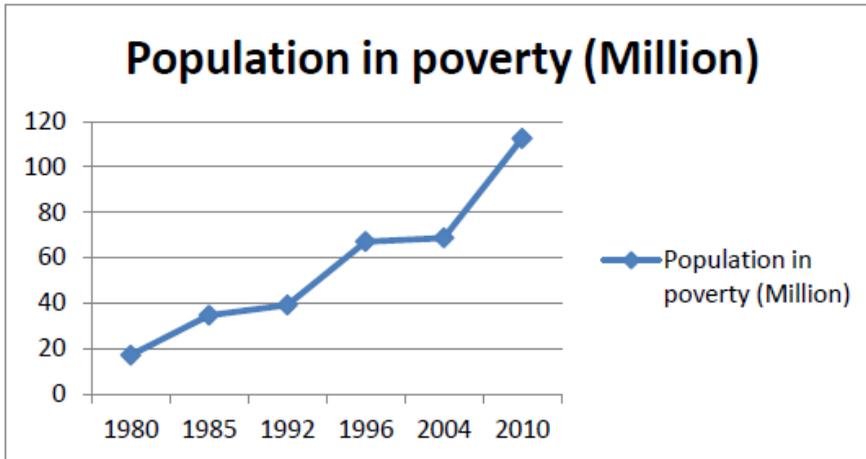
Table 2: Police Records on some cases of Kidnapping/Hostage-Taking/Sea-Piracy in Niger Delta.

S/N	Nature of case	Date Reported	Location of Case	Militants Involved	Hostages/Victims & their Origin	Date Released	Reason(s) for Action
1	Kidnapping	63/03/04	Biseni Bayelsa (BYS)	32 Militants	13 Hostages	08/03/04	Oil Company Security Operatives youth clash
2	Hostage – Taking	19/12/05	Peretoru BYS	24 Militants	42 Hostages	03/01/06	Impeachment of BYS Speaker/Government
3	Hostage – Taking	15/12/05	Swali BYS	48 Militants	14 Expatriates and one Nigerian	23/02/07	Arrest of one Militant of Port-Harcourt
4	Sea-Piracy	19/01/06	Sagbname BYS	9 Sea Pirates	6 Policemen	19/02/06	Oil-Production without development of the area
5	Militant	10/05/07	Otueke BYS	Faceless Militants	16 Victims	23/05/07	Detention of Alami-eyesigha
6	Kidnapping	25/05/07	Akassa BYS	40 Militants	9 Expatriates of TEXACO	08/06/07	Oil-Production without development of the area
7	Kidnapping	31/07/07	Amarata BYS	14 Militants	11-Year Old Boy of a Member of BYHA	07/09/07	Welfare of Militants
8	Kidnapping	08/08/07	Abarain BYS	11 Militants	Mother off the Speaker of BYHA	07/09/07	Welfare of Militants
9	Kidnapping	18/08/07	Arassa BYS	23 Militants	Mother of a Member of BYHA	07/09/07	Welfare of Militants
10	Kidnapping	08/10/07	Odi, BYS	Commander Pius Group	1 Nigerian	15/10/10	Ransom
11	Kidnapping	15/10/07	Southern Ijaw, BYS	Unknown	1 Nigerian	15/10/12	Ransom

Source: Culled from Police Crime Diary, Bayelsa State Command (2013)

The Issue of Poverty

The most daunting security challenge confronting Nigeria and Nigerians is poverty. Nigerians have been mockingly referred to as a people poor in wealth. Despite the huge billions accruing to the country as a result of the abundant natural resources the country is blessed with, a significant amount of her population still live below the one dollar poverty line. Figure 1 below captures the growing rate of Nigerians living in poverty as the amount of people living in poverty sincrease by the year.

Figure 1: Showing Nigeria's Poverty Profile

Source: NBS, (2010) Nigeria Poverty Profile

The amount of people that are faced with starving to death is more than those killed by terrorism and militancy combined. The reason that has been adduced to the growing poverty rate of the country is the leadership deficit. Nigerian leaders are much more concerned with their pockets than the welfare of the people. Nigerian leaders loot without conscience. The level of corruption perpetuated by the Nigerian ruling class on the people is so bad that former English Prime Minister was describe Nigerian leaders as ‘fantastically corrupt’. The above statement though provoking is sadly true. A country that harbors a large amount of poor people and yet have the richest set of leaders in the world could not have been better described than the exact phrase used by the Prime Minister; fantastically corrupt.

Conclusion

The spate of insecurity in Nigeria can be likened to Thomas Hobbes state of nature the cause of violence as posited by Hobbes is derive from the very qualities which are commonly thought of as being the basis of human political sociability, our supposed equality and rationality. since all seek to satisfy their desires, and since there is no one summum bonum, or highest good, for men, but rather a constant succession of appetites, what each human most wants is not any particular thing but the generalized capacity to satisfy new desires as they emerge: ‘to assure forever, the way of his future desire’. The Nigerian society has dwindle into a state of lawlessness were life is ‘short, nasty and brutish’. The security crisis in Nigeria today is as a result of the failure of the state to guaranty lives and property thus; people have resorted to might is right.

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