TRENDS OF POLITICAL INSTABILITY IN NIGERIA: THE WAY FORWARD

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Abstract
Political instability is a common occurrence in Nigeria which always affect the unity and peaceful co-existence of the country as a nation. Political instability arises from the prevailing incidences of perceived social injustice and discrimination among the citizens and the inability of the government to address the challenges of the masses. Hence, this paper examines the synopsis of political instability with its causes and implications on the country. The paper reveals that political instability can lead to wanton destruction of lives and properties and loss of large amount of revenue by the government. However, it is recommended that political leaders should not see politics as business but as a call to serve by which good governance must prevail in the country.

Keywords: Political instability, politics, good governance and peaceful co-existence

Introduction
The issue of political instability is a common phenomenon that continues to dominate the political terrain in Nigeria. Although Nigeria is regarded as the "giant of Africa", yet the country has passed

and is still passing through several restless stages of conflict and violence. The process of gaining entrance into the corridor political power is replete with violence and conflicts, resulting from rivalry and suspicions among the various ethnic groups in the country that have culminated in political instability across the entire country. From the pre-independence era till date, Nigeria is still being affected by injustices and oppressions system that were handed down by the past colonial leaders. The resultant effect of which is the weak institutions of the state and incessant struggle for political power. This, in many instances, is to the detriment of the well-being of the masses and the development of the country at large. This is despite the abundant human and natural resources prevalent in the nation. Although Nigeria got her independence in 1960, the struggle for national development and political stability continue to be a mirage. This must not be unconnected with the stormy political and social condition in the country manifesting in poverty, corruption, poor planning and implementation and general indiscipline in the society.

The issue of political instability has been a major challenge rocking the country with violence over the decade of Nigeria's independence as a nation and the period after the country's civil war between 1967 and 1970. There had been series of sporadic violence and counter attacks by different regions due to suspicion and mistrust in Nigeria's geo-political landscape. The fundamental taproots of violence in the country always lead to unpredictable and unpleasant experiences, such as, bombing, murdering of innocent people and destabilization of the existing vulnerable regions into political uncertainty. This is with no thanks to the series of tension and threats that have been engulfing the nation to date.

Political instability in Nigeria started two years after independence, with the leadership crises within the Action Group (AG) (which eventually led to the declaration of a state emergency in 1962), the controversial population census of 1962/63, and the "Operation Wet E" in the Western Region (which eventually led to the military take-over of government in the country in 1966) These marked the commencement of the series of violence and conflicts which the country is witnessing to date. The trend continued unabated, hence, tension, violence and counter-threats which were deliberately invited by some elites to the

destruction of the country's political plan between 1962 and 1966 in the Western region and the whole of the country. Raji and Ajibade (2014) opine that the appearance of violence and political conflicts has never been separated from the country's politics neither in the past nor in the Present.

From the aforementioned, there is a clear indication that politics in Nigeria has been the opposite of what it is in the developed countries and Nigerian politicians in particular are still backward in terms of their values, such as unfulfilled promises, political corruption, greed, violence, tribalism and intimidation. Political instability is said to manifest through fraud, embezzlement and misappropriation of public funds, inflation of award of contracts, lack of accountability and transparency in governance, discrimination in wealth distribution among others. There is a noticeable impact of political instability in the life of Nigerians resulting in corruption, economic distortion and under-development.

It is in the light of the above-mentioned challenges in the Nigerian polity, that this paper examines the trends of political instability in Nigeria and the possible solutions to menace of political instability in the country.

Conceptualizing Political Instability

Political instability, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2015), is a political situation in which things are likely to change or fall suddenly in a society. In a clear term, political instability entails among others communal violence, rural or religious insurgency, urban riots, coup d'etat and civil war as well as elites' disagreement over the distribution of power resources. All these forms of political instability can lead to mass forms of violence.

In like manner, political instability is an unconstitutional change of government, either regular or irregular change of government. It is a situation whereby a country is goes through political turmoil. Political instability arises as a result of the inability of government of the day and the society as a whole to adequately address the grievances of the population or a particular section of the population. The source of grievances can be internal, external or political, depending on the circumstances (Adeyeri 2013), quoting Ofiaga, (2011).

Discontent alone does not necessarily generate political instability but individuals and mechanisms must be present to articulate the grievances and mobilize the aggrieved to demand redress from government, as tension mounts within a society.

The re-occurrence of violent conflicts always throws the country into a state of chaos and political instability. Adeyeri (2013) says conflicts seem insurmountable in Nigeria because the country is pre-occupied with chasing shadows and not fundamental causes of conflicts in the country. Thus, this always leads to the re-occurrence of political instability as witnessed from two years after the independence when there was leadership crises with the Action Group (AG) that eventually led to the declaration of state of emergency in the Western Region, up till January 15, 1966, when the military eventually took over government for the first time in the first republic from the civilian political leadership.

As could be observed from the foregoing, conflicts always lead to political instability and the instability can be caused through three dimensions of conflicts which include political dimension, socio-cultural/religious dimension and economic and industrial dimensions (Oduniyi 2009). Consequently, as conflicts are common and unavoidable in all human society, so conflicts that can lead to political instability will occur where there is inequality in access to the control of natural resources and political powers as being experienced in Nigeria.

Synopsis of Political Instability in Nigeria

Nigeria, as a heterogeneous society in terms of ethnic, religious and cultural pluralism is inclined to conflicts (Agagu, 2004). Since the independence of Nigeria, the country has been confronted with various crises and violence that have been affecting the foundation of Nigeria's unity and corporate existence. Although, Nigeria is a country that is blessed with abundant human and natural resources her citizens are within the vicious cycle of poverty and bad leadership. Series of political instability had been occurring in the country since independence and up to date and the challenges of it have been a major cause of violence in the country.

Over the distant decade of Nigeria's independence as a nation and the period after the country's civil war between 1967-1970, there had been a series of sporadic violence and the counter attacks by the people from different regions due to suspicion and mistrust against one another in the country's geo-political landscape. Even at the end of the country's civil war, there had been series of conflicts and violence amounting to political instability in the country. For instance, there were the series of military coup detat, electoral crises, religious/ethnic crises, ethnic militant uprisings, kidnapping, corruption and the on-going Boko Haram insurgency, to mention a few.

However, the persistence of political crises portrays ugly trends in the political terrain of the nation. Hence, violence and political instability would arise from widespread frustration in the polity for example, violence can erupt in politics as a manifestation of the high rate of unemployment of the people and money politics also has corrosive effects on the political system. The use of weapons, arms and ammunition are increasingly being associated with electoral violence that always lead to political instability. At every stage of the electoral process, politicians employ the services of touts to intimidate their opponents and opposing parties.

What then is responsible for Political Instability in Nigeria?
Political instability in Nigeria owes much of its causes to internal factors in most cases. One such factor are; the failure of the political class to strictly comply with the basic tenents of democracy and constitutionalism (Kew, 2006). This was the contention of Harriman (2006) who posited that such situation has given rise to abuse of power, brazen corruption, abuse of electoral process, intolerance of political opposition and the weakening of the institutions. This is against the tenets of governance which presupposes the process of social engagement between the rulers and the ruled in a political community (Adejumobi, 2004). Due to political instability, the focus of leadership became parochial with the over-riding consideration for personal survival rather than national development. Instances of this abound as being unfolded in Dasuki gate; that is, the ongoing probe of Col. Sambo Dasuki, the former National Security Adviser (NSA) to ex-president Goodluck Jonathan where money that should have been

used to procure weapons to fight the insurgences were shared among the political stooges of the previous administration.

The failure of the political class to ensure good governance in the country has led to frequent military involvements in the politics of the country, since January 15, 1966. Instead of the Armed Forces to defend the territorial integrity of the nation, they dabbled into the country's politics thereby failing to maintain peace and tranquility, which is their professional callings. The unhealthy intense struggle for political power within the political class and the military hierarchy on one hand and between the civilian and the soldiers on the other hand are symptoms of an unstable political system in the country. As noted by Egbon (2001), the military involvement in the political lives of any state introduces instability in its political structure and subsequently brings down the economy and basically a consequence of its leadership problems.

Another factor responsible for political instability in Nigeria is the issue of money–politics. Bill Clinton, the former American President averred that in a civilized society, money is not a determining factor for elective post; but in Nigeria, the frequent political instability is due to the lust of politicians for money, as they see politics as business where they can make money. He further disclosed that the "problem with Nigerians is that when they want money, they go into politics…". Hence, the money that could have been used for the development of the country would be siphoned by the selfish politicians, as it is being witnessed in the ongoing probe of Col. Dasuki and others in the previous administration of Goodluck Jonathan. Adeyeri, (2013) posited that this could be responsible for the reasons why the country has been unable to realize its potentiality as an African power, despite high natural resource endowment, considerable human capital and large domestic market.

Another motive why conflict persists, keeps on recurring and consequently leading to political instability in the country is that the master-minds, who instigate, mobilize, sponsor and even arm the rioters, are allowed to go scot-free. They are never prosecuted or tried in any court, and if found guilty sentenced to along-term prison sentences. Some of the people, who sponsor violent conflicts are the elites and powerful members of the society. The feelings is

that these people are untouchables and their followers see them as such. Many of these sponsors go back to plan other rounds of such conflicts and violence, since they have never been brought to book for their abominable crimes. Moreover, the police and other security outfits have not been adequately trained to manage crises. On several occasions, the rioters are "too tough" for the untrained and unsophisticated police to handle in times of violence outbreak. Surprisingly, the rioters are often well-equipped and carry sophiscated weapons.

Moreover, conflicts keep re-occurring in Nigeria, owing the fact that the judicial and other panels of enquiry on civil disobedience and violence never had their recommendations implemented by government. This often leads to political instability in the country. Also, Nigeria being a multi-ethnic state, conflict and political instability will occur when the different ethnic groups perceive divergents views that their aspirations or goals cannot be achieved simultaneously. Hence, when there is inequality in access to the control of natural resources and political power, it is natural that there would be discontent, opposition controversy and political instability as witnessed during the Nigerian civil war, Niger-Delta militant uprisings, ongoing Boko Haram insurgency, among others.

Implications of Political Instability in Nigeria
The implications and costs of political instability across the country are over-whelming. The occurrence of violent conflicts which always led to political instability for over five decades leaves much to be desired in Nigeria. The following are some of the implications in Nigeria. First, there is the insufficient use of natural and human resources that is endowed the Nigerian state. Hence, Nigeria has been glued to poverty, hunger and other indices of economic crunch. Secondly, political instability always leads to loss of lives. Violent crises in Nigeria have resulted in a number of causalities. For instance, the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970 had led to the death of almost two million citizens. Other minor crises in the country have also recorded loss of human lives such as in the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency. The loss of lives has implications for the nation's economy as the killings have effects on the energetic workforce. The Niger Delta violent conflicts have

claimed the lives of hundreds of oil workers and expatriates (O'Neil, 2004) while many energetic and talented Nigerian have been killed by the Boko Haram insurgents. Also, government's revenue generation is been seriously affected especially during industrial unrest. Incessant industrial strikes are major characteristics of the country, especially the 1993 national strike by civil servants and the January 2012 national strike over the increase in the price of petroleum. These strikes would have cost the country a lot of revenue.

Moreover, political instability can lead to discouragement of foreign investment growth in the country. Incessant violent conflicts in Nigeria have also retarded foreign investment in flow and growth. No foreign investor will be encouraged to invest in an unstable economy like Nigeria. The atmosphere of relative peace, security and stability will attract foreigners to the country while insecurity and political instability will discourage foreign investors from investing in the Nigerian business climate (Ajayi, 2004). Again, religious, sectional and political conflicts in the country, has led to the influx of refugees and displaced people. Inhabitants of the war affected zones had to flee to either the neighboring states or communities or neighbouring countries as refugees. Apart from the economic implications to the nations, the refugees and internally displaced person constitute unexpected strangers in either new place of residence with the consequent increased pressure on social amenities on the areas.

Way Forward

To ensure political stability in the country, Nigerians should not see politics as a business but as a call to serve and to help distribute fairly the resources that are given by God. Political leaders should not see politics as a call to acquire and divert government money to ones account, while the generality of the citizens will be languishing in abject poverty and unemployment. The political leaders, at all levels of government, have to be model to the citizens by avoiding inciting statements that could disunite the country and plunge the country into crisis, rather they should focus their attention on those issues that will promote peaceful co-existence and unity among the citizens. The past leaders have either intentionally or not, being carrying out actions that would constantly promote tension in the system and

thereby consistently over-heat the polity. Also, the institutions of government in the country must work out an enduring strategy for crises management and resolutions. There should be a committee in the National Assembly and a unit in the presidency that will be in charge of crises management and resolution. Also, the focus of the government in Nigeria should be in ensuring good governance, since good governance will promote social justice, equality and even distribution of resources to the citizens. This will promote peace and stability in the country, and with peaceful atmosphere prevailing in the country, there will not be any need for any citizen to be deceived or enticed into thuggery or any situation that would lead to political instability.

The prevalence of good governance in the country, when the political leaders would discharge their functions effectively and efficiently, would discourage the military personnel from thinking of planning any military coup d'etat that can lead to political instability which could disrupt democratic government in the country. Nigeria with diverse ethnic, religious and political groups should learn to embrace a culture of dialogue in managing the endemic disputes that pervade the country by focusing their attention on those issues that unite them and promote peaceful co-existence among the citizenry. This can be done by organizing a sovereign national conference that would have representatives from all ethnic groups to resolve those knotty issues that always promote conflicts among Nigerians, such as resource control, revenue allocation formula, religious crisis, power-sharing among others. It is when this is done that the various ethnic groups in the country can see themselves as one.

Also, as some political elites in the country are in the habit of sponsoring the jobless and restive youth across the country to embark on ethnic and religious violence in order to promote their hidden personal interest, the government should provide jobs for these youths across the country, since most of the youths always engage in violence due to their idleness and joblessness. These groups of restive youth need to be engaged by the government, to kill boredom and inactivity. Engaging the jobless youth positively by the government will re-direct their energy to productive activities that can enhance the economic development of the country.

Conclusion

Arising from the foregoing, it can be concluded that most incidences of violence and conflicts highlighted in this paper always promote political instability which is having its toll seriously on the development of the country. Consequently, there must be concerted efforts by all and sundry in the country to put an end to all forms of political instability if most of the above recommendations are implemented so as to promote economic development in the country and to ensure transparency and accountability in government business.

Based on the conclusion, it is hereby recommended that political leaders should ensure transparency and accountability in their activities and particularly in financial transactions. Citizens particularly the political leaders and civil servants must have the will to tackle corruption in all spheres of life in the country. Politicians must be given thorough re-orientation in respect of the societal values. Political education should be introduced in the school curriculum and be taught as a course at all levels of education in the country. Law-enforcement agents must be prepared to handle promptly and effectively any case of breakdown of law and order in any part of the country. Lastly, the National Assembly members should make laws to prevent vandalism, thuggery and hooliganism and these laws must be implemented without discrimination.

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