INVENTED TERRORISM AND HUNGER IN NIGERIA
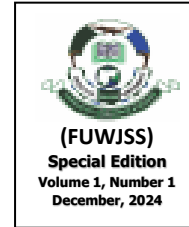
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Abstract

Nigeria as an entity has experienced acts of terrorism in varying degrees starting from the pre-independence days to the contemporary times. This paper investigates the evolution and historical development of terrorism in Nigeria. The paper discusses the ugly and heinous phenomenon of terrorism as an invention of members of the ruling class in Nigeria. Adopting principles of the Political Economy Theoretical Perspective, the paper established that terrorism in Nigeria is a creation of members of the ruling class entrenched through the agency of colonialism, bad governance and deliberate creation of political thugs/gangs who metamorphosed into terrorist groups. Data for the paper emerged through a systematic review of secondary data sources obtained from the internet, library and other documentary materials relevant to the subject of this analysis. Findings established that, as Nigeria transited from colonial rule to civil rule at political independence on 1st October, 1960, the British ruling class also handed over the legacy of terrorism to their Nigerian counterparts. Since then, Nigerian politicians and military juntas have adopted terrorism as a tool of acquiring political power. The paper concludes that the British's style of military conquest (which was an act of terrorism) remains a model and major "working tool" used by the Nigerian political ruling class. The paper recommends that governments at all levels in Nigeria should be committed to deepening democratic values that promote civil methods of acquiring political power within the Nigerian society.

Keywords: Terrorism, Hunger, Bad Governance, Ruling Class and Job Creation.

Introduction

The complex nature of terrorism as a phenomenon makes a single definition for it difficult, and as such scholars have divergent definitions. In other words, it is difficult to establish an agreeable scholarly definition of the concept of terrorism. As noted by Okereke and Ibeh (2022), one man's terrorist could be another man's freedom fighter. Walzer (2002) defines terrorism as the deliberate killing of innocent people, at random, to spread fear through a whole population and force the hand of its political leader. Schmid (2022, p. 8) defined terrorism as "a militant, usually non-state, clandestine organization with political goals which-by definition- engages, in whole or in part of its activities, in terrorism, that is a violent communication strategy for psychological (mass) manipulation". It is in response to the accompanying difficulty of defining terrorism that has resulted in the identification of core characteristics of what could be classified as terrorism. To this effect, terrorism is characterized by the following: firstly, it entails threatened or perpetrated violence to induce terror on someone who may not necessarily be the victim. Secondly, the violent actor(s) intends that the terrorized witness to the violence will alter his or her behavior (Walter, 1969).

The United States Department of Defense defines terrorism as "the calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear, intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological" (Zumve, Ingyoroko & Akuva, 2013 p.22). The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2023 p.2) viewed terrorism as "the unlawful use of force and violence against persons or property to intimidate or coerce a government, the civilian population or any segment thereof, in furtherance of political or social objectives". Resolution 49/60 of the United Nations General Assembly Declaration of Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism (1994) notes that terrorism involves criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes (UNGA, 1995).

In 2004, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1566 in which it noted that terrorism includes "criminal acts, including against civilians that are committed with the intent to cause death or

serious bodily injury, or taking of hostages, with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or in a groups of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act (UNSC, 2004 p.926-29). Wilkinson (1992, p.228-9) identifies five characteristics of incidents that can be labeled terrorism. For him, it is premeditated and aims to create a climate of extreme fear or terror; it is directed at a wider audience or target than the immediate victims of the violence; it inherently involves attacks on random and symbolic targets, including civilians, the act of violence committed are seen by the society in which it occur as extra-normal, in the literal sense that they breach the social norms, thus causing a sense of outrage; and terrorism is used to try to influence political behavior in some way.

On its part, the African Union draws its understanding of terrorism from the provisions of Article 1(3) of the Organization of African Unity Convention for the prevention and combating of terrorism adopted at Algiers on 1st July, 1999. The instrument describes terrorist as:

a. Any act which is a violation of criminal laws of a state party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to any person, any number or group of persons or causes or damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated or intended to:
   i. Intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or
   ii. Disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential services to the public or to create a public emergency; or
   iii. Create general insurrection in a state.

   Any promotion, sponsoring, contribution to, command, aid, incitement, encouragement, attempt, threat, conspiracy, organizing or procurement of any person, with the intent to commit any act referred to in paragraph (a)(i) to (iii) (OAU convention, 1999).

In Canada, section 83.01 of the criminal code (2021) defines terrorism as an act committed "in whole or in part for political religion or ideological purpose, objectives or cause with the intention of intimidating the public" with regards to security, including its economic security or compelling a person, a government or a domestic or an international organization to do or to refrain from doing any act". Activities recognized as criminal within this context include death and bodily harm with the use of violence; endangering a person's life; risks posed in the health and safety of the public; and interference or disruption of essential services, facilities or systems.

The above elaboration on the definitions, laws and conventions (both local and international) on the concept of terrorism illuminate what terrorism is, who is a terrorist, the intended and actual victim(s) and the drivers of terrorism. Therefore, one can deduce from these definitions, laws, conventions and charters that political thuggery, assassinations; killings by bandits and herders,; kidnappings etc. are acts of terrorism. Intimidation and coercion of the locals then by the British colonialists then was an act of terrorism. All acts of intimidation by the colonial authorities to intimidate the Nigerian populace to abstain from the agitation for political independence were acts of terrorism.

The task now is to unravel the position adopted in this paper, that the version of terrorism in Nigeria is an invention, creation or legacy of the British the Ruling Class! This is now adopted by the Nigerian politicians in the Nigerian entity after over six decades of Nigeria's political independence. This may sound illogical or inappropriate for others, but further analysis on the theme may justify this oxymoron. I consider the central theme of this paper an antithesis because conversations on terrorism are often dedicated to the activities of non-state actors engaged in damning assaults on the state and its assets thereby neglecting the clandestine conducts of the members of the ruling class. This is what is referred to as state terrorism by some authors like Blakeley, 2009; Booth & Dunne, 2014). The invented terrorism in Nigeria has caused untold hardship especially hunger and poverty.

Activities of rural bandits caused mass displacement of rural sedimentary farmers. The mass killings of farmers and their displacement has affected agricultural productivity this resulting into shortage of food and consequently hunger and general food insecurity in the country. As noted in Ladan & Matawaili (2020. p.2), "the killings and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain sailors has caused food shortage in the country.

Political Economy of Terrorism in Nigeria

Ikime (1977) stated that 'the buck of what is now Nigeria became British territory in the period between 1885 and 1914. In the year 1885, the Niger Coast protectorate was declared. The author would, however, side with Ohadike (1991) to contend that the British government conquered and colonized Nigeria after a series of military operations that began with the annexation of Lagos in 1852. It is on this note that I made the claim that the British colonization project in itself was an act of terrorism. The British colonization project in itself was an act of terrorism. Referencing the procedure and pattern of the colonization process, the definitions of terrorism, the laws and conventions of terrorism, it is apt to state that colonialism is terrorism. The members of the British ruling class/oligarchy with the ambition of expanding the British Empire introduced terrorism in Nigeria via their agents and cronies.

To understand terrorism in Nigeria, it is crucial to have a critical knowledge of the historical factors in terms of the political and economic situations that have shaped the nation. Elsewhere, Zumve, Ingyoroko & Akuva (2013, p.22) opined that terrorism in contemporary Nigeria is a "latent function of official corruption and state neglect". This is in line with the argument put forward by Okereke and Chinyere (2022) in their analysis on "State Terrorism", as citied in African Journal on Terrorism (October, 2022). In this context therefore, one attempts a paradigm shift by accusing the members of the ruling class as being the sponsors and drivers of terrorism in the Nigerian state. The argument here is based on existing literature especially research reports, content review of relevant publications and findings of International human rights organizations

and local NGOs. However, as a scholar, I assert my rights to be blamed for all errors and failures in this research paper.

The British accomplished the colonization process of Nigeria by using its military, thus justifying my earlier claim that the colonization process by the British in itself was an act of terrorism. The most effective tool used by the British for colonial expansion was its willingness to use its military superior power to conquer all the different regions that today make up what is called Nigeria. They used their military might to subdue any opposition offered by the indigenous people. The colonization process tells a fascinating story of the power of the Maxim gun. In December, 1851 John Beecroft the British Counsel for the Bights of Benin and Biafra, ordered the bombardment of Lagos and this led to the slaughter of Nigerians especially those who resisted colonial rule within this period. These killings were sustained for a period of close to eighty years and were horrific in nature. Some of these horrific scenes include the 1949 Enugu Colliery Massacre, also known as "the Iva Valley Shooting which took place on 18th November 1949, when a British Superintendent of Police, F.S. Philip, commanding a number of British and Nigerian police officers ordered the shooting of unarmed protesting coal mine workers of the Iva Valley Coal Mine who were on strike (Jaja, 1982). Twenty-one (21) unarmed mine workers were killed and fifty one (51) were injured. Another terrorist episode can be seen in The Benin Expedition of 1897, where British punitive expedition led by a British force of 1,200 men under Sir Henry Rawson Captured and massacred people in Benin City and the Kingdom of Benin was eventually absorbed into colonial Nigeria.

In other to establish its economic hegemony over the Northern Nigerian Protectorate, the British used her military power and established a trading post at the Niger River. There was resistance but as usual the British used her military power and crushed it. The Colonial Governor Lord Lugard sent a column of 500 infantry men to accomplish this horrific task. They slaughtered an estimated 2,000 men, women and children (Harmon, 2001). Another genocide committed by the colonial authority was the attempt to stop the Aba Women's Riots of 1929. The women were protesting against the Warrant Chiefs, whom they accused of restricting the role of women

in government. They were also demonstrating to protest against the over-taxation of their husbands and sons by the colonial government. The women congregated at the Native Administration Centres in Calabar and Owerri as well as other smaller towns to protest. The women also attacked European owned stores and Barclays Bank and broke into prisons and released prisoners. They also attacked Native Courts run by Colonial officials, burning many of them to the ground. The Colonial police and troops were called in, they fired into the crowds that has gathered at Calabar and Owerri, killing more than 50 women and wounding over 50 others, (Evans, 2009). Drawing from the above, it is observed that the British ruling class introduced what is to be referred to here as state terrorism. This became institutionalized immediately after independence in Nigeria as witnessed by series of military coups.

Theoretical Framework

The Marxian Political Economy Theoretical perspective is used as a guide to conduct the analysis in this paper. The Marxian Political Economy Theoretical perspective argues that the socio-economic character of different societies in history is often characterized by specific mode of politicians. In each of these epochs, like slavery, feudalism or capitalism, there existed different classes, the Slaves vs Slave Masters, the Feudal Lords vs the Serfs and the Bourgeoisie vs. the Proletariat. Hence, the economy/society should not be conceived as neutral platform for exchange and cooperation, but rather, that which is characterized by class struggle, conflicts and antagonistic interests. This interplay of class interests (especially economic and political interests) can result into struggles amongst political interests) can results into struggle amongst classes. The politically dominant class (elites) would always want to be in contrary of political dominance over the underprivileged class who are usually the masses. In Nigeria in their desperate urge to control and maintain political power and have access to the state coffers the ruling class resort to the invention of thugs who are used during electioneering campaigns. These thugs who engage in all forms of violent acts (terrorism) are usually sponsored or "owned" especially by unpopular politicians. Using the lens of this theoretical perspective, the author argued that,

it is these political thugs invented by the politicians (members of the ruling class) that metamorphosed into terrorists after elections using the arms given or procured for them in their sponsors to carry out terrorists activities such as insurgency, kidnapping and wanton killings of innocent Nigerians.

Research Methodology

The in-depth analysis in this paper is based on qualitative data obtained via the internet, libraries and other documentary sources. It involves extensive of the literature to draw inferences in their content and context to synthesize meaning.

Institutionalization of Terrorism in Nigeria after Political Independence

Nigeria was granted political independence on the 1st of October, 1960, as a federation of three regions (Northern, Western and Eastern) under a constitution that provided for parliamentary form of government. Under the constitution, each of the three regions retained a substantial measure of self-government. However, the Nigerian state has undergone series of political changes and today it consists of 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. It is made up of approximately 371 ethnic groups (Vanguard News, 10th May, 2017) with different dialects. The country boasts of a population of about 229,478,782 people (Worldometer, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division).

However, after 64 years of political independence (the demise of colonialism), British legacies still linger on. Legacies of terrorism, corruption, discrimination, inequality, bad governance, coercion and various forms of human rights abuses etc. The British could be accused of the first military coup in Nigeria. This is because the 1966 military coup was carried out by a group of young idealistic, UK-trained army officers. The Majors overthrew Nigeria's democratic government in a violent military coup. The subsequent military coups in Nigeria after political independence were equally acts of state terrorism. These coups unwittingly enthroned state terrorism in the country. For instance, one of the 1966 coup leaders, major Nzeugu is quoted by BBC thus: "we wanted to gun down the big wigs in our

country" (BBC 15th January, 2016). The Nigerian politicians/ruling class have inherited and socialized in the culture of violence, massacre and other forms of terror from their ruling class masters, the British Ruling Class. All successive governments in Nigeria are characterized by the following: acts of violence, terror.

A presidential candidate once made a pronouncement that "if what happened in 2011 (alleged rigging) should happen in 2015, by the grace of God, the dog and the baboon would all be soaked in blood" (Vanguard May 15, 2012; Nairaland, 15th May, 2015). Violent groups known as "political thugs and gangs" have been used by the politicians in Nigeria for decades to influence the electoral process if the voting does not seem to go their way. The candidates mobilize these thugs (who are usually armed) to raid the polling units (Aljazera Weekly Newsletter, 2nd March, 2023). The violent and heinous activities of these political thugs and gangs are further extended to the other sectors of the Nigerian entity. This has resulted into a myriad of insecurity issues including food insecurity, hunger and poverty. The incessant attacks carried out by these violent groups (political thugs) on the sedentary farmers, especially in the Northeast, Northwest and North-central Nigeria led not only to the displacement of farmers, but also disrupted agricultural activities which is the main source of livelihood in Nigeria.

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FOA, 2022) report shows that about 14.4 million Nigerians face food crisis. It further indicates that this figure consist of 385,000 internally displaced persons in 21 states and Abuja's Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Nextier (2024) report states that over 50 people were killed after an attack on the Kala Balge Local Government Area of Borno State. Many of the victims were farmers. The rising violent conflict perpetrated by these armed gangs limits the farmers' access to farm lands, destroy farmers and disrupts farming activities, thus creating endemic hunger and poverty in the country.

A sad story as reported by (Kolawole, 2021), The Cable and Digital Newspaper here buttress this point. Sadly, this story makes me laugh. A human rights activist shared with me an experience she had during a governorship election in one of the south-west states many years ago. She said she was in the state capital on election eve when

she learnt that a renowned political thug (who is now being branded by sections of the media as a messiah) was in the government house preparing to unleash mayhem the next day. The activist panicked and requested to see the leader of the police team detailed from Abuja to oversee security for the election. She said she told the police chief "this guy in government house has killed people" during elections and that he must be caged by all means.

"You know how the police chief replied me?" she asked me, rhetorically. "He simply said: 'God will catch him one day!' I was rattled. I told him: 'It's like you didn't hear me well, sir. I said this guy has killed over a hundred people in recent elections! He is here to kill!' The police chief replied: 'I heard you very well. You think the guy is in government house without a go-ahead from Abuja? You think those who sent me here didn't know he is also here? You think they don't know that he is here for this election as well? Please don't put me in trouble. God will catch him one day.' My brother, it was unbelievable." I felt so dejected after the conversation, even though I was laughing on the surface. In my article, 'A Nation Surrounded by Gunmen' (Kolawole, 2021),…. I lamented that the political authorities are making it difficult for the security agencies to tackle insecurity because of their coded messages. After reading the article, a retired police commissioner gave me a call. He emphasised just one thing from my article: "Nobody wants to be sacked." By the time we ended our long conversation, I was totally downcast. I already had an idea of most of what he was telling me, but the details from his personal experience further weakened me. The long and short of our discussion is that Nigerian politicians need to come clean on much of the anarchy ruining the land.

He continues his story thus: Let me summarise what he said in just one paragraph: "There is a lot already being said about the corruption in the security agencies, the lack of equipment, the poor welfare, the human rights abuses and other issues. The one big thing that has not caught the attention of you journalists is the role of politicians in fueling the insecurity. Most of these people we call Niger Delta militants, bandits, terrorists and armed robbers today were produced by politicians. When they had been used for elections and dumped thereafter, they took to full-time crime, deploying the arms that were

given to them by the politicians. That is partly why we are here. And we are in serious trouble."

He reminded me how militancy started in the Niger Delta: how a governor who wanted to be president started arming thugs to terrorize his political opponents; how he fell out with the first group of thugs after his re-election and raised another group to counter them; how the two groups started engaging in gun battles; how one of the groups was backed by the federal government and the leader of the other group was charged to court; and how different groups started coming up as the thugs realized the kind of power they could wield and how much of crude oil they could steal; and how they finally rebranded as campaigners for economic and social justice in the oil region.

> "Simon," he said. "I can take you through the list of the criminals giving police the toughest time across the country – from the north to the south. Most of them are products of politicians either jostling for power or trying to retain it. There is no state in Nigeria where politicians don't have thugs whom they arm at election times. The only place today where we don't have established political thugs and thug leaders is Abuja. And it is very easy to understand why: there is no governor or mayor in Abuja. The FCT minister is appointed by the president. If we establish a mayoralty in Abuja today, politicians jostling for the position will start breeding thugs. Abuja will not know peace again."

He told me the origins of the "ECOMOG boys" in Borno state, many of whom obviously ended up in Boko Haram after the 2003 general election. He told me about the "Yandaba boys" in Kano state who were readily deployed as political thugs during elections. He came to the south-west and gave me a comprehensive list of the "union leaders" who have been perpetuating criminality, such as kidnapping and murder, without any consequences – because of the "big" politicians they are working for. Some of them are dead now. There was also the example of the late TerwaseAkwaza ("Gana") in Benue state who led the killing gangs for politicians and became uncontrollable.

After the call, I began to chew on the discussion. I concluded that there is definitely a link between our brand of politics and the rise in

gun crimes in Nigeria. I do not suggest in any way that all crimes are linked to politics and politicians. True, right from the time Nigeria started managing its democracy after colonial rule, elections have always witnessed one form of violence or the other. But that does not tell the whole story of gun crime in Nigeria; after all, armed robbery started flourishing under military rule and there were cases of assassinations here and there as well. It will therefore be disingenuous to limit violent crimes to civil rule. There is no such evidence.

Also, as I pointed out in a previous article, we have watched Nigeria move from one level of insecurity to another since we gained independence in 1960, both under civil rule and military regimes. Nevertheless, politicians have played a substantial role in fueling the degeneration since 1999. We cannot discuss the insecurity and ignore this fact. The nursery of thugs is always there, so the politicians tap into it and take it a step higher by arming them to win or retain power. They have little need for them after elections and the thugs now have to fend for themselves. The arms they carry and the political protection they enjoy make it easy for them. Politicians are key enablers.

Kolawale did not stop here. He continues: I have always argued that politicians are undermining the security agencies. Give police the best personnel, equipment and funding if you like, but we will still be at the mercy of a kill-or-be-killed political culture that produces "youth leaders" and "union excos". It is from among these youth leaders, motor park chairmen, road transport associations and street urchins that politicians empower gunmen to intimidate and eliminate their opponents. Killer weapons to equip the thugs are brought into the country either by land or sea and officials at the borders or ports are usually induced to look the other way. The guns become multi-purpose when election dusts settle.

There are questions I always like to ask for which I am yet to get answers. The Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) announces all the time that its officials have seized illegally imported "pump action rifles" – but why do we not hear about prosecution afterwards? How many people have been charged to court for illegal importation of arms? The cargoes were shipped with documentation, right? Is it that difficult to track the importers? Let me guess: the importers have connections to politicians. When a well-publicised crime in Nigeria ends up in

nothing, be sure some people have pressed buttons somewhere and we will not hear about the matter again. This is Nigeria.

The retired police commissioner recounted instances of when political thugs would be rounded up on the eve of an election and his superiors would come under intense pressure to release them. "One day I looked at my boss and I almost shed tears. The pressure on him was just too much. They would be saying: So, it is true you want our party to lose? So it is true that you have collected money from our opponents? It is a tough job," he said. The pressure does not stop there, certainly. It comes with name-dropping of higher political authorities and threats of sack for "betrayal" and "compromise". Only the fittest of the fittest can remain firm under such circumstances.

While we continue to discuss the insecurity in Nigeria along the lines of weak security architecture, porous borders, poverty levels and unemployment rates, we must not lose sight of the ignoble role of our politicians. In a recent viral video, a man described as a "repentant bandit" said it was "government" that gave them guns. I understood that to mean a governor's agents supplied the said guns with which they started their banditry enterprise. I recall how some of the Offa robbers, who killed 33 people including 12 police officers in 2018, reportedly confessed that they were political thugs during the day. Even state government vehicles were allegedly found with them (BBC July 2nd 2024; the nation, July 4th 2024)

The above is just a tip of the iceberg. A cursory look at the activities of the Nigerian politicians (members of the ruling class) justifies the claim that they invent terrorism. An example can be seen in the invasion of the senate building by thugs during plenary on the 19th April, 2018 alleged to be sponsored by a suspended senator, Ovie Omo-Agege. These thugs invaded the senate chambers and made away with the maze, the senate's symbol of authority. According to Nasiru Ayitogo and Kemi Bosari (2018), this act is an act of treason and an attempt to overthrow a branch of the federal government by force and must be treated as such. The vanguard news reported that a female national assembly official fainted after she was slapped by one of the thugs on their way out of the assembly complex (vanguard news, 19th April, 2018). This tragic situation deserves the arrest and trial of these thugs by the law enforcement agencies. However, despite

the apparent complicity of Senator Ovie Omo-Agege in this felonious act of terror, these were neither arrested nor tried for this treasonable offence.

Top Nigerian politicians have owned up to the fact that banditry in the country is sponsored and promoted by the Nigerian political/ruling class. For instance, a governor in the South Eastern State of Nigeria, Senator Hope Uzodima of Imo State attributed the proliferation of banditry to Nigerian politicians. In an interview with The Vanguard on the 24th April 2023, he is quoted to have said that those behind the dastardly act were funded by disgruntled politicians. He therefore urged the security agencies to publish names of such sponsors; a mission quite impossible. Similarly, on the 9th day of September, 2024, PM News reported how a respected Sokoto cleric, Mallam Bello Asada, alleged that Nigeria's minister of state for defence, who had earlier served as the governor of Zamfara State, Bello Matawalle, is complicit in the challenge of insecurity in northern Nigeria. According to the cleric, bandit leaders like Sabubu, Ada Alero and Bello Turji, who are terrorizing the Chad basin had received Hilux vehicles from the minister to boost their terrorist activities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Reference to the style of colonial conquest from pre-independence days by the British, one would conclude that colonialism was an act of terrorism. This is proven by citing the 2004 United Nations Security council resolution of 1566 which looks at terrorism to include "criminal acts, including against civilians that are committed with the intent to cause death or serious bodily injury; or taking hostages with the purpose to provoke a state of terror in the general public or group of persons or particular persons, intimidate a population or compel a government or international organization to do or abstain from doing any act (UNSC, 2004). The British conquered Nigeria with a series of military campaigns to enlarge its sphere of influence and expand its commercial activities. Even the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 which caused the death of over two million people and produced mass starvation in the region known as Biafra was directly the responsibility of the British and other western countries (Iwuamadi, 2016). As the British gained dominance over Nigeria through colonial conquests,

they instituted several legal and political arrangements that caused unprecedented socio-economic asymmetry within the country, and created a disturbing political power imbalance between the Hausa and the Igbo. Unfortunately, this has resulted into the proliferation of ethnic militias into the Nigerian state who through various acts of terrorism are agitating for resource control and equality (Babawale, 2003; Gwom, 2011). Terrorist groups (bandits) both in the North-East and Northwest now claim they are fighting for the emancipation of their marginalized ethnic groups. For instance, Bello TurjiKachalla popularly known as Turji, a notorious Nigerian terrorist and bandit leader, operating in northwestern Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto, Zamfara and Niger states recently claimed that he is carrying out these acts because his fellow Fulani kinsmen are being marginalized (Premium Times Nigeria, 20th June, 2024; Thisdaylive 1st October, 2022). The brutal killings, kidnappings and other terrorist activities carried out by the Indigenous Peoples of Biafra (IPOB), from 2012 to date in the southeast region is based on the claim that the group is committed to advocating for the rights of the people of the region. Specifically, IPOB's core belief, centres on the perceived marginalization and operation of the old eastern region people within the Nigerian state (The Cable, 10th November, 2023). In north central Nigeria, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the hands of local warlords/bandits has resorted into high rate of criminal activities such as banditry, armed robbery, kidnappings etc. In recent months, the region (especially the Sankera axis in Benue state) has experienced a troubling rise of insecurity incidences including but not limited to acts of terrorism, banditry, communal clashes and kidnappings (CLEEN, 2023).

Ojewale, (2021) is of the opinion that during election times, politicians provide youths with ammunitions to intimidate political opponents. Youth gangs are usually hired and armed by politicians to fight political opponents, steal ballot boxes and generally rig the votes. After the elections, they retain the weapons and use them to develop criminal enterprises. Consequently, we are where we are now because of bad governance, militarization of the polity and poor orientation of members of the ruling class. There is therefore a need for re-

orientation of the political elite on civil rule and the game of political leadership as a civil matter but not WAR!

Terrorism is the order of the day in contemporary Nigeria. No particular region in the country is spared of the heinous activities of the terrorist and other criminal gangs. There is anarchy, disorderliness and retrogression in the country despite the uninterrupted democratic rule. The Nigeria's security agencies seem to be overwhelmed. Therefore, one makes the following recommendations.

- The leadership in the country should be restructured and the politicians given a new orientation about governance. Our political class should pursue political leadership using more civil, peaceful and people oriented strategies.
- An Act criminalizing the use/patronage of political thugs and gangs by politicians before, during and after electioneering campaigns should be established. Culprits should be banned from participating in future elections; they should also be prosecuted for such criminal acts.
- Deliberate efforts should be made by governments to create jobs to reduce the volume of unemployment in the country.

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