

Group Conflict, Child Vulnerability and National Security in Nigeria

Daniel Olukayode Adekeye

General and Entrepreneurial Studies, Ondo State University of Science and Technology, P.M.B. 353, Okitipupa, Nigeria

Abstract

The problem of ethnic agitations in Nigeria is that they are generally characterized by violence. The various segments of the population suffer the unpleasant impacts of the violence although at different degrees. This paper considers the peculiar circumstance of the child within the context of social conflicts as a more pressing problem. This research adopts the expository method, reviewing relevant literatures and documents on the subject. The paper reveals some conditions that expose and increase child vulnerability in armed conflict situations. This paper concludes that the state has the responsibility of operating a national security paradigm that is capable of preserving the well-being of the children population in Nigeria.

Keywords: armed conflict, child abuse, national security, vulnerability

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1. Introduction

The level of violence that has characterised the diverse agitations within and across the country and its implications on the different segments of the Nigerian population has raised concerns among the intellectuals, politicians, policy makers, business community among others. Of all the various segments of the population, we consider the children group as peculiarly sensitive and delicate because of the issues of vulnerability and dependence.

Many of the violent crises across the country are spearheaded by various militias and insurgents. One major feature of these armed groups is that, unlike the conventional army, they are largely untrained; having no respect for the rules guiding conventional warfare. These militias and insurgents flout constitutional laws of recruitment and labour, which preclude anyone below the age of 18 years from engagement in the military. By crude enforcement and subtle inducement, they recruit and engage underage boys and girls on the battle fields as foot soldiers, spies and sometimes as human shield. Therefore, this essay sets out to examine the involvement of children in perpetrating violence on the one hand and the victimization or abuse they suffer in various conflict situations that have prevailed on the Nigerian socio-political space on the other hand.

Talking around the issue of national security beyond the conventional military and defensive paradigm becomes very salient and instructive; leading to the overall position which this paper holds tenaciously. That is, while attempting to drive home its point, this essay examines the connection between security issues and the well-being of the people with its direct impact on the child. It discusses some human values which are foundational to the establishment of enduring national security in Nigeria. It argues that the nation's aspiration for sustainable development will be realised if the foundation of Nigeria's national security be redefined due to the visible failure of the hitherto restrictive military and economic approaches.

2. Group Conflict

The defining feature of most plural societies today is the prevalence of social struggles among the constituent social groups. The genocide that ethnic conflicts have produced in Rwanda and Burundi, the confrontation between the state and the religious fundamentalists in Algeria and Egypt, the conflicts between the Niger Delta groups and the Federal Government in Nigeria, all these and many others are all about group conflicts. The traditional and conventional discourse on group conflicts tends to reduce them to ethnic conflicts, so much so that all conflicts are seen *a priori* as ethnic. Owolabi however argues that this form of analysis is simple and will eventually hinder an appropriate solution. According to him, the divergent group conflicts cannot be subsumed under ethnicity because ethnicity itself in any society is not primordial or innate, but rather fluid and dynamic. (Owolabi, 1999) Moreover, ethnicity, like any other form of social identity is a potential for the scramble for power and other material resources. Hence, John Bowen affirms that the tendency to see all struggles as ethnic misrepresents the genesis of conflict and ignores the ability of diverse people to co-exist. (Bowen, 1997) This means that group conflicts, which imply a contest for power and other resources, can necessitate the mobilization of all forms of social identity, racial, ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, occupational, *et cetera*. It also implies the possibility of people living harmoniously together despite their differences and identities. In a nutshell, there could be a cohabitation of social identities without frictions that would degenerate to crisis.

That is, there are many factors that could be activated in the mobilization of group solidarity, and it will be inappropriate to reduce them to ethnicity. "Our claim here is that formation of identities in all societies, such as

the Niger-Delta in Nigeria, is motivated by multiple factors, the fundamental reason of which is the competition for resources” (Adekeye, 2014). In the struggle for resources, human beings can employ any weapon depending on its potency to gain advantage. In this sense, the ethnic factor can be used and abandoned depending on its potency and relevance. This accounts for why even ethnicity is a fluid phenomenon, with its boundary shifting based on situations. The state is supposed to be a resource and a resource distributor, (Mukherji, 1992) the just management of which will determine its legitimacy. When the State fails to allocate power and distribute resources fairly among the various component social identities, it forfeits its legitimacy, and these social identities result to armed and violent conflicts as they compete for the resources and power. Gurr in his classic *Why Men Revolt* argues that groups result to insurrection and challenge the right of the state to the monopoly of legitimate violence when they feel deprived. Groups result to violence only when they feel a sense of relative deprivation (Gurr, 1970). By deprivation, he means the discrepancy between what people regard as their rights and what they receive in resource distribution by the state. Moreover, as a result of the poor and inappropriate response or disposition of the constituted authority, group conflicts in Nigeria could degenerate very rapidly and soon take the forms of militancy (IPOB, Niger-Delta Avengers), terrorism (*Boko Haram*) and outright civil war. To restore the legitimacy of the state, minimize group conflicts, discourage violence and insurrection, social justice becomes inevitable and it must be revived (Adekeye 2014).

However, it must be noted that many violent attacks and insurgencies take the form of terrorism. Terrorism is the act of inflicting injuries and causing deaths on innocent and unprepared population by a group of armed mercenary. Terrorism has become a global menace that has left the human race with colossal loss of lives and property. It is a great security challenge that has defined the security discourse of the current century. For the terrorists, everywhere is the battle field and everyone is the enemy. It is often difficult to understand and articulate their agitations or demands. Moreso, it is difficult to get them sit and reason along in a civilized manner. The hallmark of terrorism is violence, and it has no respect for any segment of the population. The national and international communities are monetarily and militarily engaged in the war against proliferation of terror in the world. The ‘Al Qaeda’, ‘Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIL)’, ‘Al Shabab’ and ‘Boko Haram’ are some of the terrorist syndicates occupying the international, regional and national territories. Nigeria has had her fair share of the terrorist onslaught. The North-Eastern part of the country has been ravaged by terrorist attacks with major distortions on the demographics, economy, education and social stability of the region. .

3. The Child and Child Vulnerability

Article I of the United Nations Convention on the right of a child defines a child as a person below the age of 18. (UNCRC) According to Article II of the African Charter on the Rights of and the Welfare of the Child, a child is defined as every human being under 18years. (ACRWC) The Nigerian Constitution defines a child as a person under the age of eighteen years. (Child Act 2003) In the context of this paper, a child is any living human being whose chronological age is below 18years irrespective of social status, cultural background, religious affiliation and gender.

One of the major issues in our discussion is the child vulnerability especially in conflict situations. Conflict in whatever form, be it group conflict, terrorism, militancy or war affect the children population in a way that is significantly different from other people. The child is biologically vulnerable and hence, naturally dependent on the adult care giver for feeding, shelter, protection among other things. A child’s vulnerability consists in his or her extremely limited choices and many times there are no opportunities for choice. Children at this stage, live by the choices and decisions of other people and consequently, the circumstances of their latter years are determined by the earlier choices made on their behalf by others. Abuse and neglect are some of the childhood experiences that a child suffers which expose their vulnerability. Therefore, every adult human being is largely a product of his or her childhood experiences..

3.1 Child Physical Abuse

The degree of children involvement in perpetrating violence during conflict is often a function of their vulnerability (abuse and neglect). For example, children and adolescents who have experienced Child Physical Abuse (CPA) often develop externalizing or internalizing problems that can promote other behaviour problems (Mulvaney and Mebert, 2007). In terms of the externalizing patterns, the victims of CPA are more likely to display aggressive or anti-social behaviour (Grogan-Kaylar, 2005), develop oppositional defiant disorder (Steiner, 2007), or abuse drugs and/or alcohol (Schilling, 2007). In terms internalizing disorders, the most frequently documented consequence of CPA exposure is depression (Fogarty *et al*, 2008). Extreme exposure to Child Physical Abuse could lead to increased risk of suicidality, suicide attempts and some other mental health problems. These are some of the conditions that predispose a child to violence and hostility; making the child psychologically available to be exploited for armed conflicts. Therefore, in order to curb children involvement in armed conflicts, CPA must be systematically prevented in our society.

3.2 Child Neglect

Child neglect is the failure by the caregiver to provide needed, age-appropriate care, given adequate financial resources (Wise, 2006). There are several subtypes of child neglect, including physical, emotional, medical, mental health, and educational neglect (Erickson and Egeland, 2002). According to Deborah Wise, physical neglect is the failure to protect a child from physical harm or to provide adequate food, shelter, or clothing. Emotional neglect is the failure of a caretaker to provide for the basic emotional needs of the child. Emotional neglect is implicated as one of the primary causes of nonorganic failure to thrive, which connotes lack of appropriate growth in infants (Iwaniac, 1997). Educational neglect includes failure to ensure school attendance.

The harmful effects of abuse and neglect observable as the child grows and develops, emanate from the psychological damage inherent in the abusive acts and experiences. To this effect, the outcomes of abuse and neglect can be devastating. Expectedly, violent conflict situations tend to exploit this psychological deformity occasioned by long-term abuse and neglect while at the same time inflicting additional vulnerabilities on the child. The socio-economic environment in which a child lives and the prevailing security system of the society are key factors in the understanding and analysis of child vulnerability. In view of this consideration, the subsequent sections of this paper are dedicated to thorough critique of the national security in Nigeria.

4. Understanding the Idea of National Security

National security is construed and used here as the absence of violence whether military, economic, sexual or environmental. It is the assurance of the safety of lives, property, and other social infrastructures that are necessarily required for peace and social order within the context of the nation. It is a *conditio sine qua non* for the overall development of the child and the nation at large. By development, we mean a continuous process and an unending pathway towards a better livelihood for all and sundry. It is the continuous 'match forward' of the human family towards perfect fulfilment (Ehusani, 1991). In the context of Nigeria, development is construed as the elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance, increase in national wealth in such a way that each person will have enough (Adekeye, 2014).

National security is an important concern in the life of a person, group or nation (Ujomu, 2001). This concern has become all the more important for the Nigerian children who are constantly bedevilled by several sectarian, religious, ethno-political clashes and terrorist attacks. No wonder it was noted that "in the context of the nation-state, the central feature in the quest for national security is the concern for survival, peace and progress of individuals, groups and the society as a whole" (Ujomu, 2001). The concern for the security of a nation is undoubtedly as old as the nation-state itself (Brown, 1982).

National security has been construed in different ways. Brennan (1961) holds that national security is the protection of national survival. Ray (1987) submits that national security is to be understood in terms of the desire and capacity for self defence. Goldstein (1999) conceives national security as closely connected to the preservation of the borders of a state and as mainly construed in terms of the power to maintain a government's sovereignty within its territory. According to Hare (1973), national security should be understood as the confrontation of threats to peace in the society. The editors of the *Africa Research Bulletin* (quoted in Ujomu, 2001) construe national security in terms of the avoidance of conflicts and confrontations, and the preservation of the lives of people in the society. They perceive national security in terms of the capacity to achieve reconciliation among the diverse groups in the society. More than any of the conceptions of national security highlighted above, the position of the editors of the *Africa Research Bulletin* addresses the situation of national security in most plural societies.

The socio-political ontology of most multi-ethnic societies is such that makes the issue of national security more problematic because there are more tendencies towards contentions than a homogeneous nation-state. For instance, politicians, in the quest for power tend to exploit the ethnic differences for solidarity and patronage. Some politicians exploit the diversity of regional comparative advantage and economic experiences. O'Brien (1995) however, asserts a somewhat different idea of national security which he refers to as an inclusive approach to security. Here, security is construed as more than just safety from the violence of rival militaries. It is the absence of violence whether military, economic or sexual. In fact, environmental issues count as security problems (Ujomu, 2001). In the same vein, we note as Mihai-Marcel (2009) noted that "the security environment has been changing . . . while the threats are more and more complex and diffuse". Such aspects as environmental degradation, people issues, extreme poverty, disease, unbalance among rich and poor states are vulnerabilities stimulating instability at a local and regional level (Mihai-Marcel, 2009). These unpleasant conditions impact more on children vulnerability. Therefore, any discourse that tends to view security in predominantly military or defence terms, will pose a problem for the proper definition of the concept of security (Lodge, 1995).

It is pertinent to highlight that the contemporary global structure has ensured that there is a new dimension to national security. The speculative studies on the international security environment in the 21st century highlight the fact that the states will have to face numerous armed conflict sources (domestic and foreign), which will challenge the national security resources (Mihai-Marcel, 2009). However, every nation will have to set its own security strategy based on its own analyses and also on the short, medium and long time security strategy, meant

to answer to the citizens' expectations, values, and interests (Mihai-Marcel, 2009). That is, the responsibility of ensuring the security of a people primarily lies with the national government while the international community is expected to learn support to or collaborate with the effort of the home government. Also, the more each state creates its own security strategy, facilities and modern equipment meant to manage the domestic security strategy, the more the collective system is stronger and the common strategy more real and credible (Mihai-Marcel, 2009). In a nutshell, "...national state always has and always will be the most important player of the contemporary world" (Gratiela & Constantin, 2006). This understanding of security and the pivotal role of the national government sets the background for the subsequent development of this paper.

5. The Problem of National Security in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

Underlying the quest for national security in Nigeria is the issue of political morality, which focuses on the question of defining the relationship between the state and the various groups in the society (Ujomu, 2001). In his characteristic literary expositions and reconstructions of social realities, Chinua Achebe (1987) articulates what he has regarded as 'the prime failure of [the] government', which according to the scholar, is not the massive corruption, nor the 'hand-me-down capitalism', nor the damnable shooting of workers and students. It is the failure of our rulers to re-establish vital inner links with the poor and dispossessed of this country. For Oyeshile, the problem of ethnic cleavages has been a major obstacle to democracy, progress and development in Africa [Nigeria] (2005). Also, "the lack of national integration is clearly manifested in, among others, the many ethno-religious conflicts of the past three decades, some of which have almost resulted in the collapse of the fabric of society. Yet, without national integration, the socio-economic, political and cultural development of the country and its citizens will remain imperilled" (Abdulrahman, 2004). Nigeria as a polity has been run as a weakly integrated state in which the affinity and rights of the populace are still hinged on the socially repugnant dichotomy between citizenship and indigeneity (Ayoade & Oloruntimilehin, 2002).

The prevailing situation in Nigeria is largely characterised by widespread mistrust; the social consequences of which Samuel Huntington (1968) remarked as follows:

. . . the absence of trust in the culture of the society provides formidable obstacles to the creation of public institutions. Those societies deficient in stable and effective government are also deficient in mutual trust among their citizens, in national and public loyalties, and in organization skills and capacity. Their political cultures are often said to be marked by suspicion, jealousy, and latent or actual hostility toward everyone who is not a member of the family, the village, or perhaps the tribe.

Abdulrahman (2004) argues that "at the basis of the perennial conflicts afflicting the nation, the fierce competition for the control of the state, the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities, the clamour for resource control and the convocation of a sovereign national conference, lies the frustration and anger resulting from perceived [and] real inequality and injustice and the failure of the state to generate inclusive growth and development".

According to Ujomu (2001), the prolonged periods of military dictatorship with the attendant economic decay, corruption, abuse of human rights, depreciation of human dignity and general collapse of social infrastructures have ensured that there is a degeneration of the quality of life of the Nigerian people. Consequently, the problem of establishing and sustaining national security in Nigeria is blamed on the "inability of the various governments and state agencies that existed over the decades to ensure the adequate protection, defence, peace, survival, well-being and progress of the citizens, the state and the society at large" (Ujomu, 2001).

The history of the Nigerian state since independence in 1960 has been fraught mostly with regimes (civilian and military) that had very myopic, perverted and unviable ideas of national security. The national security thrust of these regimes focused on the maintenance of personal security and power, to the detriment of the long-term goals of national development and reconciliation (Ujomu, 2001). Worse still, in Nigeria, the military which appeared most constitutionally and professionally suited for the task of providing security, has been found deficient as a careful study of their contribution to the history of Nigeria has demonstrated. Therefore, Ujomu (2000) argues that "Nigeria's quest for national security cannot be guaranteed by a large body of security forces, since much of the insecurity, conflicts and crisis that happened in the country from 1960 to 1999, were due to the very actions and omissions of these same security forces". These regimes, like their African counterparts were concerned with consolidating their positions, employing the instruments of ethnicity, religion and clientelism as the tools for dividing the various groups in the society, also engendering factionalism within the Nigerian Armed Forces. This divisive attitude is a confirmation of Luckham's submission that "in most parts of Africa, national security is ideologically constructed through the play of identities and differences within the state as well as in relation to external threats" (1998). Hutchful (1998) submits that the fracturing of the military along ethnic, rank, ideological and generational lines has compromised the objectives of operational efficiency, institutional solidarity and stability of the military as an institution. This failure has resulted in the military's overriding concern for regime and personal security (Amuwo 2000).

Still on the failure of the Nigerian security structures to ensure the safety of lives and property, and to ensure peace and stability, Egwu (2000) observed that over the years, the security of the Nigerian nation-state was reduced to that of the ruler and his immediate supporters. Ujomu (2001) noted that evidence of insecurity in Nigeria is the manifest incapability and inefficiency of the police force with its failure to maintain law and order and provide security for the citizens. Regarding the reason for this colossal inefficiency and gross incompetence of the Nigerian security operations, Luckham (1998) attributes it to the acts of social banditry, political involvement, corruption, ethnic manipulation and political indoctrination. For Ujomu, “the security calculus of the Nigerian state failed because it did not include vital aspects of social and national development, such as the provision of basic social amenities” (2001).

The implications of the present state of national security in Nigeria include: increasing national decay and insecurity, which is manifest in the regressing economy, unviable health facilities and services, lack of good pipe borne water, weak transportation system, near comatose educational system, fragile financial and economic institutions, pervasive lawlessness, violence and criminality, deteriorating social infrastructures, diminishing standard of living (Nwankpa, 2000; Ujomu, 2001). The situation of insecurity is clearly seen in the emergence and entrenchment of the ethnic militia such as Oodua Peoples Congress (OPC), Arewa Peoples Congress (APC), the Egbesu boys among others (Ujomu 2002) and the erstwhile Niger-Delta militants. These militia groups were formed as a reaction to the real and perceived manipulation of the Nigerian security forces by the ruling class to clamp down on perceived oppositions. These formations suggest that several people [and sub-national] groups are overtly challenging the state authority (Odugbemi 2001) and its capacity to ensure security.

However, the problem of national security, especially in Nigeria, cannot be isolated from the overall moral milieu that has dominated the entire Nigerian social space. Many conflicts in Nigeria are created by the problem of socio-economic inequality and poverty, which have been aggravated by the attitudes of greed and self-interest that have guided the lives of most Nigerians (Ujomu, 2001). Former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo (1999), in the national day speech, emphasised that there is a need to examine the moral foundations of all our actions and to continue to search for the conditions that will make Nigeria a just, free and wealthy society. According to him, for all the social amenities and institutions to be sustainable, they need a fundamental moral reconstruction. This presupposes that a society is as good as the quality of its moral underpinning (Oladipo, 2000). According to Ujomu (2002), the absence or lack of operation of some core social values such as trust, cooperation, compassion, justice, tolerance, etc, among the different interests and segments in the society, ensured that the country achieved little or no sustainable development and that the various levels of national government could not effectively manage the nation’s resources for the overall security, peace, prosperity and well being of all. Oladipo (2000) maintains that where the moral underpinning is strong and resilient, the society survives and thrives but where it is weak and fragile, the society’s capacity for social progress becomes impaired. Considering the high level of corruption perpetuated by public officials in Nigeria – the cases of James Ibori (Wikipedia 2013), Diepreye Alamieyeseigha (Wikipedia 2013) and Halliburton scandal (Omonobi, 2012; Wikipedia 2013) are few instances - poor accountability mechanism, the collapse of state institutions such as the security, intelligence services and civil service, electoral fraud and other vices, there is no doubt that Nigeria is more of an example of the latter phenomenon. All of this implies that there is need for an ethical basis for addressing the multi-faceted problems, especially the security challenges of Nigeria.

6. The Imperative of Social Values as Foundations for National Security in Nigeria

Ujomu (2002) identified the problem of resource control as the underlying factor in the establishment and sustenance of the conflict [and insecurity] situation in Nigeria. Underlying the problem of resource control is the phenomenon of marginalization or exclusion. Internal marginalization is the outcome of political, democratic and human development deficits or inadequacies as they prevail within a social system (Ujomu, 2002). Internal marginalization is caused by the mismanagement of the economy and the pursuit of a development paradigm that has polarized the different social and economic groups in the society. According to Nolutshungu (1996), the state is central to the process of marginalization, because in so far as states preside over diverse and unequal societies, they simply are not always representative of, or responsive to, all sections of their populations; neither are the interests and concerns of the state always coterminous or congruent with popular interests.

Social justice presupposes a society or a group of people who have rightful claims to common means of livelihood or resources and power to allocate resources. It entails the distribution of material resources and intangible opportunities. The notion of justice is as old as when the civil society came into being. In other words, justice is an ideal that is associated with civility. The point is that the question of justice is only meaningful and relevant within an organized system of human relations. Justice is the idea of giving each person his or her fair due as a matter of right and duty according to an impartial system, bearing in mind the interest of all. Therefore, a claim that injustice has been done implies that some people have received less than their fair share while others have more than their fair share. It also implies that the procedure of distribution itself has been unfair, or that perhaps the whole system is biased in the interest of some, while pretending to serve the interests of all. However,

it should be noted that impartiality does not imply treating everyone the same, as this can lead to injustice. Rather, impartiality requires equal consideration of each person without arbitrary prejudice. Reasons must be given for treating people unequally. In the light of this, various theories of justice determine which reasons are relevant in each situation. Each theory of justice, such as “justice as fairness” (Rawls, 1972), and “entitlement theory” (Nozick, 1974) offers its account of what justice requires, and for the inconsistency that each theory bears to the other, the idea of justice becomes a problem in political philosophy.

The problem with the concept of justice begins with the very meaning of the term. Although, most authors assert that they use it to designate a virtue, but most of the descriptions they attach to it suggest impersonal states of affairs. They ascribe the term not to individuals but to social systems. Nielsen’s conception of justice is an indication of the above observation. According to him, the question of justice is the question of what is a proper social order, which can guarantee human flourishing (Nielsen, 1996). This means that a definition of social order is inclusive of a conception of justice. For Ujomu, the idea of justice encapsulates every aspect of institutional rules and relations, which are subject to potential collective decision (Ujomu, 2002). There is such a consideration of the social systems because the individuals mainly operate within the limits of the social structure in which they are situated.

Moreover, the dispensation of justice has been implicated for the various conflicts that have ravaged various societies. Consequently, effective consideration of these conflicts, which constitutes a part of the enterprise of political philosophy, requires a deeper understanding of the idea of justice as it relates to the social structures that breed and sustain these social conflicts. Hence, we observe with Mitchell (1996) that a conflict at any level in society usually involves a struggle for justice. Therefore, we submit that justice, as a social ideal is the fundamental principle of the existence and coexistence of man as well as of human communities, societies and peoples (Pazhayampallil, 1995). The best condition for social order, as diverse social thinkers have argued is the situation where justice is persistently sustained.

Justice is an instrument of legitimation since the state survives and commands obligation depending on its capacity to sustain social justice. Hence, Rawls following Aristotle declares justice as the highest virtue of a society (1972). Rawls defines justice as:

A set of principles required for choosing among the various social arrangements which determine the division of advantages and for underwriting an agreement on the proper distributive shares. These principles are the principles of social justice, they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social co-operation. (1972)

The above remark underscores the importance of justice in building a cohesive and secure society, the kind of society where rights and duties, benefits and burdens are shared in a manner that all parties and different identities are fairly treated. Social justice in relation to social organization also refers to the manner of distributing resources and power. For Otakpor,

Justice is the web which holds any society together, like a spider’s web it is very fragile. It needs to be handled with care, devotion and dedication. Though fragile, the entire society reverberates whenever (and for whatever reason) a part of this most fundamental societal web is dislocated, punctured or ruptured. In any society where this has been the case, peace, order, unity and stability mean nothing in real time. Consequently, the first and the only known panacea for chaos is the uncompromising pursuit of justice. (1994)

The above passage aptly captures the fundamental role that social justice plays in managing the problems of social identity and national security. Social justice remains a primary consideration in creating and sustaining not only a peaceful relationship between social groups but in affirming the sense and consciousness of dignity and humanity of all the parties to the social structure. Hence, Rawls’ conception of justice is geared towards the realization of a well ordered society which can only be attained if its social justice is so designed that the subscription to it is stronger and more likely to override disruptive inclinations and differential loyalties.

To this end, the distribution of rights should be effected with fairness, such that all free and rational persons would accept it in a position of neutrality. The ideas of freedom, rationality, equality and neutrality which are the cardinal features of Rawlsian theory of justice seek to ensure that all members of the society are morally obliged to support the society.

The distributive conception of justice has been prevalent in the history of political philosophy. Contemporary theories of justice are dominated by a distributive paradigm, which tends to focus on the possession and allocation of material goods and social positions. Distributive issues are important, but the scope of social justice goes beyond them to include the political, that is, all aspects of institutional organization. In this sense, the concept of justice is coextensive with the socio-political. Roberto Unger (1987) defines politics as “struggle over the resources and arrangements that set the basic terms of our practical and passionate relations. Preeminent among these arrangements is the formative institutional and imaginative context of social life”. This predominant focus on the distribution of wealth, income, and positions ignores and tends to obscure the institutional context within which

those distributions take place. Hence, a theory of justice should go beyond distribution itself to conception and creation: the naming of the goods, the giving of meaning and the collective making. (Walzer, 1983)

This prerequisite for a just social order which includes the extensive conception, creation, shaping and determination of what is just and good is a product of democratic dialogue. Human life is fundamentally dialogical. Human identity achieves fullness in the person's interaction with the world and with other human beings. This dialogical character, which implies a mutual interdependence, is not antithetical to one's ability to achieve individuality, but is rather a crucial aspect of it. The problematic of a multicultural world is not that there is a multiplicity of worldviews, perspectives and moral standpoints, but that all these continue to exist separately and in a state of tension. Therefore, the central challenge for realizing the ethical conditions necessary for national security in Nigeria lies in the capacity to understand and confront the task of managing the nation's pluralism, in order to establish and sustain a stable and prosperous country.

The concept of democracy is elusive. Many scholars who have tried to define this concept have confessed their inability to give an encompassing definition. The popularity of this concept has made virtually all political systems claim to have something to do with democracy or to be driven by democratic ideals. One could argue therefore that "the promotion, practice and vicissitudes of democracy in different parts of the world have exposed it to some definitional haze and diverse forms of interpretations" (Adediran, 1996). Two reasons have been identified for this popularity: first, "democracy has become in current usage, another word for political decency and civilisation" (Owolabi, 1999). It is an idea that has become a moral concept thereby drawing the patronage of various regimes that proffer it more for the sake of survival than true commitment to its ideals. Second, democracy has assumed an ideological connotation. For example, the ideological tussle between the socialists and capitalists has generated a situation in which regimes become tagged democratic not necessarily because of its participatory tendencies but mainly due to its ideological persuasion. Therefore, it becomes difficult to present a definition of democracy which can be called objective (Oyekan, 2009).

Etymologically, "democracy" as a concept in the Greek language is a combination of two words: *demos* and *kratia* which means power or sovereignty in the hands of the people. "Democracy" from its Greek origin means the government of the people. Therefore, the only means by which we can adequately define the concept is not to lose sight of this etymology of the concept of democracy as the government of the people. The concept of democracy, in its classical sense goes beyond a form of government; it is a "way of life". Democracy is not all about a system of government where a variety of organizations and associations that are relatively independent in relation to the government and to one another exist (Dahl, 1987). Moreover, it is not a system where the principal leaders are selected through a competitive electoral process in which the majority of the population has the opportunity to participate. These conceptions of democracy are inadequate as they emphasize not only elections but also the elitist character of democratic system. The legitimacy of democracy must be thought to result from the free and unconstrained public deliberation of all matters of common concern (Benhabib, 1994).

Democracy is much more than a form of government or a set of legal arrangements. According to Dewey, democracy should not be conceived as "something institutional and external" but should be seen as a "way of personal life" (Dewey, 1988) that requires "faith in the capacity of human beings for the intelligent judgement and action if proper conditions are furnished (Irele, 1998, Rockefeller, 1992). Dewey's conception of democracy was born out of a pragmatic everyday experience of neighbours and friends coming together to converse freely with one another. According to him, intolerance, abuses, calling of names because of differences of opinion about religion or politics... as well as because of differences of race, color, wealth or degree of culture are treason to the democratic way of life. He argues that anything that hinders dialogical communication engenders "antagonistic sects and factions and undermines democracy" (Dewey, 1988).

The focus of this paper is the political manifestation of the idea of democracy. Oyekan (2009) has identified basic features of a democracy which include: the legitimacy of authority which emanates from the people either directly or indirectly, the rule of law, individual autonomy, respect for personal and group rights, and the power of the governed to withdraw authority from incompetent governments.

Looking at the above features critically, they represent a more political manifestation of the spirit of democracy that Dewey talked about. On the basis of these features, one can estimate that democracy is a political arrangement in which those who rule do so on the basis of the consent of the governed, while the rulers reciprocate by being accountable to those who bequeath the mandate to them (Owolabi, 1993). It could also be argued, on the basis of the highlighted features that the democratic society allows for individual autonomy and openness; attributes which are very essential for dialogue and dissent communication.

Democracy requires more than institutional guarantees of rights but requires a consistent belief in the possibility of resolving disputes and managing differences through rational deliberation. Undistorted communication is vital in a democratic setting in which there is a cooperative undertaking (Irele, 1998), instead of having a dominant group suppress the other through either subtle or evident violence or through intimidation. In the absence of such a cooperative undertaking, the dialogic communicative democracy becomes impossible. Democracy becomes very expedient in multicultural societies such as Nigeria because it caters for diversity and

difference of opinions. This expression of difference is not only a right of other persons that must be guaranteed but it also enriches others' life-experience. Democracy relies on the dialogical process as the source of authority and the means of choosing among competing alternatives. What emerges from the above conception of democracy is that democracy entails a socio-political space where there is an unconstrained participation of all citizens in a free and rational public debate which could only take place in the public sphere.

Hence, there is a nexus between democracy and a vibrant public sphere where there is a deliberation on all issues of social relevance in which the citizens can participate. According to Durkheim, democracy lays emphasis on submitting a greater number of things to collective debate and strives as well to achieve a critical consciousness of itself (Durkheim, 1957). This includes the citizens' role in scrutinizing government activities, debating current events in the public sphere. The citizens' capacity to participate in the state's judgement becomes the hallmark of democratic dispensations.

Democracy becomes highly relevant and important in pluralistic societies because it brings about the proper management of diversity and a synthesis of differences in opinion, beliefs and ideals. In democracy, we require real participatory structures in which actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage the representation of their distinct voices (Marion, 1990). In the context of Nigeria, General Ibrahim Babangida argues that it is this inability to have the requisite democratic attitudes that constantly gives rise to the series of policy failures and what can be called "executive paralysis" (1991).

In a plural society, the civic public does not imply that citizens should be alienated from their particular group affiliations, histories, and needs. Rather, the society should be conceived as an emanation of a complex synthesis of ideas, beliefs, and convictions of diverse groups and orientations. The community is not a given; it is consciously worked out, and in the same manner sustained. The community is basically established around a common goal and a shared aspiration. In many cases, different social identities form an alliance to pursue their perceived common goal. These social identities must appreciate and respect the differences of each other to ensure a community in the real sense. Each social identity should be allowed to locate the common goal within her respective context. This implies that each social group is given the opportunity to express herself within the commonwealth of groups in the pursuit of the common good. The community is not a space for discord, hence it is an essential aspect of the community to harmonize and synthesize the differences of the component identities in their sincere pursuit of the good of all. The community is not an entity; rather it is a relationship that requires the active participation of all the parties to the relationship. The community could be realized and sustained if the component identities could express their differences to the common goal, which is communally pursued.

7. The Nigerian Child and the New National Security Paradigm

It was posited earlier that any discourse that construes security in predominantly military or defense terms poses a problem for the proper definition of the concept. Also, as Nolutshungu argued, "we need to jettison, or if one may say, demystify the view that national security dictates a hush-hush discourse in which knowledge is mystified in a cult of technical expertise, and public information characterized by selective disclosure" (1996). These fundamental failures come with poor national security strategy and an incompetent national security paradigm. However, the hope of this paper is the establishment of a national security paradigm that can help to achieve the type of social transformation required for stability and progress in Nigeria (Ujomu, 2001). The author of this article is convinced that such a national security paradigm is not only fundamental to the emergence of the much desired overall sustainable development but also inevitable for establishment of a favourable social order for the Nigerian child.

The new paradigm of national security will ensure the nation's ability to prevent tension from escalating into armed conflicts, maintaining an atmosphere of stability, preventing chaos and widespread violence, and ensuring the commitment to human rights (Shea, 1995). This new paradigm is realizable via an ethical redefinition of the conditions of life in Nigeria. Central to the ethical redefinition of the conditions of life in Nigeria is the mitigation of conflicts – created by the problem of socio-economic inequality and poverty, which in turn have been aggravated by the attitudes of greed and self interest that have guided the lives of most Nigerians (Ujomu, 2001). Nolutshungu (1996) agrees that the clarification of the issue of values is important in the question of national security. Therefore, the maintenance of security implies the protection and preservation of certain core values. Values are by definition standards that people aspire to live by as guides to their life (Pascah, 2011). By their very nature values are transient and complex (Haydon, 1997). According to Verma (1991), "the temporal locus of a value system is always the present. . . The central reference point of a value system is the individual and the society of today". In light of these congruent positions on values or a value system, this paper argues for a national security paradigm that is driven by a value system that captures the reality of a post-independent, 21st century democratic political dispensation which encapsulates the individual and group interests. Values such as social justice and democratic dialogue among others have been identified and discussed in details earlier.

Talking about what values can achieve, Senator John McCain (2010) argued: "It is true that the Berlin Wall

fell for many reasons. Economic power had a lot to do with it – for without the combined wealth of the West, we would never have overcome our darkest hours of need. Military power also had a lot to do with it – for without the strength to defend ourselves; our dreams of peace would have remained just that. But beyond all of this, what toppled the Berlin Wall was the West’s support for all behind the Iron Curtain who struggled for universal human rights”. The lesson from this is that military and economic powers without a viable value system are not enough to create a sustainable national security. Ujomu (2001) agrees that Nigeria’s quest for national security cannot be attained through the mere consolidation of its military forces. He observes that much of the insecurity, corruption, injustices and anarchy that have occurred in the nation between 1960 and 2000, were perpetrated directly by the security forces through *coup d’état*, violence, dictatorship, oppression). At the same time, Ujomu (2001) noted that mere economic growth or huge financial revenue cannot be the basis for Nigeria’s national security. It is the moral repositioning of the Nigerian state, which must affect every segment of the society such as the political leadership, education, industries, all state agencies, commerce, economy, infrastructures and social services, politics, professional groups, etc. that distinguishes the new national security paradigm from the current defective security paradigm in Nigeria.

It should be mentioned here that the new security paradigm is essential for sustainable development which translates into elimination of poverty, disease and ignorance; increase in national wealth in such a way that every person will have enough. It implies the mitigation of endemic corruption, oppression, injustice, marginalization, victimization and dehumanization which constitute the barriers to individual and group access to the wealth of the nation and the means of production. This viable national security paradigm is essential for a systematic transformation of the conditions of life of the majority of people in a beneficial manner to enhance their attainment of individual and collective well-being which is the hallmark of sustainable development goal in Nigeria. The new national security paradigm is expected to be the outcome of a process of critical examination of the socio-political and ethical foundations of national security in Nigeria; and a general commitment to a value system that enhances respect for human life.

Finally, we have discussed two important and urgent issues which must be addressed by the Nigerian leaders; first, economic repositioning to alleviate poverty, disease and ignorance, and second, fair and democratic management of the nation’s ethnic, religious, political and economic diversity to eliminate violent frictions within the country. These issues if properly and judiciously addressed will engender a conducive environment where every Nigerian child is given opportunities and facilities to enable him develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in condition of freedom and dignity (Omowole, 2006).

8. Conclusion

Children exposure to armed conflicts and their subsequent active involvement in such conflicts by carrying fire-arms and ammunition, serving as spies, etc. are indications of certain fundamental deficiencies. We have highlighted that many children are raised by incompetent parents or guardians who lack the requisite parenting skills. Some children grow up abused by physical and psychological violence. Many children have been subjected to prolonged neglect of diverse kinds; making them emotionally bruised. We have extensively discussed the national security questions and its impact on the well-being of the citizenry, children inclusive. In our critique of national security in Nigeria, we have offered a comprehensive definition of national security, which is premised on the State’s responsibility to ensure the much desired overall sustainable development and a favourable social order for the Nigerian child to mature into happy and responsible adulthood.

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Adekeye O. is a lecturer in the Department of General and Entrepreneurial Studies at the Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Ondo State, Nigeria. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Ibadan in 2008. The author is a member of Globe Ethics International and a public affairs analyst. His research interests include social and political philosophy, development studies, continental philosophy and metaphysics.