

Domestic Conflicts and Human Rights in Africa: Implications for Nigerian Foreign Policy

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Abstract

Every nation, no matter how peaceful experiences varying conflicts at one point or the other in her existence, whether developing or developed. The weird domestic conflict which has culminated into insecurity of lives and properties currently bedevilling the existence of Nigeria especially in the northern part of the nation has become one of the fundamental challenge troubling the present government of Nigeria, which has invariably put her relationship across international boundaries on the line. The study examined the implications of domestic conflicts and human rights on Nigeria's foreign policy and argued that the escalating rate of insecurity across the nation especially in the northern part has a nexus with aggrieved political big wigs who takes advantage of youth's vulnerability due to high rates of unemployment, to perpetrate the heinous crimes. The study observed that the perpetrators of the crimes are employed by political elites to discredit their political opponents and also to gain relevance and popularity in the political market. It found that the conflicts, rather than experience the influx of investors into the country, might experience the exodus of the few investors out of the country. It concluded that until the financiers of the heinous crime are brought to book in the public glare, the scourge which we all have ideas about its genesis, its ending might be a puzzle.

Keywords: Nigeria, Domestic Conflicts, Human Rights, Africa, Foreign Policy

1.1 Introduction

All over the world right from human existence in the Garden of Eden after the fall of man, conflicts has remained with man. Hence, no society is absolutely free from domestic conflicts at one point or the other because conflict is one of the features of societal dynamics and it is as old as human race. Conflict per se does not represent a negative phenomenon but when it transforms into violence leaving behind a sorrowful aftermath, only then can it be adjudged as a negative phenomenon. Conflict arises as a result of a set of complex variables coming together and reinforcing each other at multiple levels and at critical junctures of a country or regional development. It leaves in its aftermath significant development and humanitarian challenges. The recurring insecurity and non protection of lives and properties as a result of domestic conflicts resulting in devastating violence in some parts of Nigeria, which culminates into the abuse of human and peoples' rights, is taking a toll on the foreign policy of Nigeria. Consequently, Nigerian government is very concerned, just like other international societies to effectively manage and bring the conflicts under control using state apparatus, international aid and every paraphernalia of office at its disposal to put an end to the scourge.

Nigeria like most societies especially in the developing countries is experiencing varying degrees of insecurity and domestic uprisings ranging from the Boko Haram insurgency, kidnappings, suicide bombing, ethno religious conflicts and other social ills. These conflict disorders have led to the insecurity of lives and properties of both Nigerian Nationals and foreigners within the country. The challenge by National governments and in particular, Nigeria, is how to ensure the protection of lives and properties of the citizens as well as the foreigners, while ensuring that the fundamental human rights of even the violators are respected as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the crux of the study is to take a critical look at the salient causes of domestic conflicts in Nigeria, how the conflicts has led to human insecurity, impacts on national interest, the abuse of human and fundamental rights of both of its citizens and foreigners residents in Nigeria, its implications on Nigeria's foreign policy and her international relations.

1.2 Conceptual Clarifications

David (2004) defined conflict as an intrinsic and inevitable part of human existence. He further opined that violent conflict is not inevitable and as such is an anomaly. Conflict has also been defined as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals. Armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. Zartman (2000) argued that conflict has an ontological basis in human needs, and it is the denial, which causes violent conflicts, or causes re-solvable differences to degenerate into armed violence or armed conflicts. However, Scholars and development agencies have defined internal conflicts differently, but the most widely accepted definition comes from the Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) and its Research Partner, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) at Uppsala University, Sweden. They defined internal conflict as one involving at least one state as a warring party, occurs within a state's boundary and that directly causes at least 25 battle related deaths per year, civilian and military.

The expression human rights are relatively new, having come into everyday parlance only since the World War II and the founding of the United Nations in 1945. It replaces the phrase “natural rights” which fell into disfavour in part because the concept of natural law to which it was intimately linked had become a matter of great controversy, and the later phrase “the rights of man” (Weston, 1992). Generally, human rights can be defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings and without which no society is viable and able to survive (Ladan, 1999). Human Rights act as great safeguards against the tyranny of the majority and a considerable protection of the minorities (Ray, 2004). It also refers to certain basic freedoms, opportunities and protections that should be possessed by all as inherent attributes of one’s humanity (Omoregbe, 1994).

In the earlier agitations the human rights and protection were scholars like John Locke, the French Philosopher Rousseau, who believed that governments derived their legitimacy from a social contract binding them to protect their citizens from injustice. Thus, when the leaders of the American War of Liberalization from the British, made their now famous Declaration of Independence in 1776, it was an idea that was already eloquently espoused by Milton, Locke and Rousseau that they derived their inspiration from when they declared: “We hold these truths to be self evidence, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inalienable rights; that among those rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure those rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” (American Declaration of Independence, 1776).

The Independence of the United States of America, the French Revolution and the Russian Revolution all contributed immensely to the development of human rights as obligations, duties of states towards their citizens. Following the Second World War and the creation of the United Nations, the leaders of the world were eager to prevent some of the gross abuses suffered by the victims of the war and to further protect human dignity. Thus, the United Nations decided to draft a Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted in Paris in December 1948. The first paragraph of the Preamble declares that: “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world”. The duties of states to promote protect, and give effect to human rights has also been provided for in the United Nations Charter 1945. Article 1(3) states that to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion.

Consequently, most Independent nations across the world have adopted and enshrined the fundamental Human Rights Principles in their Constitutions. In Nigeria, it is provided for under Chapter IV, Section 33-43, Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Cap C23, LFN, 2004 (2011 as amended). The rights which are guaranteed and inalienable rights of every citizen of Nigeria includes: right to life, right to dignity of human person, right to personal liberty, right to fair hearing etc. Against this backdrop, it is clear that “human rights” as a concept is not new. As aptly enunciated by the Supreme Court of Nigeria in *Ransome Kuti & Others v. Attorney-General of the Federation & Ors*, human rights are: ...a right which stands above the ordinary laws of the land which in fact is antecedent to the political society itself. It is a primary condition to a civilized existence.

According to the Commission on Human Security, human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms- freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s own behalf. Human security is a critical component of the global political and development agenda. Two ideas lie at its heart: firstly, the protection of individuals is a strategic concern for national as well as international security; secondly, security conditions for people’s development are not bound to traditional matters of national defence, law and order, but rather encompass all political, economic and social issues enabling a life free from risk and fear. Despite the consensus on the foundations of this concept, an uncontroversial definition of human security does not currently exist. Since the mid 1990s, the UN Commission for Human Security, the UNDP, the World Bank, the Development Assistance Committee and the national governments of Japan, United Kingdom, Canada, and others have worked to identify its key components. Nonetheless, definitions continued to be broad, emphasising the protection of human beings and local communities from a variety of threats, ranging from individuals to collective, and from physical to political, economic, social, or environmental.

2.1 Foreign Policy

Ojo and Sesay (1988) defined Foreign Policy as a policy that leads to the creation of full employment in the country and at the same time advance the nation’s march towards economic and political emancipation vis-à-vis other members of the international system. To Modelski (1962) foreign policy is the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the

international environment. A country's foreign policy, also called the 'international relations policy' is a set of political and economic goals that seeks to outline how a country will interact with other countries of the world. Thus, foreign policies generally are designed to help protect a country's national interests, national security, ideological goals and economic prosperity. It consists of decisions and actions which involve to some appreciable extent, relations between one state and others.

2.2 Domestic Conflicts and Human Rights Issues in Nigeria

The U.S. Department of State has said the most significant human rights problems in Nigeria are extrajudicial killings for example the unlawful killing of the leader of Boko Haram and use of force by security forces; impunity for abuses by security forces; arbitrary arrests; prolonged pre-trial detention; judicial corruption and executive influence on the judiciary; rape; torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment of prisoners; detainees and suspects; harsh and life – threatening prison and detention centre conditions; human trafficking; for the purpose of prostitution and forced labour; societal violence and vigilante killings; child labour; child abuse and child sexual exploitation; female genital mutilation; domestic violence; discrimination based on sex, ethnicity, region and religion; restrictions of freedom of assembly; movement; press; speech and religion; infringement of privacy rights; and the abridgement of the right of citizens to change the government. (Human Rights Report on Nigeria, 2008).

Another report further said that hundreds of people remained on death row; many were sentenced after unfair trials, human rights crusaders and journalists faces intimidation and harassment (Human Rights Watch 2112). In January 2012, a staff and reporter of Channels TV, Eneche Akogwu was shot dead by Boko Haram sect in Kano. On the 8th day of March 2012, two foreigners - an Italian, Franco Lamolinar and Briton, Christopher Mcmanus that were abducted in Birnin Kebbi and held hostage since May 2011 were shot dead by the Boko Haram sect in Sokoto in a joint raid by UK and the Nigerian security personnel in an operation to set the foreigners free. Meanwhile, the government which is saddled with the responsibility to maintain peaceful co-existence, orderliness, protection of lives and properties have failed in its duties not only to its citizens, but also to foreigners living within the geographical space of Nigeria. Those killings would mar the image and international relations of Nigeria. However, episodes of inter-communal violence continued to claim hundreds of lives, including ongoing violence in Plateau State, and post-presidential election riots and sectarian killings in northern Nigeria that left more 800 dead. Meanwhile, abuses by government security forces and the ruling elite's mismanagement and embezzlement of the country's vast oil wealth continued largely unabated. Endemic corruption, poverty, poor governance, and unchecked police abuses have created an environment where militants thrive and find recruits in the vast cadre of Nigeria's unemployed youths (Ibid).

Furthermore, Civil Society Groups, human rights crusaders that mobilized Nigerians across all political, religious, professional and ethnic divides from Monday 9th - Friday 13th January, 2011 to protest the removal of fuel subsidy were abused. Some were killed by Police bullets; some were harassed by Security personnel; the protesters were denied access to the Gani Fawehinmi Park, the epicentre of the protest by soldiers. In all parts of the Lagos metropolis, where soldiers were deployed, they were seen searching motorists and pedestrians. The soldiers shoot into the air to scare the protesters. (Punch, 2012:2). Interestingly, another protest was followed up in Lagos to protest the presence of soldiers on the streets of Lagos. The protest led by a Lagos based Lawyer and activist, Bamidele Aturu, and the secretary of the Joint Action Front, also comprised members of the Nigerian Bar Association, the Nigerian Medical Association and Civil Society Groups. Aturu who spoke after the melee said, "This is a relapse to militarism under a civilian dispensation. This action is antithetical to democracy and this is the first time we are having a civilian government deploying soldiers in the streets to combat and unleash violence on defenceless and armless citizen" (ibid). In a state broadcast, the governor of Lagos State, Babatunde Fashola, condemned the deployment soldiers, describing it as a "very disquieting development". Prof Wole Soyinka also condemned the act and called for unconditional removal of the soldiers, describing their deployment as "an intolerable act of provocation" (ibid.). Though, it is the duty of the State to prevent the break down of law and order, it is also an inalienable right of the citizens to peaceful assembly and association, as enshrined under section 40 of the Nigerian Constitution (Cap C23, LFN 2004). The harassment by the deployed soldiers is violation of the rights of the citizens to congregate and give expression to whatever grievances bedevil their existence.

Moreover, the spate of kidnappings in the country in recent times has become a disturbing phenomenon. Though, it has subsided, the menace which started largely as a means of drawing government's attention to the neglect of the communities in the oil-rich Niger Delta region blossomed to a booming lucrative trade. Though the act began in the Niger Delta region, it gradually crept into neighbouring states in the South-East geopolitical zones. Prior to the prevailing situation, kidnapping in Nigeria was rare and hardly in the same realm. It became rife in the latter part of 2005 and early 2006 when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), turned to kidnapping of foreign oil workers to draw attention to their political cause. Initially, only expatriates or foreigners working in oil firms and multinationals in the country were the main

targets, it soon transcended what started like a child's play. Nigerians, including children, toddlers, adults, priests, royal fathers, marketers, the aged, and relations of influential individuals in the society became targets of the nefarious and nebulous act. Between 1991 and 2000, Nigeria was ranked 9th behind nations like Columbia, Mexico, Russia, Philippines and Venezuela in the number of annual kidnappings. In 2008, the rate of kidnapping in Nigeria was 353 and in 2009, it has risen to 512. (www.kwenu.com).

In June 2005, six foreign workers linked to the Anglo-Dutch oil company (Shell) were kidnapped in the Niger Delta area; in February 2006, some foreign oil workers were abducted in the same zone; in March 2007, two Chinese workers were abducted at Nnewi, a commercial town in Anambra state; in May, 2007, some gunmen kidnapped four American oil workers from a barge off the Nigerian coast; in August 2007 in Port Harcourt, some gunmen kidnapped an American oil industry worker; in the same August 2007, six Russian workers from an aluminium plant were kidnapped. (www.foxnews.com).

The criminal act goes beyond concentrating on the expatriates as Nigerian citizens were also victims. For instance, on 10 July 2003, Dr. Chris Ngige, the then governor of Anambra State was abducted (TELL, 2003). Since then, a lot of Nigerians have either been abducted or kidnapped across the nation. Meanwhile, after the introduction of Amnesty, kidnappings and bombings were reduced the barest minimum. Recently, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) resumed bombings in the Niger Delta. MEND, in a statement, recalled that it had confirmed in early 2011 that all statements posted on Sahara Reporters were authentic MEND statements. The spokesperson of MEND was also quoted as saying that "the lull in fighting by all groups in Niger Delta is being used to acquire more sophisticated weapons to ensure that our next assault on Nigerian Oil Industry expels western oil companies once and for all. There is nothing the Nigerian Military can do to stop us" (Blueprint, 2012:4).

3.1 The Impacts of Domestic Conflicts on Human Rights

When things fall apart and the centre could no longer hold, the state will resume anarchical, lawless and human rights abuse becomes rampant and same are subverted as if they never existed.. Respects for human rights are lost; fundamental rights of citizens are violated; citizens are displaced; in such a situation, unlawful deaths becomes the order of the day; security agents and all lawful agents performing their civic duties might be cut in the web as they are specifically targeted and singled out for elimination. According to the Director of State Security Service(SSS) in Kano, Bassey Entang, "terrorists know quite well that the general population is vulnerable if the security officers are picked out. It assumed that once can you pick out the security officers, who are suppose to provide security to the general population, then the general population is like a lamb, because they will now have no protection"(Sun, 2012). Innocent citizens are arrested, detained in the same cells along side condemned criminals and in most cases they are neither released nor traceable to the custody of the arresting security personnel; Journalists get arrested over fair comments and publications especially if the comments are anti-government. During the fuel subsidy protest in Lagos, the State Security Service agents were reported to have raided the offices of the British Broadcasting Service (BBC) and the Cable News Network (CNN) from further reporting the street protests over the removal of fuel subsidy by the government(Sun, 2012).

3.2 Nigerian Foreign Policy

According to Hartmann (1983), foreign policy consists of selected national interests presumably formulated into a logically consistent whole that is then implemented. Foreign policy expresses self-interest strategies chosen by the state to safeguard its national interests and to achieve its goals within international relations milieu. Thus, the approaches are strategically employed in order to interact with other countries. However, it has become an axiomatic truth that the Foreign Policy of a country is to a large extent determined by its domestic structure. Many scholars and diplomats have accepted this view. They have attempted to "demonstrate that the various constituent elements in the political system - the government, the political parties, pressure groups, the civil service, the political and bureaucratic elites, public opinions, and the press - operating within the democratic process provided by the Constitution, exert direct or indirect influence in shaping a country's foreign policy (Nweke, 1986:34).

Apparently, the basic elements underlying the foreign policy of all countries are the quest for security, which, depending on the strength and leadership of a given country, may range from the pursuit of status quo policies to blatant imperialism. Any foreign policy can be viewed analytically in three phases: conception, content and implementation. Conception involves the strategic appraisal of what goals are desirable and feasible given the presumed nature of the international system. Content is the result and reflection of that appraisal. Implementation looks at both the coordinating mechanisms within a state and the means by which it conveys its views and wishes to other states. Though inefficiencies and failure can be very costly in any of these three phases, it is obvious that the most critical phase is conception (Winter and Bellows, 1992).

At independence, non-alignment was adopted as one of the basic tenets of Nigeria's foreign policy. The rationale behind that position was basically to preserve Nigeria's choice and freedom of action as a sovereign

state. It also utilized that opportunity to advance the goals of pan-Africanism, concern for black people, decolonisation (Ogwu, 1986). Beyond this, the setting in which foreign policy is made is pivotal. Unlike domestic policies, the targets of foreign policy decisions are not domestic but entities external to the state. In other words, the process of foreign policy decision making is influenced by factors that are not only internal to the state initiating particular policies, but also by pressures from sources that are external to it. Hence, two environments of foreign policy can be identified: the domestic influences on foreign policy include a country's geography, economy, demography, political structures, military, political parties, lobbies and interest groups and public opinion. Basically, a country's location, topography, its terrain, climate, size, population and distribution of natural resources will not only affect the socio-economic development within the country, but will also determine the country's needs in relation to other states. (Curtis et al., 2006).

The Nigerian Constitution makes provision for Foreign Policy objectives under Chapter II, Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State' Policy. Section 19 of the Constitution provided that the policy objectives shall be:

- (a) promotion and protection of national interest;
- (b) promotion of African integration and support for African unity;
- (c) promotion of international co-operation for the consolidation of universal peace and mutual respect among all nations and elimination of discrimination in all its manifestation;
- (d) respect for international law and treaty obligations as well as the seeking of settlement of international disputes by negotiation, mediation, conciliation, arbitration and adjudication; and
- (e) promotion of a just world economic order.

(Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2011 as amended, Cap C23, LFN, 2004).

3.3 Implications of Human Rights abuse and Domestic Conflicts on Nigeria's Foreign Policy

Since Independence in 1960, Nigeria has had extensive diplomatic contacts with its fellow African countries and western nations and had worked through all these to safeguard its national interest and to achieve other international political interests. Based on its economic and demographic strength, Nigeria has always considered itself as one of the leading countries in Africa and its foreign policy has been geared to reflect this. Apart from belonging to many international organizations: United Nations and several of its special and related agencies such as, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), States (ECOWAS), African Union (AU), it also has taken the lead in articulating the views of developing nations on the need for modification of the existing international economic order.

The emergence of the insurgent's activities that are hitherto burgeoning and becoming a recurrent decimal has made the nation to lose all these respect and its relevance in the international community. Of course, no country will be disposed to establish a bilateral relation with a country that is linked with insecurity and terrorism. Instead of witnessing multinational corporations coming into Nigeria to boost the nation's economy, the country rather experiences the exodus of many companies and industries from the country to other countries as a result of insecurity, terrorist and criminal acts. The continued violence against innocent citizens in Jos, Bauchi, and Maiduguri and other parts of the country, carried out with impunity on a daily basis is enough to scare foreigners from coming into the country to invest. The prevailing trend is also capable of stopping foreign election monitors from coming to observe subsequent elections in Nigeria.

It suffices to aver that since the escalation of abduction, kidnapping and bombings in Nigeria, the country has lost its 6th position in the league of oil exporting countries. The position has been taken over by Angola that now top the chart as Africa's largest exporter of crude oil. Prior to the precarious situation, Nigeria used to produce a total output of 2.4 million barrels per day. Industry sources now put the average total oil production output at 1.4 million barrels while Angola produces 1.9 million barrels daily. The terrorist acts in the country have succeeded in killing the hen that lays the golden eggs as the most affected oil companies were, Shell production development company, Chevron, the Nigerian Agip Oil and the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC). To buttress this, Shell's production has dipped by 85 per cent from 1.150 million barrels per day in 2005 to the current production figure of about 145,000 barrels due to a series of attacks in its platforms both in the eastern operations in Rivers State and Western operations covering Bayelsa, Delta and Edo states. The same applies to Chevron whose production and loading facilities in the region especially in the coastal Delta state have been blown up resulting in production shut down (Punch, 2009).

Prior to this current decline, oil companies operating in the Niger Delta have lost about \$200,760,000 in 1993 as a result of protests and blockages. Shell in particular had lost N9.9 million in Ogoniland in 1993 when it was forced to stop operations by angry villagers (Obi 1992). In a more recent attack by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) added: "Agip cleverly indicated that 4,000 barrels of its production is affected by our attack. The reality is that close to 200,000 bpd of the Nigerian crude exports is affected by our attack as that trunk line served to transport crude oil for other oil companies as well. This translates to a daily loss of at least \$20million" (Blueprint, op. cit: 12).

Nevertheless, given the currency at which these activities (kidnapping, abduction and blowing up of pipelines and terrorism) are going, the secured are no longer safe. However, the essence of striving to attract more foreign investments to Nigeria is to boost Nigeria's economy and position us as a future world leader, which of course is part of our foreign policy. This set of goals can only be achieved if the of the foreigners are secured. Suffices to say, that the more the country lacks the capacity to guarantee steady flow of crude oil in the international market, the more critical stakeholders will become impatient with Nigeria and perhaps begins to look for an alternative oil nation that is with an enabling environment.

3.4 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is obvious that insecurity and/or abuse of human rights in all its ramifications is a serious threat to any country's national interest and foreign policy. Having known the genesis and the immediate causes of the problems i.e. neglect, poverty, indiscipline, marginalization, corruption, underdevelopment, and unemployment in Nigeria, government should brace up to its responsibilities by addressing the problems. It is imperative too, that the sponsors of incessant bloodshed in Nigeria should be brought to book. Though, both the past and present governments have done a lot to stimulate the developmental growth of Niger Delta such as the establishment of Oil Mineral Producing Authority Development Commission (OMPADEC) in 1992 and Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) in 1999, more should be done to cut across the country.

However, the National Assembly on 17th February, 2011 passed a bill on Anti-Terrorism, which was assented to by the President. This suggest, therefore that any form of terrorist act carried out in Nigeria attracts a maximum of 20 years imprisonment as of Boko Haram insurgents has been adjudged a terrorist group. Many advanced democracies spells out clearly their policy on such crimes. Meanwhile, President Goodluck Jonathan has signed into law the National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Act 2011, which has been pending approval for over six years. The Act secures the independence and funding of the National Human Rights Commission, which works to protect human rights. The Commission can now work independently to improve the human rights situation in Nigeria. Also, with Nigeria currently having a seat in the United Nations' Security Council, the security challenges of Nigeria will take a more realistic and result driven approach.

3.5 Recommendations

The government at all levels should ensure the provision of good governance as a panacea to Nigerian security challenges. Good governance will give birth to a corrupt free society, and if a society is free of corruption, there will be discipline everywhere and every other thing will fall into place.

Both the central and the state governments should give critical attention to the increasing rate of unemployment in the country. Because many graduate youths are jobless, the tendency is that they might become inclined to criminal acts in other to survive. Just as the saying goes, the idle mind is the devil's workshop.

Also, there is need for the government to embark on any programme that could go a long way to reforming or transforming the agencies responsible for internal security. For example, the government should endeavour to have an upward review of the welfare package of the Police Force as well as its insurance policies. This can go a long way to ginger and boost their morale and make them appreciate whatever services they are rendering to the nation.

There should be introduction of effective unemployment reduction - job creation agenda policies and laws that would boost food production, provisions of social amenities, good and affordable housing, assurance of equity, fairness and justice in all spheres of our national life should be pursued and enacted. The recovery and return to the state coffers of all ill-gotten wealth for investment and punishment of the culprits (dead or alive) should not be treated with levity.

There should be convocation of Sovereign National Conference open to all groups and sections in the country to table and discuss what they needed and how to move Nigeria forward. There is the need to establish a committee of community leaders, which from time to time among other things be charged with the responsibility of reviewing the relationship between the warring parties. Only equity, equality, and a true democratic order could provide the bedrock of unity and peaceful co-existence could soften ethnic, communal clashes and militia insurgencies.

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