VIOLENCE AND INSECURITY OF LIVES AND PROPERTY AS THE GREATEST CHALLENGES TO NATION-BUILDING IN EMERGING DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES IN AFRICA: NIGERIA AS A CASE-STUDY

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1. Preamble
The age old definition of democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people. In other words, democracy is a people-oriented form of political governance in which the welfare of citizens is always at the heart of the programs and policies of the government in power. Unfortunately, violence and insecurity of lives and property in emerging democratic countries of Africa, particularly the present-day Nigeria, have taken their tolls on the citizens’ psyche and have proved to be the greatest roadblocks on the way to real nation-building. Using Nigeria as a case-study, a return from military dictatorship to a liberal democratic regime on May 29, 1999, was expected to usher the country into the 21st century of good governance, preservation of fundamental human rights, respect for the sacredness of human life, development and progress, peace and security as opposed to the current culture of violence, insecurity and destruction of human lives and property. Alas it is as if Nigeria as a political entity is steadily backsliding into Thomas Hobbes’ “state of nature” – “a condition of war of every one against every one,” in which human life has become ‘nasty, brutish, and short.’ Thus, as Henry Umoru observes, it is frightening that the former President Obasanjo and the leaders of different socio-political groups from six geo-political zones in Nigeria – the AFANIFERE, OHANEZE, PANDEF, NEF, have come to the conclusion in their recent communiqué that “the government lacked the capacity to arrest the drift towards a state of anarchy that looms in the country as a result of the security challenges in the country.” In this excursion down memory lane, we shall attempt a survey of the emergence of violence in Nigeria’s polity from the colonial era down to the nascent liberal democratic civilian dispensation which began with President Shehu Shagari’s brief democratic regime that was interrupted by 34 years of military interregnum, and from President Olusegun Obasanjo’s democratic regime (the 4th Republic, 1999) down to the current President Muhammadu Buhari’s democratic government. We underline here that the current spates of violence and insecurity of lives and property in different parts of Nigeria, but especially in the North-East, North-West and the North-Central states, necessitates this survey. The aim is to remind political leaders in Africa, and Nigeria in particular, that unjust political actions and inactions, more often than not, result in violence and insecurity and loss of citizens’ lives and property to the detriment and derailment of efforts towards nation-building. Based on this crucial point of view, our conception of violence will broadly include communal (ethnic or religious) conflicts, inter-party and intra-party violence, electoral violence, all manners of political thuggery and undemocratic practices which have always resulted in gruesome assassination of perceived political opponents or enemies, all forms of insurgency, such as the Niger-Delta militancy, Boko Haram insurgency and the cattle herdsmen and farmers conflicts that have resulted in mindless destruction of lives and property in different parts of Nigeria in recent years. Before we delve further into the menace of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, I would think that it is strategically important to define first the concept of nation-building.

SECTION 1
NATION-BUILDING
1.1 Concept of Nation-Building

The terminology “nation-building” became fashionable among social and political scientists in the 1950s and 1960s. Those who championed and propounded it were mainly leaders of the academic community in America, such as Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly, and Reinhard Bendix. In 1963, Karl Deutsch and William Foltz co-edited a work entitled *Nationbuilding*. Based on the work, the Wikipedia (edited on 4 March 2018) gives the following insights into the concept of nation-building. Accordingly, it describes nation-building as ‘constructing or structuring a national identity using the power of the state… Nation-building aims at the unification of the people within the state so that it remains politically stable and viable in the long run.’ Furthermore, the Wikipedia observes that since ‘legitimate authority in modern national states is connected to popular rule, to majorities, nation-building is the process through which these majorities are constructed.’ It also observes that nation-building can ‘involve the use of propaganda or major infrastructure development to foster social harmony and economic growth.’ Again, the Wikipedia (2018) affirms that ‘nation builders are those members of a state who take the initiative to develop the national community through government programs, including … national content mass schooling.’ Furthermore, it makes a crucial observation that ‘at a deeper level, national identity needed to be deliberately constructed by molding different ethnic groups into a nation, especially since in many newly established states, colonial practices of divide and rule had resulted in ethnically heterogeneous populations.’ The Wikipedia (2018) is also right to observe that in the modern period, the concept of ‘nation-building referred to the efforts of newly independent nations, notably the nations of Africa and also in the Balkans, to redefine the populace of territories that had been carved out by colonial powers or empires without regard to ethnic, religious, or other boundaries. These reformed states would then become viable and coherent national entities.’

In the final analysis, it is of great importance to understand that many emerging democratic countries in Africa are bedeviled by tribalism that gives rise to constant rivalry among ethnic groups within the nation. This at times results in their near-disintegration. Pertinent examples are the attempted secession by Biafra from Nigeria in the late 1960s, and the constant attempt of the Somali people in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia to gain complete political independence. Also the recurrent problems in Sudan that have recently resulted in the creation of the independent state of Southern Sudan can also be related to lack of ethnic and religious harmony within the country of Sudan. Another living example is the on-going struggle by the English-speaking part of Cameroon (Ambazonia) to exist as a country of its own. All these point to the urgent need for political leaders in Africa, Nigeria in particular, to be serious and conscientious with the task of nation-building in their various countries.

1.2 Violence in the Colonial Era

Coming now to the issue of violence, it must be stated that some of the earlier mentioned forms of violence that we have mentioned earlier in the introduction were recorded prior to Nigeria’s political independence (1960). In fact, those forms of violence were intrinsically entrenched in the manner of coming together of Nigeria as a political entity. For during the colonial era, the British colonial master conjoined by force the various hitherto autonomous people and groups of divergent cultures and languages that border the
areas East and North of the river Niger into one entity known as Nigeria (“Niger-area”). While the British overlord applied the system of direct rule in the southern Nigeria, the evolution of an “indirect rule” in the northern part was subtly meant to ensure a political ‘divide and rule’ tactics which not only created a widening gap between the peoples of the North and those of the South but, ultimately, ensured a permanent division and conflicts among the diverse ethnic groups that now make up the Nigerian state. This division was particularly cemented by the McPherson Constitution, which saw to it that Nigeria was divided into three regions (eastern, western, and northern regions), each having a full-fledged regional authority and legislature. The salient point is that this type of political arrangement, *ab initio*, made nonsense of both national unity and integration and correspondingly nation-building, since it became virtually impossible for the emerging Nigerian elites at that time to have a uniting forum where they could discuss the form and structure that their nascent country would take in the future.

Again, this initial arrangement also laid the foundation for ethnic and regional politics in Nigeria, which has largely proved the undoing of Nigeria’s political unity, stability and nation-building even as of today. This is so in the sense that from that time onward, leaders of various political parties always resorted to playing up either ethnic or regional sentiments in the political process, such as during national elections, census, etc., in order to favor one’s ethnic political base.

Finally, the *McPherson constitution* also cemented the lopsided nature of the Nigerian federal system of government, since it ensured that the northern region has ever remained non-proportionately greater than both the eastern and western regions put together (the South) in terms of land mass and geography. The point here is that, no thanks to that constitution, a culture of political disagreement with its concomitant violence and insecurity of lives and property has been inadvertently implanted in the political attitude and *modus operandi* of various ethnic nationalities that make up the entity called Nigeria. Thus, for example, the regional bent of the Constitution also encouraged the formation of political parties along tribal or ethnic affiliations. Consequently, the Nigerian political climate under that Constitution was characterized by rivalry between the Yoruba and the Igbo on the one hand, and the North versus the South political divides on the other. Hence, it is not hard to see that the pre-independence McPherson Constitution which, from all intents and purposes, sowed the seed of ‘divide-and-rule’ in Nigeria made the task of nation-building a herculean one.

Hence, for instance, at the dawn of the formation of political parties between 1948 and 1950, the Action Group (AG) was mainly for the people of the western region, the National Council of Nigerian Citizens and Cameroon (NCNC) was mainly for the people of eastern region, while the Nigerian Peoples Congress (NPC) was mainly domiciled in the northern region. The rivalry between the Yoruba and the Igbo played itself out at that period when Nnamdi Azikiwe was politically edged out of the western House of Assembly despite the fact that he had won a seat in Lagos and was *ipso facto* due to get elected into the western House of Representatives. In 1952 the division between the South (east and west) and North came to the fore in a bizarre form. The Northerners rightly perceived themselves as educationally backward vis-à-vis the Southerners and, therefore, insufficiently prepared for the proposed Nigeria’s independence that was meant to hold in 1956. Consequently, when Chief Anthony Enahoro tabled the motion for Nigeria’s independence in 1953, the
North understandably backed out of it. This angered the Southerners who manhandled some Northerners in the city of Lagos. To add salt to injury, when the AG undertook a tour of the North, ostensibly to sensitize the masses there on the need for the independence, it resulted in the Kano violent riots of 1953. The fact was that, at the instigation of the offended northern leaders, their followers rioted against the unwelcome “trespassers” from the South.

It then became obvious that the McPherson constitution was unworkable. Thus, another constitutional conference was held in London in 1954, where the resultant **Lyttelton Constitution** gave wide-ranging concessions to regional powers while en alarming a weak government at the center. The subsequent 1954 federal election was again won largely along regional and ethnic lines, although the NCNC won many seats in both the East and West. It was not until March 1957 that a unanimous decision was reached in respect of Nigeria’s independence. A motion was then moved on the floor of the House of Representatives signaling a unanimous agreement to have independence in 1959. Based on the resolution passed by the then elected NPC government of the Prime Minister, Alhaji Abubakar T. Belewa in 1959, the British agreed to allow Nigeria have political independence in 1960. While Dr. Azikiwe of the NCNC became the Senate President, Chief Awolowo of the AG became the opposition leader of the House.

Within the context of this write-up, it has to be underlined that the lopsidedness of the political and social structures that the British colonial master bequeathed to us in Nigeria simply sowed the seed of politically inspired communal, social and religious violence, which has mitigated against economic development, political stability and viable nation-building in Nigeria. This is because, the lopsided structure ensured that there would always be mutual suspicion and distrust among politicians and political parties, mutual struggle for political power and domination between the South and the North and recourse to politics of ethnic sentiments and loyalties among political leaders. It further gave rise to permanent disaffection among the culturally diverse peoples of the then three geo-political regions that made up Nigeria, which are detrimental to conscious efforts towards nation-building. Any wonder then that since her independence in 1960, Nigeria has witnessed series of both successful and unsuccessful military coups d’état, a tragic civil war (1967-1970), violence and insecurity in the form of ethnic, communal and religious conflicts, electoral violence (Western regional crisis of 1965), politically motivated killings and assassinations, etc.

### 1.3 Violence and Insecurity in the First Republic

In the first republic (1960-1966), by virtue of the already mentioned Lyttelton constitution that gave wide-ranging concessions to regional governments, these regional governments wielded enormous political power. Hence, they were able to call the shot from their regional spheres of influence since they enjoyed considerable political autonomy from the central government in the capital city of Lagos. There was bad governance at both the center and the regions. However, matters came to a head with the political crisis in the western region that became one of the proximate causes of the first military coup d’état in Nigeria that culminated in genocidal Nigeria–Biafra civil war that lasted from 1967 to 1970. This civil war saw the massacre and death of millions of innocent Nigerians from both sides of the war divide but especially from the eastern region. In effect, the first republic was aborted by a combination of violent factors in the form of military coup d’état
and counter coup d’état, ethnically inspired killings and counter killings, and a bitter fratricidal civil war.

1.4 Violence and Insecurity in the Second Republic

The end of the civil war in January 1970 ushered in the second republic. However, the seed of violence and insecurity sown in the colonial era before the independence (1960), and now watered in the first republic, has continued to germinate. Violence erupted again when General Gowon backpedaled in his promise to hand over political power to civilians in 1976 as he declared that proposed handover date to be “unrealistic”. Those who opposed him by insisting on the military disengagement from the Nigerian body politics as already scheduled were being quietly repressed. The growing disaffection both within the military establishments and among civilians that followed this backpedaling and the deteriorating general state of affairs in the country eventually led to the non-violent military coup d’état that toppled the military regime of Yakubu Gowon. As the monograph, Daily Times Historical Account of July 29th and After, puts it, “on Tuesday, July 29, 1975, a bloodless operation brought (General) Murtala Ramat Muhammed and his government to power.”

In his broadcast to the nation, Muhammed gave the fear that the nation would be engulfed in violence as one of the reasons for terminating the military regime of Gowon when he said that “the nation had been groping in the dark and the situation would inevitably result in chaos and bloodshed unless arrested.”

Ironically, Muhammed himself was to be later consumed by the same violence he had reason to pre-empt by the bloodless coup d’état of July 1975. For, on 13 February 1976, Lt. Col. B. S. Dimka and some dissident troops unleashed another act of violence on the country when they “struck and assassinated the head of State, General Murtala Muhammed.” At about 5.00pm the same day, the Federal Military Government announced to the restless nation that it had crushed a coup d’état attempt and that “the situation is under control, and the entire members of the armed forces and police remain totally loyal to the Federal Military Government.” At a second announcement, the nation was informed that the Supreme Military Council (SMC) “had decided unanimously to appoint Lt. Gen. Olusegun Obasanjo, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, as the new Head of the Federal Military Government and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces.”

The various political reforms initiated by Murtala Muhammed had already endeared him to many Nigerians. Therefore, it was understandable that many well meaning Nigerians saw the Dimka coup d’état as a reckless adventure and so called for the maximum penalty for its masterminds. The military court found 39 persons guilty of the assassination of Gen. Murtala Muhammed and they were executed. Having disposed of the major issues arising from the coup attempt, General Obasanjo announced a five-stage transition program for the country to follow, which would culminate in the political elections in the country and the handover to a civilian government on 1 October 1979.

Subsequently, the elections in this second republic were conducted as scheduled but the presidential election proved to be most controversial. It was mired in a legal tussle between the political flag bearer of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Shehu Shagari, and that of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Chief Obafemi Awolowo over the exact interpretation of what constituted ‘one quarter of the votes cast in each of at least two-thirds of all the states of the Federation,’ as stipulated in the 1979 Constitution, Section 26, 2 (a) & (b). In the end, the Federal Electoral Commission (FEDECO) declared Alhaji Shehu
Shagari the winner of the 1979 presidential election and, *ipso facto*, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. This did not go down well with the other four Presidential aspirants who threatened to use all legal means to challenge FEDECO’s declaration. Later, when the Election Tribunal rejected Awolowo’s complaint and submission, he headed for the Supreme Court that, nevertheless, upheld FEDECO’s interpretation in a majority decision of five against two.

In the context of this essay, the noteworthy point here is that despite the fact that Shagari was declared the winner of the election, the protracted legal struggle that followed it further overheated Nigeria’s political landscape thereby generating tension as politicians resorted to whipping up ethnic and regional sentiments that were further made worse by inter-party violence, insecurity and instability in the polity. All these eventually lead to the demise of the second republic. The other four political parties allied themselves against the ruling NPN at the center, and having control over many states in the Federation; they were able to make governance very difficult for NPN.

Again, intra-party conflict in the People’s Redemption Party (PRP) led to the impeachment of the governor of Kaduna State, Balaraba Musa, which resulted in violent riots in Kano in July 1981. The struggle for political power and for who controlled the wealth of the nation among the five political parties were to be worsened by the appointment of the so-called Presidential Liaison Officers in all the states of the Federation by the NPN-controlled Federal government. The other political parties perceived this as trouble-shooting by the NPN and this gave rise to further political intolerance and violence in the second republic. It is on record that violent conflict between the NPN and GNPP led to the death of 38 persons and injuries to 99 in Bornu State in May 1981.

In fact, politically inspired religious violence took a frightful dimension in the second republic. One recalls the Zaria religious violence. In a NCIR monograph, *The shadow of Religion on Nigerian Federalism: 1960-1993* (1993), Isawa Elaigwu has it on record that in the wake of violent religious riots that broke out in the second republic, “death tolls rose, innocent citizens were rendered homeless, properties were recklessly destroyed, sacred places of worships were vandalized and burnt, and security agencies were rendered impotent by the magnitude of violence unleashed by religious fanatics.” For instance, Nigerians cannot easily forget the religious riot that erupted between Dec. 18 and 29 1980, which was masterminded by the Maitatsine religious sect. This riot resulted in the burning down of State Government Secretariat, Radio Kano, the death of over 4, 000 persons, and the general damages to properties worth millions of naira. A careful understudy of some of the causes of violence in Nigeria at this period would suggest that the NPN as a political party in power, under the Shehu Shagari civilian administration, developed a penchant for exploiting religious sentiments for political aggrandizement thereby making public peace and harmony an uphill task for them to maintain. Consequently, politico-religiously inspired violence and insecurity became high among other factors, like official corruption, unemployment, mismanagement of the economy, misappropriation of public fund, etc., which brought about the eventual collapse of Shagari administration in the second republic. On December 31, 1983, Brigadier Sani Abacha announced a successful military coup d’état against Shagari’s government and Gen. Buhari became the military President of Nigeria.
1.5 Violence and Insecurity in the Third Republic

The coup d’état of Dec. 1983 brought into power the Buhari-Idiagbo military regime which lasted from 1983-1985. This military regime ushered in the third republic, which would later be continued by the regime of General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida. In terms of violence and insecurity of human lives, the Buhari-Idiagbon regime acquired its notoriety for the brutal ‘killing of three drug suspects under a retroactive decree passed by Generals Buhari and Idiagbon’ despite all entreaties from human right activists and some well-meaning Nigerians. There was also a violent attempt by the regime to bring back from Britain one of the political arrow-heads in Shagari civilian regime, Umaru Dikko. But for the eagle-eyed Scott yard police in London, Umaru Dikko would have been forcefully brought back to Nigeria in a container to answer massive corruption charges against him. This was opposed to the ethic of international diplomacy. Ironically, it is still being speculated that it was the determination of the Buhari-Idiagbon regime to investigate and punish one of Ibrahim Babangida’s protégés for cocaine pushing that resulted in the overthrow of their regime by Babangida in a palace coup d’état in 1985. A culture of violence became really entrenched in Nigeria’s body politic and really reached its apogee in this third republic during the military dictatorship of President Ibrahim Babangida.

After overthrowing the military regime of Buhari-Idiagbon, Babangida started off a detailed political transition program to return the country to liberal democratic rule in 1990. He, however, kept dribbling the nation by shifting the transition program from one date to another. From the first deadline of 1990, he invoked a new deadline of 1992, and later to January 1993. When this date came around, Babangida not only kicked out the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) but also appointed a civilian-led Transitional Council. Subsequently, he announced for the third time a new handover deadline to be August 1993. All these shifts of political handover dates were a recipe for violence, since not only that politicians were becoming very impatient but the general masses were also growing restless and disenchanted with the whole political process. Suffice it to emphasize here that Babangida’s penchant for tinkering with his transition program ended up with the ill-advised and unfortunate annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, which unleashed untold violence on the country. In short, Babangida’s era will always be remembered by Nigerians as one characterized by frightening pockets of violence and insecurity in the form of official intimidation, arbitrary arrests, detentions, human right violations, bloody coup attempts by opponents of his government, politically motivated assassinations and executions. For instance, the 1990 Major Gideon Orka’s coup d’état attempt saw the execution by firing squad of many military officers involved in the coup.

In fact, violence and insecurity took a bizarre turn in Nigeria during Babangida’s era with the gruesome murder of one of the foremost journalists in the country, Mr. Dele Giwa, on October 19, 1986 with a parcel bomb. Furthermore, the CLO Annual Report on Human Rights in Nigeria, 1993 (1994), recalls the extra judicial killings by the police of Dr. Nwogu Okere and Oko-Oba massacre in area of Agege in Lagos State in 1991, and Col. Ezra Rindam’s murder by the police in 1992, and a police murder of two brothers, Saka and Sule Dawodu in Idumagba in Lagos, in November 1987.10

Apart from the aforementioned spates of violence arising from military coup d’état, assassination of political opponents both within and outside political parties and extra judicial killings by the police, tension and communal violence were important features
during the Babangida era. In his contributory essay in *New Strategies for Curbing Ethnic & Religious Conflicts in Nigeria*, Dauda Abubakar corroborates this assertion when he observes that “the Babangida era marked a threshold not only because of the annulment of the June 12 presidential election and the derailment of the transition to democracy, but, above all, it was a period during which authoritarian tendencies were entrenched in the state apparatuses, repression was intensified, while civil society degenerated into poverty, ethnic and religious violence. The period brought to the limelight the dangers of ethnoregional politics, and religious bigotry in the context of the National Question within Nigeria.”

For instance, one particularly recalls here the communal violence in respect of the Ogoni and Zango-Kataf cases. The Ogoni people were trying to agitate for a faire share of the oil wealth being mined in their land. As contained in their *Ogoni Bill of Rights*, they demanded from the Babangida regime, among other things, “the right to the control and use of a fare proportion of Ogoni economic resources for Ogoni development”. As the CLO Annual Report on Human Rights in Nigeria, 1993, observes, “rather than engage the Ogonis in a constructive dialogue with a view to resolving the minority agitations, the government resorted to high-handed tactics” by drafting troops to give security to oil companies thereby provoking “violent clashes between the soldiers and the Ogonis.”

This eventually led to frequent violent demonstrations, arrests and detentions in the minority enclave, and the eventual death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni leaders and activists by hanging during the Abacha military regime.

The May 1992 communal violence in Zango-Kataf in Kaduna State was another case in point in the history of violence in Nigeria. There were three days violent clashes between the people of Kataf and the Hausa community following a controversy over the plan to relocate the Zango-Kataf market in Zango-Kataf LGA of Kaduna State. The aftereffects of the violence saw 84 people killed, about 100 seriously injured and properties worth thousands of naira ruined. In short, following its chronicles of communal violence during the third republic, the *Tell* magazine (May 25, 1992) observed that “the almost seven-year-old Babangida regime has had more than enough share of violent protests and crises that have plagued the country since the advent of military rule.”

In a brief rundown of various forms of communal violence and “mindless bloodletting caused by ethnic and religious differences” that continue to be one of the banes of Nigeria’s socio-economic advancement, political stability and march to nationhood, the same *Tell* magazine records the following violent communal riots and demonstrations that took place during the Babangida’s military regime between May 1986 and May 1992: the student demonstration at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria (May 1986) that saw “the death of five people in the university community”; the religious riots which erupted in Kafanchan (March 1987) and “spread through Funtua, Zaria and Kaduna leaving in its wake massive destruction of both lives and properties”; the nation-wide student unrest that originated at the University of Jos (April 10, 1988) “in protest over hike in fuel prices resulting in mangled bodies and charred remains of what were once government properties”; in March 1991, the suffering of Nigerians occasioned by the Structural Adjustment Program, SAP, that lack human face led to ‘peaceful campus demonstrations by university students that later ignited a nation-wide violent protest during which some lives and properties worth millions of naira were destroyed’; an innocuous reference to Prophet Mohammed in a *Daily Times* publication (March 1989) angered the Shiites Islamic sect and led to “a mindless orgy of violence”; the attempt by the German preacher,
Reinhard Bonnke, to hold a one-week open air religious revival in Kano at the invitation of the Christian Association of Nigeria, CAN (October 1991), was met with a spontaneous eruption of violence (over the motive of the revival) in which “hundreds of people were killed while properties and businesses worth millions of naira were destroyed”. In Jalingo, capital of Taraba State (March 1992), ‘a little quarrel between Christian female students and their Muslim counterparts at the Government College over the Muslim students’ use of water for ablution led to a violent clash between students on the campus in which many lives were lost and many government and private properties were reduced to ashes’. In May 1992, several weeks of fuel scarcity led to an increase in transport fares in various towns and cities in Nigeria, which subsequently resulted in a sharp increase in the prices of all consumer goods. Reactions to the economic hardships occasioned by the price hikes (May 4, 13, and 14) culminated “in bloody confrontations with drivers and security agents” in Lagos, Edo, Ogun and Cross River States and in all these violent clashes “it was the same story of death and destruction.”

Violence in relation to party politics based on violent confrontations among political parties, fraudulent manipulation of political opponents in election processes, and the consequent struggle either to retain power or to wrestle it from perceived opponents appeared to have been both widely entrenched in the third republic as well as in the regimes that arose after its collapse. Writing on “Wild, Wild Politics” in Tell magazine, Nosa Igiebor and co-staff writers made what would pass for a political forecast, namely, that “physical confrontations, bare-faced intrigues and fraudulent tactics to outwit political opponents seem to be sounding the knell for a Third Republic that is still in its infancy.”

It came to pass in line with their forecast, since it was ‘bare-faced political intrigues and fraudulent tactics’ that culminated in the mindless annulment of June 12, 1992 presidential election largely judged to be the freest and fairest election ever held in Nigeria. The concomitant violent reactions from the opposing coalition of democratic forces in the country, especially the NEDECO, finally forced Babangida on his knees politically, thereby bringing his despotic military regime to an abrupt end. In any case, violence did not abate in Nigeria’s body polity with the “stepping aside” of General Babandida. In fact, there was a heightened sense of tension and violence during the subsequent absolute military rule of General Sani Abacha, which reached its apogee in the ‘judicial murder’ of human rights activist, Ken Soro-Wiwa and eight others in Ogoni land, by hanging, and the imprisonment of numerous political opponents like Shehu Yardua and Olusegun Obasanjo on trumped up charges of coup-plotting against his regime. Ironically, General Abacha was to be consumed latter by political intrigues and violence at the height of his maximum rule in Nigeria. However, the crux of the matter is that unwholesome political practices more often than not give rise to violence and instability in the polity, which always prove the undoing of any regime and any effort at nation-building. Put differently, violence that is often rooted in naked political intrigues, fraudulent practices, and organized political brigandage is an ill wind that blows no good to anybody but especially to people in government in any regime. More importantly, violence remains a serious obstacle to any effort at nation-building since it is a great impediment towards forging a heterogeneous people into one nation.

1.6 Violence and Insecurity in the Fourth Republic
Seen from the above perspective, the civilian regime of President Olusegun Obasanjo in the 4th republic had found itself in trouble during its second term in office. This was because, most people in Nigeria believed that the regime was born out of the 2003 fraudulent electioneering tactics and bare-faced malpractices, such as intimidation of political opponents through the overwhelming presence of armed forces on the streets on the voting day as well as massive vote-rigging, etc. All these deliberate and unconscionable acts of abuse of democratic process conspired to put the political legitimacy of Obasanjo’s civilian regime under serious question. John Okwoze Odey captures the general attitude of well-meaning Nigerians towards especially the presidential election of 2003 in his book, This Madness called Election 2003. Describing the nature of violence that characterized that election, Odey partly observes that “hundreds of thousands of the Nigerian army, the police and hooded political thugs were armed to the teeth and were let loose on innocent citizens in the name of keeping peace and ensuring free and fair elections” and, from all intents and purposes, this bizarre action was unfortunately orchestrated “to compel people to submission over the unprecedented electoral malpractices that characterized the whole charade.”

Gen. Obasanjo’s administration as civilian president could best be described as a reign of terror within which violence and hardship were celebrated at different parts of country. Describing the violence situation in Plateau State during that regime, Emeka Alex Duru of The Source magazine observes: “in a manner reminiscent of a deadly gangrene, violence has eaten into the very soul of the tin city state. In place of its legendary peace and harmony, confusion, uncertainty and blood-letting have taken over.” As Duru draws our attention further in the same magazine, the consequent state of emergency being unconstitutionally imposed on Plateau State on May 18, 2004, by President Obasanjo, really “marked a turning point in weeks of tension resulting from an orgy of violence in the Plateau south senatorial district”. Sabath Abiodun in the Insider Weekly recorded how anarchy appeared to have descended on the land going by the spate of politically motivated violent killings in Kogi State. Writing on this, Abiodun noted that “the political game plan of Kogi State witnessed a dangerous dimension on Wednesday 3, March 2004, when a former Caretaker Committee Chairman of Bassa Local Government Area of the State, Honourable Luke Shigaba was murdered at Sheria village, his country home at about 2 o’clock in the morning. Also on Sunday 7, March 2004 at about 3 am, the Chairman of the State Independent Electoral Commission (KOSIEC), Chief Philip Eniolorunda Olorunnipa was mowed down by assassins at his Edumo-Bunu residence in the outskirt of Kaba in Kabba-Bunu local government area of the State.” In a similar line of thought, concerning the spates of violence in Kano, Kaduna, and Plateau States vis-à-vis the apparent Federal Government’s lackadaisical attitude in tackling them, Julius Ogunro speaks the minds of most Nigerians when he succinctly observes in the Insider Weekly magazine that:

Nigeria may be on the way to perdition as terror groups masking as religious sects cause fear and mayhem in the north while the Federal government plays the Ostrich.

Again, George Mbah in the Insider Weekly magazine also rightly pointed out that even before these aforementioned violent killings and assassinations, violence had already reached its callous and frightening heights in the Obasanjo civilian democratic regime.
when policemen “raze Odi village in Rivers State and killing most of the natives for the death of a few police men on duty there” (presumably to provide security to foreign oil companies and their workers), and also, with “the massacre and burning down of Zaki-Biam villages by soldiers on revenge mission for the killing of a few soldiers on peacekeeping operation in the area.”

Is not the same thing happening today in Benue and Plateau States, where the alleged death of a few soldiers on military operation has resulted to a reprisal murder of many innocent civilians by armed soldiers? Regrettably, the unresolved mystery surrounding the assassination of Dele Giwa has already made it possible that perpetrators of similar high profile violent assassinations get away with them in Nigeria today. The salient issue in question is how one can seriously think of nation-building in a country where government authorities are abating and condoning these spates of violent killing of innocent citizens of various ethnic nationalities that are supposed to be welded into one nation?

Piqued by the apparent lack of clues to the incessant acts of violence in the land, there were open accusations leveled against the then ruling political party, the People’s Democratic Party (PDP), during the time of President Olusegun Obasanjo that it was breeding “a killer nest” within its fold. Hence, referring to the gruesome assassination of Bola Ige and others in the country at that time, George Mbah (2004) wrote in the same Insider Weekly magazine that:

The fear of assassination totally seized the land ever since, and Nigerians have come to know that heinous crimes could easily touch the top echelon of the society, and could be sponsored by some of them.

It is pertinent to recall here a few of such heinous and violent wastage of human lives in Nigeria. In The Source (March 2004), Oamudiamen Ogbonmwan recapitulated the following violent attempts on the lives of some political heavyweights, which are traceable to either inter-party or intra-party conflicts, the then Benue State Governor, George Akume, who narrowly escaped death. Both the National Chairman of the PDP Audu Ogbe and the Senate President Adolphus Wabara expressed shock, sadness and utter dismay over the attempted assassination of Benue State Governor. Ogbonmwan also (2004) recalled that ‘the National Vice Chairman of the PDP (South-south zone), Amino K. Dikibo, was sent to the great beyond when armed men waylaid him on his way to Asaba, the Delta State capital, to attend a meeting of PDP, South-south zone. On December 23, 2001, the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice, Bola Ige, was assassinated in his residence in Ibadan, Oyo State, who was perceived to have had plans to resign his post in the PDP-controlled Federal government. In February 2004, Marshal Harry, National Vice Chairman, South-south zone of the All Nigerian People’s Party (ANPP) was killed in his Abuja residence. In December 2003, Dora Akunyili, Director General of the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) survived armed attack in Anambra State despite Police escort.’

The killers of these politicians are yet to be identified and the political violence continues unabated in our contemporary Nigeria. Whenever political violence is seriously discussed in Nigeria, one cannot fail to recall the shameful PDP intra-party squabbles and in-fighting culminating in series of brutal murders and attempted abduction of a sitting governor of a State. In addition, “Anambra State witnessed the murder on September 1,
2002 of Barnabas Igwe, chairman of Nigeria Bar Association, NBA, and his pregnant wife.” The already mentioned intra-party power struggles that have culminated in political assassination of fellow party members in the ruling party, the PDP, took a bizarre turn in more than two unsuccessful attempts to abduct and violently unseat the Governor of Anambra State, Dr. Chris Ngige. This state of affair is certainly not a recipe for constructing a nation out of diverse citizens. On the contrary, these acts of violence and insecurity of life push the country to the brink of total disintegration.

Section II

INSECURITY IN NIGERIA IN RECENT YEARS

In recent years, there is a wide spread of insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria. General insecurity is almost becoming synonymous with the name ‘Nigeria.’ It has become a hydra-headed monster which has made nonsense of the idea of nation-building in Nigeria, since it has rendered the country very unprogressive and underdeveloped. According to Ewetan, “security is a concept that is prior to the state, and the state exists in order to provide that concept.” The provision of security of life and property is the primary responsibility of the state. Nigeria’s Constitution also provides that primary function of the government is the protection of lives and property of the citizens. Thus, one can view security as the degree of protection of citizens from danger, damage, loss or crime, and it entails the presence of an atmosphere that is conducive for the pursuit of legitimate individual, group or national interests.

The alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria today has engendered an increase in crime rate and the consequent retardation in the socio-economic development of our country. Nevertheless, as a concomitance of violence, insecurity has different dimensions such as political, religious, economic and ethnic. Consequently, the origin, types, causes, effects and possible solutions to the menace of insecurity in Nigeria, together with the arduous task before the incumbent democratic government of General Muhammadu Buhari will constitute the focus of this section of our write-up.

2.1 Types and Causes of Insecurity

As we had mentioned above in relation to violence, the origin and causes of insecurity in Nigeria is traceable to the way and manner in which different ethnic independent nationalities in Nigeria were merged together to form an independent country. Consequently, the unity of the country has been severely threatened by ethnic rivalry and insecurity of lives and property since independence in 1960. From the foregoing observations, one can allude to different types of insecurity arising from political, economic, religious and ethnic rivalries. Thus, as we had earlier observed, Nigeria, right from birth, has undergone a lot of political insecurity occasioned by military coup d’états, political thuggery, election riggings, assassinations, arsons, and kidnappings. These ugly conditions continue to worsen due to government’s lack of political will to deal decisively with all perpetrators of violence and insecurity in our country. Economic insecurity revolves around unemployment for Nigeria’s teeming population of youths, lack of job creation by various tiers of government, poor remuneration of workers, economic and financial crimes, corruptions, which continue to impoverish the ordinary folks in Nigeria.

Ethnic insecurity stems from the constant mutual suspicion and distrust among various major and minor ethnic components of Nigeria. Lastly, religious insecurity is a type of
insecurity that results from lack of mutual understanding and trust among leaders and adherents of various religious traditions in Nigeria. Consequently, there are often violent religious clashes between the two dominant religions, Christianity and Islam, in Nigeria. In fact, not a few Christians believe that the quest for religious dominance by Moslems in Nigeria has largely given rise to the extremely violent activities of the Boko Haram Islamic sect in recent years in our country.

Thus, Nigeria is currently facing the insecurity challenge to nation-building posed by this deadly Boko Haram religious sect. Benji Drazen gives a good description of the Boko Haram Islamic sect and its activities as follows:

Boko Haram is the Hausa name for The Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad. It is a group and militant organization based in the northeast of Nigeria, north Cameroon and Niger. Founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, the organization seeks to establish a "pure" Islamic state ruled by sharia, putting a stop to what it deems Westernization. The group is known for attacking Christians, Muslims and government targets, bombing churches, mosques, schools and police stations, and kidnapping western tourists, but has also assassinated members of the Islamic establishment who have condemned their operations over the years. Violence linked to the Boko Haram insurgency has resulted in an estimated 10,000 deaths between 2002 and 2013. The group's main leader is Abubakar Shekau.25

The crux of the matter is that the generally poisoned atmosphere of violence and insecurity in any country certainly militates against socio-economic progress and development of the country and, most importantly, constitutes serious challenges towards nation-building in particular.

2.2 Aftermaths of Violence and Insecurity

The socio-political and economic landscape of Nigeria has been harmed by endemic acts of violence, which has given rise to different forms of insecurity of lives and property. Since the last three years of the civilian administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, there has been a dramatic rise in the wave, dynamics and sophistication of violence and insecurity in Nigeria. Insecurity, which used to be one of the lowest concerns in the hierarchy of Nigeria’s social problems, has now assumed an alarming proportion under this civilian regime. As earlier mentioned, these different forms of insecurity are laden with lots of effects in the society, such as reduction in economic activity and foreign income earning; impediment to progress and development of Nigeria, and obstacle to serious nation-building.

2.2.1 Reduction in economic activity

Due to the general insecurity in the country, economic activities in Nigeria have reduced drastically, because the lives of foreign investors as well as their investments in Nigeria are constantly threatened and are in jeopardy. Again, the general insecurity scares away those foreign investors because the existing insecure atmosphere is not conducive to stable work and business transactions. A. A. Adejumo observes that the general atmosphere of violence and insecurity “would, therefore, impact on the general human security of the people as the situation promotes fear, while at the same time limiting the peoples’ ability to develop economically. At the same time, the state’s capacity to attract investors becomes limited as a result of the insecurity.”26 Those states that have huge tourism potential would
be losing out on this front, since tourists would not like to risk their lives by visiting countries that are notorious for insecurity.

### 2.2.2 Insecurity impedes development of Nigeria

C. I. Douglas observes that every average reasonable Nigerian will agree that insecurity accounts for about 70% of the level of underdevelopment that is experienced in the country. Insecurity hampers the development of the country. The reason is that the money that would have been used in developing critical sectors of the economy is channeled towards efforts to combat violence and general insecurity. Also, many people in labour markets, such as artisans and unskilled workers in factories, industries and private enterprises are prevented from working due to insecure environments. This drastically affects the amount of money that is realized from corporate taxes that these groups should normally pay for the development of the country. Folarin and Oviasogie underline that the overall negative impact of insecurity in Nigeria is that it leads to collateral damage on the peace, stability, development, sovereignty of the state, and effort towards nation-building.

### Section III

#### NATION-BUILDING

### 3. Efforts towards Nation-Building

If Nigerian leaders are serious towards nation-building, they must evolve deliberate strategies to effectively checkmate all manner of violence, criminality, insurgency, invasion of communities by violent herdsmen, and activities of militant groups that exacerbate insecurity in Nigeria. We know the government in recent times has used military interventions such as Operation Lafiya Dole in the North-East, Operation Python Dance in the South-East, Operation Crocodile Smile in the South-South, and Operation Cat Race in the North-Central states in order to combat violence and insecurity in Nigeria. But these are ad hoc measures that are often counterproductive in respect of nation-building. This is because many communities often feel alienated from the government and very angry because of the shoddy, brutal, partial or lopsided manners in which the military appear to execute these operations. It is being suggested that long term measures, such as the national Youth Service scheme, basic military training and civic education of citizens should be incorporated into the extra-curriculum studies in secondary schools and Universities in order to create the desired basic defense skills among citizens and inculcate national consciousness, patriotism, discipline and the values of hard work and selflessness in the youths, the leaders of tomorrow. These deliberate measures will help to create a sense of belonging in citizens, which is one of the very vital ingredients of nation-building.

On this S.F. Folarin & F.O. Oviasogie opines: Nigeria as a country desperately needs to adopt and follow strictly a viable political ideology. An ideology is a system of ideas, values and beliefs, especially forming the basis of a country’s social, economic and political affairs. Each political party in Nigeria that seeks political power must first have a viable political ideology. From this perspective, we suggest that the salaries of political office holders be reduced considerably to make such positions less attractive. For example, recent findings appear to show that Nigerian lawmakers at both the state and federal levels are the highest paid in the world. If such over-bloated salaries are reduced, such positions will only appeal to those who actually have the flare and zeal to serve the people.
this is implemented, the money realized from the reduction will be channeled towards resolving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria.

Moreover, ensuring that Nigerian children and youths get quality formal education is paramount in resolving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria. The reason is that when most citizens in both southern and northern Nigeria are literate and well educated, they will be empowered to be more gainfully productive; when this happens, insecurity will be drastically reduced. The former US President, Bill Clinton, gave credence to this view when he visited Abeokuta in 2013. He observed that “the Federal Government should tackle the myriads of problems, including insecurity, facing the nation by making universal education available to the youth as well as addressing the problem of poverty.”

3.1 Task before the Federal Government
With reference to the spate of violence and insecurity in the present day Nigeria, a Vanguard Comment (2018) pointedly observed that “it is beyond debate that Nigerians are being slaughtered everyday in their local communities.” The editorial comment goes further to observe that

…never had Nigerians faced the scale of wanton destruction of lives and property being faced now. From the Boko Haram Islamist terrorists in the North-East, cattle rustlers in the North-West to armed herdsmen in the Middle Belt and Southern states. Also, kidnappings for ransom, jailbreaks, killer cult groups and daring bank robberies have dramatically spiked of late.

Referring particularly to the so-called “clashes” between herdsmen and farmers, Bashir Bello noted that even the Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Boss Mustapha, admitted publicly that “within the last few months, we have recorded a total of over 30 incidences which have claimed lives of more than 257 persons within this year alone.”

Thus, the former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon and Bayelsa State Governor, Seriake Dickson, “described as worrisome, the widespread insecurity and killings in the country.” Gowon said that “the activities of militant groups, Boko Haram and the killings perpetrated by herdsmen, were of serious concern to the leaders, elders and, indeed, the citizens.”

Based on the gloomy picture painted above, it is undeniable that the first and urgent task before Nigerian political leaders today, particularly the current elected President, Muhammadu Buhari, revolves around arresting and checkmating immediately the fast degenerating situation of violence and general insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria. In fact, the situation of violence and insecurity in the country has degenerated so much that the Senators of the Federal Republic of Nigeria recently blamed the Federal Government publicly for not showing meaningful efforts to curtail insecurity. Thus, as reported by Kingsley Omonobi & Henry Umoru, the Senators said:

We are also worried that despite the killings in Benue, Kaduna, Kogi, Zamfara and other parts of Nigeria (which occurred within a spate of a short period of February to April 2018), and of course, the Boko Haram mayhem in the North-East, coupled with the daily nationally spread cases of sophisticated killings, deadly clashes, armed robberies, kidnappings, cattle rustling and other heinous crimes, where hitherto unavailable firearms are used, meaningful effort is not
seen to be done on the part of the government to curtail the proliferation of firearms in Nigeria.\textsuperscript{36}

It suffices here to give a few examples of recent killings in different parts of the country. In the attack on Kaduna community, Ben Agande reported that “no fewer than 48 bodies have been recovered from Gwaska village in Birnin Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, following Saturday attack on the community by bandits.”\textsuperscript{37} In the attacks in Benue and Nassarawa States, Rose Ejembi & Linus Oota noted that “at least 37 persons were reportedly killed, several others injured and some still missing after suspected herdsmen attacked three council wards in Guma Local Government Areas of Benue State. Seven others were killed in a separate attack in Nassarawa State.”\textsuperscript{38} Ndahi Marama, Peter Duru & Boluwaji Obahopo also reported how “no fewer than 16 persons were, yesterday, killed in Bama, Bornu State, and Kpanche in Basa Local Government Area of Kogi State. While four persons were killed in suicide bombing in a mosque in Bama, including the two suicide bombers, with 10 others sustaining injuries, 12 were slaughtered at Kpanche in inter-communal conflicts.”\textsuperscript{39}

As we were about to end this chronicle of violence and insecurity in Nigeria, it is important that we yet refer to a reported incident of massacre of people in Plateau state. According to Yinka Odumakin:

Plateau State was thrown into mourning with the killing of 86 persons
(by police admission) and over 200 by eyewitnesses (more believable)
in the attacks on about 11 communities in the Gashish District by
suspected Fulani herdsmen.\textsuperscript{40}

Funny enough, the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) claimed that these most recent remorseless attacks on the communities in Plateau State were ‘an act of retaliation over the killing of 300 cows belonging to its members.’ Thus, considering the general spate of violence and insecurities in the country, Segun Awofadeji observes that the Nigeria Labour Congress in Bauchi State has concretely appealed to the government of General Muhammadu Buhari “to tackle issues of insecurity, unemployment, poverty and corruption, saying that there were high expectations from the populace of the country....”\textsuperscript{41} Moreover, Stephen Chukwujekwu insists that government has the task of fighting “political violence that is rooted in naked political intrigues, fraudulent practices, and organized political brigandage.”\textsuperscript{42} Hence, reacting to the recent killing of two Catholic priests and seventeen other worshippers in a Church by herdsmen in Benue, the director of Muslim Rights Concern (MURIC), Professor Ishaq Akintola echoes the same point in these words:

We implore the Federal Government to do everything possible to stop the carnage in the country, particularly in Benue and Taraba. Human life is sacred; only Allah, the Supreme Creator, has the right to take what He gave; therefore, killing for vengeance, religious or ethnic reason is not only primitive but also sinful.\textsuperscript{43}

Emeka Mamah & Sam Eyoboka reported that the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria reacted in condemnation of the killings and gave the directive that “every Diocese in Nigeria should organize a peaceful demonstration/rally against the barbaric but intolerable killing of two priests and 17 others by herdsmen last month in Benue, Date May 22, 2018.”\textsuperscript{44}
The general insecurity in Nigeria today is very detrimental towards building a strong and united nation. The federal government has the task of ruthlessly dealing with all manner of violence and insecurity which has assumed debilitating proportions in the last few years. If the lives and property of citizens are not secure, they will not cooperate in the important task of nation-building.

3.2 Focus on making Nigerian a Nation

We have earlier mentioned above that the first task facing Nigerian political leaders, particularly the current Federal Government headed by President Muhammadu Buhari, revolves around arresting and putting under check and control the degenerating condition of violence and general insecurity of lives and property that have bedeviled Nigeria as an emerging democratic country. Nevertheless, we believe that the most important task before our political leaders today is that of taking conscious steps to build Nigeria into a nation. Put differently, Nigerian leaders should be focusing now seriously towards making Nigeria a united nation where citizens live in peace and harmonious co-existence. This is because no meaningful social, economic and political developments and progress will take root in Nigeria until our political leaders get their priorities right. In this line of thought, Aare Afe Babalola rightly observes that Nigerian politicians should give little attention to “those matters which in my estimation are the most necessary for any meaningful attempt at development. While it is good to formulate economic and social policies and tout them as panacea for many ills troubling this country, the hard truth is that without getting the basics right, we will continue to go round in circles.” Thus, we agree with Babalola that “the most important task which our leaders should concern themselves with now is how to make Nigeria a true nation.” He agrees with our earlier point of view that “a lot of problems plaguing us as a new country have their foundation in the arbitrary partitioning of Africa.” For, as he rightly observes, in the wake of the European Scramble for Africa, “some 10, 000 African polities had been amalgamated into forty European colonies and protectorates. Thus were born the modern states of Africa,” including Nigeria. Hence Babalola is of the view that it is arguable that:

The most difficult task facing Africa’s new leaders was to weld into nations variety of different peoples, speaking different languages and at different stages of political and social development. The new states of Africa were not ‘nations’. They possessed no ethnic, class or ideological cement to hold them together; no strong historical and social identities upon which to build.

In the light of the above observation, the onus lies on the incumbent President of Nigeria (Buhari) to take urgent and drastic measures aimed at arresting the worsening conditions of violence and insecurity in Nigeria today, since they threaten the unity and corporate existence of the country and constitute a great challenges to nation-building.

4. Evaluation and Conclusion

The general condition of violence and insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria is a strong sign of a chaotic country where all manners of violence hold sway. This is firmly fertilized by corruption and suitably sponsored by most political powerbrokers in the country. Consequently, we advocate that the conditions of violence and insecurity of lives and property in which we find ourselves today really requires urgent action on the part of our political leaders. It also requires serious moral re-orientation and attitudinal change by both
public office-holders and ordinary citizens. Consequently, mental reconfiguration founded on education, grass root reformation and mobilization of citizens are quite imperative, so far as the successive governments will be very firmly decisive, humanely sensitive, deeply honest and highly capable of managing the political affairs of our country. Without these, Nigeria will continue to be at a loss in terms of dealing with sources of violence and insecurity of lives and property, and ensuring a coordinated march towards building a virile Nigerian nation.

From all we have seen above, one can agree with us that Nigeria at its conception as a country was congenitally impregnated with political violence which later became a recurrent decimal in the form of military coup d’etats, political election violence emanating from gangsterism and vote riggings, blood-shilling assassination of political opponents, ethnic and religious tensions and mindless wastage of lives and property. Put differently, at the heart of violence and general insecurity in Nigeria lies fundamentally the bad will of our British colonial master in its bid to achieve its hidden agenda for exploiting Nigeria’s natural resources through ‘divide and rule’ tactics among different ethnic nationalities that make up Nigeria. This hidden agenda later became ever manifest in the form of insincerity in formulating and drafting the nation’s Constitution, lopsided geo-political structure, a penchant for all manner of injustice and inequity in the exploitation of both human and natural resources, unjust distribution of the nation’s income and wealth, inter-ethnic tensions and rivalries. As Bonnie Iwuoha observes in *The Source*, the truth of the matter is that, if peace and political stability that would of necessity lead to meaningful social and economic development can be achieved in Nigeria, “we must therefore keep violence and useless destruction out of our national life.”

Therefore, since it has become very clear to all honest Nigerians that our present post-natal violent tendencies are structurally rooted in our pre-natal encumbrances of the past, we need to apply a ‘surgical operation’ in order to sever the umbilical cord that connects our present unworkable political structures with our primordial past mistakes. Stephen Chukwujekwu would associate himself with the “many calls for a sovereign national conference that would enable Nigerians to decide how they wanted to live together as a diverse people in one nation.” At that time, President Olusegun Obasanjo and his image-makers in Aso Rock appeared to be the only people who did not see the rationale for convening such a national forum for public dialogue aimed at resolving Nigeria’s intractable ‘national questions’ that largely accounted for the deepening social and political violence and insecurity in our land. It was rightly argued that holding such a national face-to-face public conversation among our ethnic nationalities would undoubtedly contribute to the unity of the nation since the aim was to give back to Nigerians a true sense of belonging and a reassurance of their fundamental personal dignity as citizens of Nigeria, thereby regenerating in them a new faith in the corporate existence of Nigeria as a just and socially egalitarian society composed of a plurality of ethnic nationalities and a diversity of religious traditions. Later, and to his credit, President Goodluck Ebere Jonathan heard the calls and carefully organized a national conference in 2014 whose laudable outcomes are yet to be put into good use towards building a true nation of our dream. It is most unfortunate that President Muhammadu Buhari had dismissed the idea of using the fruits of that 2014 conference with a wave of hand, and publicly vowed not to touch the compiled proceedings of the conference nor implement some good aspects of its resolutions.
Consequently, Nigeria has continued to wobble on and to be bedeviled by deepening acts of violence and insecurity of lives and property to date.

After observing in its 2009 communiqué that Nigeria is not a nation, the Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) underlined that “a nation is not just a geographical space. It is an aggregate of people who live a common life rooted in and inspired by common ideals and core values, a common life in which the dignity of every human person is respected.”\(^5\) Thus, the Bishops remind all citizens, but especially the political leaders, that the task of nation-building demands the promotion of peace, reconciliation and tolerance in the country. For, as they pointedly observe:

Each time we witness ethnic and religious conflicts, each time we hold elections lacking in credibility, we lose opportunities to build a nation.
Each time the people of our richly endowed land are impoverished through acts of violation of fundamental human rights, each time we make or fall victims of injustice, bribery and corruption, we lose opportunities to build a nation.\(^5\)

In the light of the above fatherly advice of the Catholic Church leaders, Innocent Dim stresses the need to allow reason to contribute to nation-building with love and confidence. He rightly observes that “reason helps nations to respect human life, treat others as you would wish to be treated … It is only with reason that one can perceive the importance and relationship between peace and justice in national building.”\(^5\) The march to nationhood is an arduous task. It demands strong political leadership on the part of those entrusted with political governance, and constructive followership on the part of citizens of a country. There is need for our political leaders to always have strong political will to do the right thing at the right moment. Otherwise, there will be no end in sight to the current spates of violence and insecurity of lives and property in Nigeria that have become the bane of peace, stability, harmonious coexistence, real development and progress towards nationhood. One agrees with the views of many well-meaning Nigerians and the leaders of different socio-political groups in the country ‘on the imperative for a new and visionary leadership’ to take Nigeria out of its present conditions of violence and insecurity of lives and property that constitute great challenges towards building a viable, stable and united nation. Such a visionary leadership will surely appreciate that the only way to build a great nation of our dream is to construct it on the foundations of peace, justice, equity, fairness, high moral standard, and rule of law.

ENDNOTES

3 See the Wikipedia (edited on 4 March 2018).
6 Ibid., 11.
7 Ibid., 14.
8 Ibid., 16.
13 See Tell (May 25, 1992), 18.
14 Ibid.
16 John Okwuese Odey, This Madness called Election 2003 (Enugu: Snaap Press Limited, 2003), 16-17.
18 Sabath Abiodun, in Insider Weekly (March 22, 2004), 22.
19 See Julius Ogunro, in Insider Weekly (June 14, 2004), 18 (Italics & bold mine, as emphasis).
20 George Mbah, in Insider Weekly (June 7, 2004), 17.
21 Ibid.
22 See Oamudiamen Ogbonmwan, in The Source (March 15, 2004), 25.
23 George Mbah, in Insider Weekly (March 22, 2004), 17.
31 Editorial Comment, “Service chiefs and killings in the land,” in Vanguard (Friday April 20, 2018), 18.
32 Ibid.
33 Bashir Bello, “Herdsmen, farmers’ clashes have claimed 257 lives – SGF,” in Vanguard (Friday April 20, 2018), 6.
34 See Vanguard (Monday, April 23, 2018), 43.
35 Ibid.
36 Kingsley Omonobi & Henry Umoru, “Killings: Senate summons security, service chiefs, customs boss, others,” in Vanguard (Wednesday May 9, 2018), 8 (Italics & bold mine, as emphasis).
38 Rose Ejembi & Linus Oota, “44 killed in fresh Benue, Nassarawa attacks,” in Dailysun (Thursday April 26, 2018), 6.

Aare Afe Babalola, “As elections draw near, focus must be on how to make Nigeria a nation,” in Vanguard (Wednesday April 25, 2018), 40.

Babalola, “As Elections Draw Near”, 40. (Italics & bold mine, as emphasis).

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Catholic Bishops Conference of Nigeria, “A Communique” (March 9-14, 2009), par. 7.

Ibid., par. 9 (Italics & bold mine, as emphasis).