

A Journal of Research in Nigerian English and Literature

Volume 10, December 2013

Editor
Ubong Josiah

The Roles of Language on National Security: Implications for National Development Since 1980s

Dominic A. Akpan

Abstract

National insecurity has been one of the most discussed issues in Nigeria. Insecurity has been a bane to our development; it has caused a lot of dislocation in the economy and to individuals thereby subjecting and place Nigeria to one of the failed states in Africa. Insecurity has manifested itself through kidnappings, armed robberies, political assassinations, terrorism, ethnic rivalries and conflicts. These are organized crimes that are facilitated and are succeeding through the use of language. The paper argues that language has major roles to play in the current insecurity challenges in Nigeria. It proffers that arms should be controlled. Arms should always be directed only to those authorized by law for such arms. The availability and indiscriminate use of arms should be checkmated. Harsh and foul language has often been used by some leaders and statesmen to cause friction and heat the polity. Such use of language should be discouraged for national interest.

Introduction

Nigeria as a nation is plagued with forces of disunity arising from the union of the different ethnic nationalities who were joined or forced into this arrangement by the British colonial masters in 1914. Some of these nationalities are disenchanted hence have been taking up arms against other nationalities at various times in our history. Recently, the youths of the Niger Delta were up in arms for resource control to draw the attention of the international community to the internal imperialism of the larger or populous ethnic nationalities. The Islamic fundamentalists from the north (Boko Haram) are currently terrorizing the people making life unbearable by truncating the economy and politics. All these create insecurity challenges to Nigeria as sovereignty.

Part of these insecurity challenges are covertly or overtly caused by some Nigerian leaders in authority who sometimes heat up the polity through the use of inflammatory and unguarded statements or language that causes violence and destruction. Thus, even before independence, it was common to hear or read about how different respectable Nigerians in authority made unguarded statements when politics or issues of power were raised. Political power determines so many things within the Nigerian nation; those who hold it know what they use it for. But political power does not convey that the different components that make up the Nigerian federation should engage in the war of words when the polity is heated

or if a component has an advantage over others either in resource sharing or appointment of persons into positions of authority.

Indeed, during the struggle for Nigeria's political independence and self-rule, some nationalists who the people looked up to made insidious and unguarded utterances at the slightest provocation that tended to puncture the unity of this nation. For instance, phrases such as "the mistake of 1914" are accredited to late Sir Ahmadu Bello, during one of the independent conferences; or the phrase "a mere geographical expression" that is accredited to late Chief Obafemi Awolowo. That was how Awolowo saw the relationship among the various ethnic nationalities. The 1914 amalgamation of Nigeria is an albatross because the union did not take into consideration that these various ethnic nationalities into a union is today responsible for the challenges of cohesion in politics and economy. In addition, "a mere geographical expression" is stressing the different ethnic nationalities forced together as a country or sovereign nation but lacking in cohesiveness in all ramifications because of differences in culture. These are incisive expressions that conveyed disunity. The important thing to note is that no nation on this planet is homogenous. All nations are heterogeneous, hence, those expressions as cited above should not have been used in the first instance let alone allowing generations after to learn of them. More than fifty years after Nigeria's independence inciting and unguarded statements are still used by some respected Nigerians in authority and often times breed violence and indeed insecurity. It is the role of this kind of language in national insecurity that this paper is addressing.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section one deals with the introduction; section two discusses the concept of language and national insecurity; section three looks at the use of language and its impact on national insecurity; section four deals with the ways of reducing these inciting utterances to achieve national security, while section five is on recommendations and conclusions.

The Concept of Language

Every language is unique and important to the people who use it as an important means of communication and of intellectual discourse, and for advancement of civilization. Language is an indispensable element that drives civilization, as it contributes to building and changing the socio-economic and political conditions of the people. The fact is ascertained as Nigeria uses English language as its lingua franca in addition to other Nigerian languages. Without language neither civilization nor socio-economic or political development would

even have begun, let alone achieve the height it does today in any part of the globe (Encyclopedia Britannica).

The term "language", and for the purpose of this paper, connotes two meanings. The first meaning indicates the group that uses a particular language for expressing actions and inactions, intentions and demands for what they need at a given time or moment or the use of words that convey meanings to the intended expression and understood only by the user.

The other concept is an indication of the use of words or expressions by eminent people in authority who the people look up to and regard as leaders whose words or command they can obey. It is these groups of personalities that can incite or drive people to rise against other people or communities – implying that inciting language from these elements can cause violence, disobedience, disruption of public peace, threat to lives, bring down government or cause chaos. The inciting language may be oral or written. It is this concept that this paper is referring to and not the language of different nations or people.

The Concept of Security

The term "security" lacks a precise definition though it is a word commonly used by all manner of persons. Security suggests relative freedom from war, coup led with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur (Bellamy, 1981). Imobighe (1985) sees security as a feeling of being protected, and a feeling of freedom from danger, fear, anxiety, oppression and unwarranted violence. Therefore, national security is the feeling of the people within the nation of being protected from fear, anxiety, violence, oppression, unwarranted restriction. National security means developing relatively stable patterns of economic development and political growth at home and abroad. National security, by extension, encompasses environmental security, human security, economic security and food security in that without national security other aspects of security cannot function optimally.

National Insecurity

National insecurity is the failure of national government to address the special needs of its citizens. Such needs include hunger, poverty and unemployment, inequality and injustice, among other things. However, the issues of hunger, poverty, unemployment are interwoven because one aspect may be responsible for the manifestation of another. It is imperative to now link these variables to insecurity.

National insecurity is not all about absence of threat, violence, killings or in short human security. It encompasses other aspects of life such as food security,

environmental security, economic security, social security, cultural security and space security. These aforementioned securities are for the utilization of man. Man lives and depends on environment for his other activities to thrive. Without the environment human security would have no meaning. Without viable economic security the essence of man would be totally unparallel to life – meaning that economic security becomes useful to man when there are strong economic institutions that create opportunities for employment and increased Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the nation. Social security has to do with interactions of people through exchanges in wealth, recreation, etc., while space security has to do with the wind, water, and other constituents of cosmology that have direct link with man. Thus, poverty, poor health, unemployment, injustice and lack of education can destroy the bases of these securities. National occurrences such as flood, desertification, earthquake and man's creation such as modern slavery (human trafficking) are all some aspects of national insecurity.

National insecurity is a condition in nations' development where life is threatened as a result of lapses in governance which have adverse effects on food security, youth unemployment, health conditions of the people and in the long run breed violence like kidnapping, armed robbery, assassinations, ethno-religious crisis, or even civil war (Akpan, 2012).

Conceptualization of Development

One word that is often used without drawing out its meaning is "development". In the past, development was seen as the growth in volume or quality of goods and services or simply an increase in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of a country. But this increase did not work for developing countries because the human conditions of the people did not change in spite of the change in GDP. Today, development is defined qualitatively to mean a general sustainable improvement in the welfare of the entire society; meaning that social indicators such as levels of employment, housing, education, poverty, nutrition, infant and maternal mortality, life expectancy have improved (Akpakpan, 1987; Tordoff, 1997). It is increased skill and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material well-being (Rodney, 1972). It is one's ability to have good, affordable and sustainable food to eat, access to safe drinking water, good shelter, access to good and affordable medical facilities, being able to communicate, have access to good education, have access to decent and sustained infrastructural facilities (Akpan, 2011).

Language, Political Injustice and National Security

Tanko Yakassi, a prominent Northern politician, is credited to have said during the 2011 Nigeria's presidential elections that "we shall make Nigeria ungovernable". Atiku Abubakar, a former Vice President quoting Frank Fafon during the 2011 presidential elections said that "those who make peaceful change impossible make violent change inevitable".

Political injustice is usually linked to electoral process, especially the conduct of elections, specifically or particularly the election of candidates into political offices. Political injustice was responsible for the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970 and the wounds are not totally healed today. Political injustice was responsible for the annulment of June 12, 1993 presidential elections and the aftermath of that June 12 episode is still lingering with us. That annulment has had an erratic and corrosive impact on Nigerian politics in spite of the weak amendment by the political gladiators to bury it permanently. The upbeat of it is that some ethnic nationalities see the south-west as dominating the political firmament. Besides, after the April, 2011 general elections in Nigeria most political parties were disenchanted over the result especially the Congress for Positive Change (CPC) presidential candidate General Mohammedu Buhari. General Buhari claimed he won the election but was robbed of it by the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). It was that claim that was responsible for the 2011 Bauchi political crisis where Nigerian Youth Corps Members and other Nigerians lost their lives, and property worth billions of Naira destroyed. That Bauchi crisis spilled over to Gombe, Kano, Kaduna and other northern towns and cities. Since then the northern cities of Bauchi, Kaduna, Gombe, Nigeria, Yobe, Plateau, Adamawa have been in flames which, to a large extent, has affected national security. Elections in Nigeria are not usually conducted in the manner it should be; rather, politicians would do everything to win. This must win syndrome usually leads to importation of arms, training of political thugs which later constitutes a reign of terror. Nigerians have experienced this even before 1999, and so these have become a bane to our development and by extension engender national security (Mordi, 2012). Today, serving governors in some states of the federation have made life difficult for their opponents. Since every one wants to survive, he evolves a process of survival either through arms and thuggery or any other means which have brought about insecurity. The language of these political gladiators is making Nigeria a hot bed of crises and insecurity.

Language, Lack of Education and National Security

Language or use of words in an intense event can build or destroy the society depending on who uses it and for what purpose. The recipients of such

words would always impact on the security through interpretation or response to such words. For instance, a number of people who are responsible for insecurity are those without formal education.

Education as a process of developing a society has two functions in the building of human capacity for the nation. One aspect is the training to draw out skill from a learner for something worthwhile, while other has to do with educating people on patriotic attitude towards the nation.

Training for skill acquisition is one of the most potent factor in human capacity and national development. Skilled workers distinctive abilities, certain levels of competence some special training. This depends on the presence of the right kind of training opportunities from primary schools to the university. The skill may be plumbing, blacksmithing, welding, cabinet work, etc. Other skills may involve farming, fishing, herding, lumbering, and few would engage in commerce like petty trading or an employee of commercial firms. When skilled workers are trained and become engaged daily would not constitute problem to the nation they work using their skills to earn a living.

Education on the other hand trains professionals for different functions within the economy. Professionals: lawyers, engineers, architects, teachers, medical doctors, pharmacists, career diplomats and agriculturists acquire special skills etc. From this group is derived the economic and social technocrats that drive the economy for national development. Again, this class would not constitute security risk to the nation they belong to a special pool by training and reasoning. Also, it is from this group that the social engineering network such as security emanates.

The third aspect of education is educating the citizens to be nationalistic. Nationalism involves the love one has for his fatherland and, perhaps, would on circumstance lay down his life for that cause. When people are not patriotic they can do anything to undermine the nation even with a fee. Subversion of one's nation because of lack of patriotism is very common. That perhaps explains the President Goodluck Jonathan's alleged relationship between Boko Haram and Al-Qaeda sponsors to destroy Nigeria. The product of lack of patriotism is responsible for militancy, violence, incessant killings, human trafficking, drug peddling and trafficking within and outside the country. In other words, the function of education is solely to educate the people on the need to be loyal to their fatherland.

Furthermore, national security is the function of well articulated economy where the citizens are gainfully employed, are able to use their resources to avail themselves of health facilities, education and indeed good food and its security.

Food security is the primary function or interest of a nation without which other indices within the economy are a farce.

Propelling of the economy so as to achieve peace and security and the working of educational apparatuses for the production of professionals and non-professionals are the outcome of good governance. Of recent, almost everything about our nation hinges on politics and that explains the reason certain government achievements in human development are on the pages of newspapers and television screens. However, even if education would have achieved some level of successes, it has some teething challenges. The challenges are in the area of poor funding for infrastructural facilities, research and development. Others include financial corruption, and lack of human capacity in certain disciplines such as technology, computer and environment.

Language, Hunger, Poverty and National Security

Hunger is a product of poverty except when one decides to go on hunger strike either to draw government's attention to a particular issue or for freedom. Outside such hunger, no sane human being would love to starve himself/herself. Hunger is a condition in which persons do not have access to good food, and perhaps can go for days without food. This condition bestrides our society and is common among students in higher institutions and rural dwellers.

Nigeria is a rich country by the measurement on the current oil production quota and price sold in the international market for the past twenty-seven years or so, yet majority of Nigerians are poor. However, the recent figures released by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the standard of living in Nigeria is deteriorating alarmingly with 71.5 percent of the population living below the poverty line; while an estimated 80 million citizens live on less than IUS dollars a day. It is said that Nigeria is about the only member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries OPEC that is poor. The poverty index in the country is as high as 10 percent, which places her as the 156 out of 187 countries considered. The ugly condition is that the youths constitute the majority of these people. They are the people who hold the nation and place her on insecurity pendulum through kidnapping, armed robbery, assassinations, prostitution, etc. Also, it is from this group that Nigerian bourgeoisie politicians recruit and arm as political thugs and sustain during the after elections and by extension add to the social problems in our country. Hunger and poverty hamper youths of this country's capacity to think straight and right due to poor governance. The only language they hear and understand is to carry out the dirty job of their masters killing, maiming among others (Omoragbon and Okeke, 2010; Kogbara, 2010; Gidado, 2012; Punch, Editorial, 2012).

Language, Unemployment and National Security

Unemployment is a common phenomenon in both developing and developed economies. The significant thing or question to be asked is the rate between them. It is difficult to say the number of unemployed Nigerians. Unfortunately, neither the Manpower Board nor Ministry of Labour nor Federal Office of Statistics has the accurate data of the unemployment rate in Nigeria. However, in 2007, about seven years ago, the Federal Office of Statistics claimed that the national unemployment figure was 3.6 percent outside those who have not registered with Labour Exchanges. In 2013, there is a higher rate of unemployment that is officially put at 23.9 percent; Central Bank of Nigeria and World Bank put it at 37 percent. Comparatively, in developed economies such as USA, Canada, Britain, it is only one digit ranging from 0.4 and 1 percent. Now, the unemployed army is swelling every year as the nations dysfunctional educational institutions turn out fresh graduates, most of whom are ill-prepared for self-employment (Manuaka, 2010; Oshiomode, 2011; Agbo, 2012; Gidado, 2012). The numbers of unemployed youths found in our rural communities and the rural environments today are not secured. Gbenro Abesina and Femi Ayodele of the News Magazine describe these unemployed class as "THE WASTED GENERATION" (Adesina and Ayodele, 2011). It is among this group that insecurity of this nation rests. These people are usually used for drug peddling and other vices.

National Security and National Development

The use of inciting language is usually observed when people are disenchanted because their rights are denied or resources meant for their utilization do not get to them as should be expected. For instance, the Ogoni people and indeed the Niger Deltans are aggrieved because the resources derived from this region are used to develop other regions of Nigeria far better than what is used to develop the Niger Delta. They in turn (Niger Deltans) suffer from the environmental effect of the resource exploitation. Thus the phrases credited to Ken Saro-Wiwa and Edwin Clarke have bearing with frustration and aggression that the people are experiencing and by extension justifies the 'odd phrases' by them. "Heads will roll" by Ken Saro-Wiwa on the Ogoni four; or "either the south-south turn or nothing" credited to Edwin Clark.

Of recent, Nigeria is seen and regarded within and outside as a failed state. Today there has been proliferation of light and heavy weapons in Nigeria and are readily being used by both the authorized and unauthorized persons. The unauthorized persons are the criminals who are found in our society. They freely use these arms to terrorize the law-abiding Nigerians through armed robbery,

kidnapping, assassination thereby making life unbearable. Besides, some of these "bad boys" have formed themselves into militant groups. Some of these groups have manifested through piracy, oil pipeline vandalism, and religious extremists such as the Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria etc.

However, the presence of these evil men has punctured the rate of internal trade within the country and decrease the standard of living of Nigerians. For instance, since the advent of Boko Haram in the North, the prices of goods from the north consumed in the south have doubled. Such goods include tomatoes, onions, yams, cabbage, potatoes, beef, goats etc.

Besides, insecurity does not allow local international investment. For instance, a good number of Igbo entrepreneurs who invested in the north have relocated to the south while some have lost their investments and are thrown back to the unemployment market. Indeed, many foreign companies have relocated to other parts of the West African sub-region because of insecurity. These include Michelin Nigeria Plc. Kano, a conveyance belt for traders from Niger, Chad, Mal, Cameroon is no longer attractive because of incessant bombings caused by Boko Haram since 2011. Kano-Sharada, Bompai and Chellawa industrial areas have been abandoned. In this connection, many Nigerians are again becoming jobless and thus constitute danger to the development of Nigeria.

Ways of Checking Inciting Languages

The use of language is a driving force that impacts on the state of mind, the level of education of individuals and the socio-economic well being or standing of persons. Of all these, it would appear that the level of education is the most potent factor or determinant.

The messengers of violence, the apostles of militancy and kidnapping are from uneducated class of the society. Thus, one of the ways of peace building is free and compulsory education for every Nigerian child to at least secondary school level. Nigeria's history and civic education should become an integral part of the curriculum.

The socio-economic conditions of the people should be improved. Government at all levels should create employment for the citizens. There are several economic structures that are untapped in the country. Such structures are found in agricultural sector, manufacturing, service sectors such as tourism and telecommunication. If these sectors are explored positively they would become gold mines for the nation.

There is an internal imperialism within the Nigerian state. From the beginning of the nation, some regions were more advanced economically and educationally than some regions, hence the less advanced groups are often cheated

in the power equation and at the slightest provocation take up arms against the perceived oppressors. As much as possible every part of the country should receive attention in the areas of development through education and provision of infrastructural facilities.

Nigerians should be taught on how to be patriotic. The ethical and attitudinal departments should, as a matter of urgency, commence educating Nigerians through jingles, billboards, advertisements, etc., on the negative vices in the Nigerian state and ways of correcting them.

There are laws in Nigeria but these laws are not applied when necessary; that is why many Nigerians in positions of authority appear to be above the law. If not, why would one make a statement that Nigeria would be made ungovernable if his opponent won an election? After the election which his opponent won Boko Haram surfaced and has become a thorn on the flesh of Nigerians in the north. Those who break the law need to be punished.

Recommendations

Nigeria is a plural society. Since independence in 1960, the country has been struggling through the efforts of well-meaning Nigeria's to unite the ethnic nationalities for development. However, the spanner in Nigerian development is caused by uneven development, corruption, ethnicity and by extension poor governance. The phenomenon has led to underdevelopment. The underdevelopment has manifested itself through unemployment, underemployment, armed robbery, kidnapping and other forms of insecurity. In this connection, the following recommendations are suggested so as to reduce insecurity arising from underdevelopment and place Nigeria on the pedestal of hope and development:

1. Nigeria as a sovereign nation should make food available for all through encouraging the citizens to grow food crops. Thus government should heavily subsidize agriculture. In addition road infrastructure should be put in place especially in food producing areas. When there is adequate food supply hunger and poverty would equally be reduced.
2. Youths unemployment is alarming. Government and private individuals should steam up the economy by investing on productive ventures ranging from cottage to giant industries that are labour-intensive. This would help to mop up the excess unemployed youths and channel their energies to worthwhile and productive ventures.
3. The government at the centre should as a matter of priority improve physical development of all parts of the country to reduce friction and unnecessary rancor.

4. Nigerians should be educated on how to be patriotic through civic education and entrench in the school curriculum from primary to secondary school levels.
5. Nigerians in all spheres of human endeavour should be discouraged on the use of inciting or foul language that can lead to quarrel and rioting or can cause tension among or between ethnic nationalities.

In the words of Raph Uweche, a journalist and politician:

In the current Nigerian situation what we have is a statement – no definite agreement to live together but no agreement to separate. In such a case only a compromise solution is reasonable and realistic. We should not separate – since there is no agreement to do so – but we should not suffocate ourselves in too tight an embrace – since there is not yet total agreement to cling together. The important thing is that in the light of our past and present experiences, an adjustment should be made such that can allow the best in the different communities to come out while keeping the worst in them in adequate check.

Nigeria is a British creation, but the people of Nigeria were not strangers to one another before the 1914 amalgamation. There is no country in this world that is homogenous, thus Nigerians can always live together and develop themselves by burying all differences arising from culture or other things that can bring hostility to them. Nigerians should not suspect each other, even when there is friction, it should be amicably resolved.

Conclusion

The paper has attempted to establish the relationship between inciting language, insecurity and national development. The paper has argued that inciting language does not allow for national unity. Insecurity is a product of veiled governance. National development can only be achieved in the atmosphere of security. Education is the power of liberation. When people are educated they break out from the shackles of slavery and understand their basic human rights and are free from unnecessary exploitation and evil command of the oppressors. Every part of the Nigerian state should be uniformly developed. There is need to entrench justice in dealing with unpatriotic Nigerians. The prime interest of the

nation should be jealously guarded for peace to reign. Government should make and enforce laws on arms proliferation; Nigerians who own arms illegally should be punished to deter others. Nigerians should make Nigeria safe for development.

References

- Akpakpan, E. B. (1987). *Grossroads in Nigerian Development*. Port Harcourt: New Generation Publishers.
- Akpan, D. A. (2011). Youths and Contemporary Socio-economic Challenges: Implications for Nigerian Development in the 21st Century: A Discussant Paper, Department of History and International Studies, Veritas University (The Catholic University of Nigeria) Abuja – August 23.
- Akpan, D. A. (2012). *Building Human Capacity through marketing Education for National Security*. A paper presented at the 1st Conference, Department of Education, University of Uyo.
- Bellany, I. (1981). *Towards a theory of International Security in Collins, A Contemporary Security Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University.
- Encyclopedia Britannica, v. p. 375.
- Gidado, T. (2012). Lamentation of a Prime, Punch, May 6, p. 14.
- Imobighe, T. A. (1989). *The OAU, African Defence and Security: Benin & Owerri*: Adena Publishers.
- Manuaka, T. (2010). *A Struggling Economy*, Tell Magazine, October 4, p. 38.
- Omoragbon, O. and Okeke, C. (2011). Nigeria's Economy since Independence, the good and ugly. *The Economy*, October 6, p. 21.
- Punch Editorial, June 29, 2012. 1.
- Rodney, W. (1972). *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle – L'Ouverture Publications.
- Tordoff, W. (1997). *Government and Politics in Africa*. 3rd Ed. London: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Adesina, G. and Ayodele, F. (2011). *The News Magazine*, March 28, p. 14.