Security Challenges in Nigeria and Sustainable Development: A Focus on the Southeast Geo-Political Zone

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Abstract

Security has become a major concern at global, regional and national levels. Our nation has to grabble with various forms of internal security issues over the past decade in all geo- political zones. The work is aimed at x-raying how security issues have affected sustainable development. The research adopts qualitative research method through secondary sources of data and documentary approach of data analysis. The theoretical discourse is on relative deprivation theory. The study found out that the marginalization of the Igbo region and military high handedness coupled with police brutality and excessive use of force on civilians are among the drivers of insecurity in the region. Wide spread injustice and impunity of the ruling class and the security apparatus, religious intolerance and purposeless leadership are top most danger to sustainable development. These challenges have impacted negatively on the socio-economic, infrastructural and general wellbeing of the people. The study therefore advocate for realignment of the Nigeria polity as well as strategic, fair and purposeful leadership both within the zone and the state al large to tackle the menace of insecurity.

Keywords: security, national security, national development, sustainable development, relative deprivation.

Introduction

Nigeria is presently divided into six geo-political zones: North-East, North Centre and North-West, then South-West, South-South and South-East. South-east is predominantly Igbos, and largely Christians. The Nigerian Nation shares land borders with Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger; and maritime boundaries with Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Sao Tome and Principe, the challenges these borders pose to our national security and interest are enormous; the instability and conflict in the Chad basin alone deserves close attention. (Buhari, 2021, May 27). While the porous border may constitute a worrisome dimension to national security, but more worrisome is the insecurity that is home brewed. It is a common knowledge that security has become a scarce commodity as long as the enclave called Nigeria is concerned. Security has become a major concern at global, regional and national levels. Our nation has to grabble with various forms of internal security issues over the past decade in all geo- political zones. (Buhari, 2021May 27).

In recent times, terrorism, banditry, hostage-taking, kidnapping, armed robbery etc constitute insecurity in Nigeria. At the same time, herdsmen /farmers clash, religious and ethnic crises, rape and attack on women and children have created a state of instability and reduced socio-economic activities. (Asoya& Obi, 2021). Revived Biafran secessionist activities have escalated in recent years, leading to violent clashes between Nigeria's security forces and militia groups resulting in dozens of deaths. Well known for its underground radio presence in the South East, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) established what it calls the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in December 2020 to act as a paramilitary force in the region (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021)

The south East has been adjudged the most peaceful Zone in Nigeria especially with the rise of terrorism in the North West which spread to other parts of the regions. But recently, there has been serious security challenge in the zone. To this, Prof. George Obiozor-the President of Ohanaeze while welcoming President Buhari to Imo state on Thursday 9th September 2021 remarked "regrettably our South East zone has recently become a theatre of conflict, negating the peace-loving nature of our people.

The question on every lip is: what is the root cause of the rise of insecurity especially in the zone? The only way to solve a problem is to identify the root cause of that problem first, then apply the best strategy to resolve the issue. The same apply to issues of insecurity in Nigeria. Nevertheless, the work is an explanatory attempt to unravel the effect of security problems on sustainable development focusing on the south east.

Conceptual Clarifications and Literature Review

Security

Security may not really connote absence of trouble or violence in a country. But when the security architecture of that country has the capacity and capability to contain the internal insurrection or external aggression, then that country is said to be secured. On the contrary, a situation where non-state actors can threatening a legitimate government is indeed a security risk, how much more when they operate freely, so to say, and issue directive contrary to the government of the day, which the citizens helplessly had to obey as a result of fear, then insecurity is at its height. It is believed that the state should have monopoly of force hence security is the aggregation of security interest of individuals, political entities, human association and ethnic groups that make up a nation. The security interest includes safety of life and property, economic, psychological, mental well-being and freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance (Obasanjo, 1999 cited in Udeh,Okoroafor,& Ihezie,2013).

From the definition above, the security of the human association and ethnic groups within a country is indeed the indices of a secured nation. This goes to say that any threat to peaceful existence of any part of Nigeria as well as hindrance to attaining lawful objective is a pointer to insecurity in the country.

National Security

National security is a state where the unity, wellbeing, values and beliefs, democratic process, mechanism of governance and welfare of the nation and her people are perpetually improved and secured through military, political and economic resources.(Oriakhi and Osemwengie, 2012 cited in Asoya& Obi, 2021). According to Ani and Onyebukwa, (2016)

> National security is thus a combination of abundant and suitable political, military, human resources, economic structures, technology, science and natural resources at its optimal level in a country. It includes the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory and protect it from undesirable internal and external control. It is therefore a state of being able to control and overcome various external and internal threats

The definitions, well establish the fact that there is no security of the Nigerian state. Infact, the insecurity is affecting the military, political, economic, social and cultural life of the country as we can notice threat of this structure in all the geo-political zones.

Insecurity:

Insecurity is a state when the sovereignty of a nation is under threat It supposes a situation where any aspect of the national life is under the control of persons outside the constituted authority. The undue influence could emanate from within or from outside the country.Here the unity, wellbeing, values and beliefs, democratic process, mechanism of governance and welfare of the nation and her people are compromised.

Sustainable Development

Pearce et al (1992 cited in Nyewusira & Nweke, 2014) defined sustainable development as a development that manages all assets, natural resources, and human resources, as well as financial and physical assets, for increasing long-term wealth and well-being. As a goal, sustainable development rejects policies and practices that support current living standards by depleting the productive base, including natural resources, and that which leaves future generations with poorer prospects and greater risks than our own.

Empirical Review

Ani and Onyebukwa, (2016) pried into the issue of security and sustainable national development. They discover that the issue of security has taken center stage in the contemporary international system. Continents, regions, states, etc are all battling directly and indirectly to improve their direct domestic and international security status. It therefore follows that security requires not

only the physical protection from existing harm, but also the establishment of resilient sociopolitical and economic structures to deal with its complexity. In this era of globalization, growing interdependence because of uncertainties in security has given it a new meaning, scope, perspective and dimension. Consequently, policy makers in different counties around the globe have gradually come to recognize that the protection of states and there citizens require a fully integrated multidimensional and comprehensive approach to security issues, which directly influences civil, social, cultural, political, environmental and economic sectors of the society. Such recognition has precipitated a number of measures and counter measures to deal with security. However, the underlying truth is that security is the state of being free from danger or threat. It is the degree of protection to safeguard a nation against danger, damage, crime and loss. It includes the safety of a state against criminal activities. The work is a synoptic account of the dynamics of the different forms of security threats facing the Nigerian State. It showed how a number of major military and non-military forces of insecurity are weakening the process of national development in the country and made extensive recommendations on the strategies for sustainable national security and development in Nigeria.

Ezemenaka (2021) explored the variable between youth violence and human security in Nigeria. He avers that the failures of governance and statehood in Nigeria breed an anarchical or disruptive system in the state and provide a platform for youth violence and justification for disruptive behaviour against the state systems and structures. Contributing to the available research, the study shifts its focus to understand and address the linkage of disruptive behaviour by studying and discussing Human Security through the lens of youth violence in Nigeria. In doing so, the study adopts a mixed method approach of quantitative and qualitative data with Ted Robert Gurr's theory of relative deprivation to investigate, analyse and discuss the issues herein. From the findings, cultism and ethnic factors were identified as major causes of youth violence among others. Thus, effective institutions, quality education, economic and security regional or geopolitical zones programs is noted as a means to address youth violence in Nigeria.

Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezie, (2013) studied on the variable of insecurity and economic development. They assert that since the past decade or more, Nigeria has witnessed an

unprecedented security challenges occasioned by the activities of militants in the South- South region, kidnappers in the south east, violent armed robbery in almost parts of the country, political assassination, ritual killings and more recently activities of Boko Haram in some parts of the northern region especially north east. These social menace, when put together impinge on the security of lives and property of both Nigerian citizens and foreigners living or even trying to invest in the country. Thus, more particularly, since late last year 2011, suicide bombings in some parts of the northern region have put Nigerians and foreigners on their toes. This has become worrisome in the face of Nigeria's preparedness to be ranked among the twenty (20) developed countries of the world by the year 2020. These social menace trigger off a worrisome sense of insecurity that challenge Nigeria's efforts towards national economic development and consequently its vision 20:2020. It also scares the attraction of foreign investment and their contributions to economic development in Nigeria. This paper recommends effective leadership and good governance as a panacea to solving problems of insecurity, unemployment, poverty, hunger, disease, etc.

Theoretical Framework

The work is anchored on Relative Deprivation Theory (RD). Walker and Pettigrew (2011, pp. 13) aver that Relative Deprivation Theory is traced to De Tocqueville 1955 pp. 176-177 and Marx 933 pp. 33. Its popularity reached a zenith in the late1960's when it was often invoked to account for the widespread civil unrest in the USA. Relative Deprivation Theory is a variant of social evaluation theory (Pettigrew, 1967). It formalizes the relationship between social comparison leading to outcome unfavorable to individual or the individual's membership group and a variety of behavioral outcomes. (Walker and Pettigrew 2011).

Relative deprivation (RD) is the disparity between what people want, that is, their value expectations, and what they actually gain, which are their value collecting capabilities. Gurr (1971 cited in Ezemenaka, 2021) states that 'the intensity of relative deprivation varies strongly in terms of the average degree of perceived discrepancy between value expectation and value capabilities.' Furthermore, he argues that people are more likely to revolt when they lose hope of attaining their societal values, and that the intensity of discontent/frustration 'varies with the severity of

depression and inflation.' Gurr alludes to RD as 'the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the 'ought' and the 'is' of collective value satisfaction, and this disposes men to violence' (Gurr 1971, p. 23 cited in Ezemenaka, 2021).

Deprivation is relevant to the disposition to collective violence to the extent that many people feel disconnected about the same things. Unexpected personal deprivation such as failure to obtain an expected promotion or the infidelity of a spouse ordinarily affect few people at any given time and are therefore narrow in scope. Events and patterns of conditions like the suppression of political party, a drastic inflation or the decline of a group status relative to its status group and are likely to precipitate the feelings of relative deprivation among whole groups or categories of people. (Gurr, 1970 pp. 29 cited in Walker & Pettigrew 2011, pp. 13).

Among the six (6) geo- political zones that makes up of Nigeria, the south- east is the only zone with five states while others have six states each with North-West having seven (7) states. The Zone again has not had the privilege of occupying the highest seat of power in the country. The Gen Buhari (rtd)led Administration have heightened it by ensuring that the zone is excluded from the highest military echelon in the country. To this end, the former military head of state – Gen Gowon lend his voice to the cry of marginalization of the zone. *Vanguard news* reports "Fifty years after his administration ended a brutal civil war with the Igbo, former Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon (retd), confessed, yesterday, that the Igbo nation had been marginalized in Nigeria's polity. Gowon, who spoke at a public event organized by Igbo Leadership Development Foundation, called for the adoption of appropriate measures to ameliorate the pains of the Igbo" (Vanguard News, 6, March).

According to frustration aggression hypothesis, frustration is the blocking of motivated goals. The nearer a person is to the goal before the blockage, the more frustrated the person becomes. (Okechukwu *et al* 2021).

The theory of relative deprivation is apposite to the work in that it helps to explain the variable of marginalization as strongly felt in the south eastern part of Nigeria and the consequent, incessant unrest that has recently characterized the zone.

Discussion

National security is thus about containment. It is therefore a state of being able to control and overcome various external and internal threats. Thus, the concept of security remains a complex phenomenon that unarguably require not just counter-measures to deal with but concrete preventive and resilient decisions to manage in order to avoid loss of lives and properties. It therefore follows that security requires not only the physical protection from existing harm, but also the establishment of resilient sociopolitical and economic structures to deal with its complexity (Ani&Onyebukwa, 2016). In the case of Nigeria, there seem to be loss of hope, security operatives seems to lack the resilience to face the challenge. Partly, owing to the emotional and economic attachment to the perpetrators of the threat, and the lack of will power on the part of the leadership in dealing with the core cause of these problems. Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezie, (2013)discussed causes of insecurity in Nigeria to include: imposition of unpopular policies, corruption, unemployment, poverty, Terrorism/ suicidal bombing, defective intelligence gathering and coordination on the part of security agencies as well as under funding and under equipment, external influence and inequality. However, we saw terrorism/bombing attacks as a state of insecurity rather than a cause of insecurity. We shall consider some of the drivers of insecurity in Nigeria especially the South-Eastern Zone. Further, we shall discuss the drivers of insecurity especially within the South-East.

Marginalization of the Igbos and Relative deprivation.

The South-East has been adjudged the most peaceful Zone in Nigeria especially with the rise of terrorism in the North West which spread to other parts of the Northern regions. But recently, there has been serious security challenges in the zone. To this, Prof. George Obiozor-the President of Ohanaeze while welcoming President Buhari to Imo state on Thursday September 9, remarked "regrettably our South East zone has recently become a theatre of conflict, negating the peace-loving nature of our people. Dilichukwu (2019) further asserts that:"Since the end of the civil war, the alleged marginalization has become dynastic in the Igbo dominated area of the southeast in particular and the southern part of the country in general. The marginalization trend manifests in lopsided appointment, promotion and admission into federal establishments and

institutions of learning through the instrumentality of quota system and federal character that favour mediocrity at the expense of merit. More so, in the area of geopolitical boundary, the southeast is made up of only five states while their counterparts are composed of six states and seven states even. The number one seat in Nigeria either by omission or commission have eluded the zone since after the civil war till date. The feeling of marginalization especially when compared to the privileges and opportunity enjoyed by other parts of the country causes feeling of frustration and restiveness especially among the youth in the zone.

Military/ Police Excessive use of force against the pro-IPOB.

Duerksen, (2021) In *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, assert that Nigerian security forces and ESN have clashed in a series of skirmishes in 2021 that have resulted in the deaths of several civilians in what has become known as the Orlu crisis. ESN has inflamed tensions by killing police officers at checkpoints in several locations in the South East. These back-and-forth raids and attacks risk plunging the region into a crisis similar to the Anglophone-Francophone conflict across the border in southwest Cameroon.

Human rights groups have documented Nigerian military and police using excessive force against pro-Biafran protestors, including killing 150 IPOB supporters and members in 2015 and 2016. On the 49th anniversary of the declaration of Biafran independence, in 2016, security teams that included members of the military opened fire on a parade in Onitsha, killing at least 60 people. Violence against civilians by Nigeria's security forces has contributed to motivating young men in the region to join the militant groups (Duerksen, 2021). "It is almost impossible to cure a problem based on violence with" violence, Clinton cited in UdehOkoroafor&Ihezie, (2013) said. "You also have to give people something to look forward to when they get up in the morning" (This Day Newspaper, 2012)

The Nigerian Security threat map under shows the Biafran separatist location

Source: From Duerksen, M (2021). Nigerian's Diverse Security treats. Africa Center for Strategic studies.

The map above Map of Nigeria shows that there is security threat within the South East zone. Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo state. The places with the purple mark indicates the Pro-Biafaran Militant base. Especially where the Orlu crisis in Imo state happened.

Widespread Injustice and impunity.

Another major cause of the tension in security in Nigeria is wide spread injustices and impunity in Nigeria. Apart from the ruling class, the security architecture is the worst culprit in Nigeria.From the minor offence of driving against traffic to extra-judicial killings.It is apposite to state that

unified security is highly correlated to transparent and accessible justice mechanism especially that which invokes trust on the citizenry. It is a sure proof or method of defusing tensions between communities or with the government. Security personnel should show example by respecting and obeying court orders. This will engender trust and smoothen the process of justice This review reveals, especially with regards to security sector violence against civilians, repeated instances of security services disregarding judicial rulings, thereby exacerbating social tensions and undermining the rule of law (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2020).To buttress the point, they further revealed that:

> Police and military violence against civilians are a persistent impediment to sustainable peace in Nigeria. In 2020, nationwide #EndSARS protests, led by young people, transcended the country's religious, ethnic, and political divides and demanded an end to police abuses, particularly the dissolution of the unaccountable Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS). This division of the national police force was originally set up to address the problem of organized criminal gangs across the country. Over time, however, FSARS became known for extorting Nigerian citizens and committing human rights abuses. In a vivid illustration of this, security forces opened fire on #EndSARS protesters in October 2020 to shut down marches and sit-downs across the country.
> While FSARS has been in the spotlight recently, Nigeria's State Security Service (SSS) has regularly harassed and detained journalists with impunity, including invading a courtroom to re-arrest a defendant whom the judge had ordered be set free. When protestors or fact-seekers get too close to the levers of power and privilege, it is often the SSS—directly overseen by the president—that intervenes. Another unit close to the executive—the Presidential Guard Brigade—was revealed to have shot and killed dozens of Shia marchers from the Iranian-backed Islamic Movement in Nigeria in Abuja in 2018. The protesters were demanding the release of their leader (who was still detained despite Nigerian courts ordering him freed).

Rather than application of violence force all the time, active citizen engagement and citizen cooperation may be the most essential element of a successful response in each context.

Photo of#EndSARS protesters in October

Sources: Africa Center for Strategic Studies (2020), "#EndSARS Demands Nigerian Police Reform," Infographic, November 10, 2020.

The picture above is a clips of the ENDSARS protest in Nigeria.

Religious intolerance

Religion, they say is the opium of the masses. Observation shows religion has divided us more than uniting us in Nigeria. Many threat to security and actual security challenges can be traced to religion, no thanks to the two dominant religion in Nigeria- Christianity and Islamic religion. Take a look at Kaduna state for example, though same people within the state, but the Christian-Dominated Southern Kaduna and the Muslim-Dominated Northern Kaduna has never been in peace from time immemorial owing to their religious differences. The Northern Nigeria is predominantly Muslim while the Eastern is predominantly Christian, the West is a hybrid of Christianity and Muslim sect, we observe that breakdown of peace, to the point of civil war is usually between the Northern and the Eastern Nigeria. This is to show that there is a serious

connection between religion and insecurity in Nigeria. Many unprovoked religious war in core Northern state like Kano, Kaduna etc between Muslim and Christian had claim many lives and destroy property worth millions on Naira. By the way, who introduced the idea of filling one's religion in official documents in Nigeria, when the country is a secular state? For example, when a Nigerian applied for a job in an organization, be it private or public, and he/she is required to fill their religion, how does that affect the suitability or otherwise of the candidate ? Except to be used as a tool for oppression and discrimination. That is the root of deprivation which has proved to be the bane of Nigerian security and sustainable development.

Purposeless leadership

The political class in Nigeria also has contributed to the security threat in the country. When a political actor will earn in a month what an average top civil servant will earn in a year, there is disparity and relative deprivation. To add salt to the injury, many of the politicians are purposeless and lack any meaningful agenda or strategy for development. The case of some of the south east leaders are a case in mind. Some South-East Governors are owing workers up to the tune of 24 months (two solid years) and still counting simply by not remitting the subventions due to the public establishments. Hence some of the youth and indeed the populace often turn themselves into social miscreants as a way to cut part of the national cake. Little wonder there is cyber-crime, kidnapping, bunkering, arm robbery and other social evils in the country which hampers any meaningful development,

Implication of Security Challenge on National and Sustainable Development

Insecurity impinge on the political stability of the country. Thus, when the political system is unstable as a result of crisis, the government in power is distracted from pursuing its goal of transforming the country and moving it to the next level. This is because rather than focus on the agenda of government in power, theywill be compelled to channel large chunk of her energy and resources towards security at the expense of other social goods that should be delivered to the people. For example in the 2012 budget security took a large chunk of N921.91 billion,

p-ISSN: 2787-0367;e-ISSN: 2787-0359

(Newswatch, 2012) when compared with other sectors like education, health, agriculture etc, yet the country is plunged into instability as peace in the polity seems to be a mirage (Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezie, 2013).

There is no need over flogging the issue, insecurity affects the economic progress due to loss of investment. In agreement, Ezemenaka (2021) noted that "Despite numerous resources, human security in Nigeria has remained a salient issue and problem for the Nigerian government and has also decreased the nation's economy through major deterioration of channels such as tourism and investment in the country" What is however, difficult to evaluate is how much investments would have come into the country without the current security challenges. This is the opportunity cost of the current insecurity which because it is difficult to measure, maybe ignored by economists and thus the government. How bad! (Innocent, Nwachukwu & Olise, 2017).

The herder farmer clash in many Easter state like Enugu, Abia, to name but a few has adversely and seriously affected food production. The resultant effect is high cost of living. Many farm produce including domestic animal produced in the North are usually consumed in the East and West. The insecurity has also endangered the smooth trade between the north and the East and other parts of the country. Development nosedive under this condition.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the analysis, it is obvious that the marginalization within the Igbo region and military high handedness coupled with police brutality and excessive use of force on civilians are among the drivers of insecurity in the region. Wide spread injustice and impunity of the ruling class and the security apparatus, religious intolerance and purposeless leadership is stirring the ship of development to danger zone. The above no doubt, hampers development in the zone and in Nigeria generally.

It is our opinion that the Nigerian Government will achieve more by: Firstly, engaging the Pro-biafaran agitators in the South East to dialogue and find out the context of their agitation. This, we believe will help resolve issues. Secondly,the Buhari led- government should take a cue from the Yaradua's strategy of engaging the Niger-delta militants.So, active citizen engagement and citizen

cooperation will be a better policy response to the issue of insecurity than violence use of force. Thirdly, those security-risk persons like repentant militant, Boko Haram, IPOB, Niger- militants should be re-oriented and reintegrated into the society and not into the security architect of the nation. Many of them have suffered psychopathy and as such may not easily come out of their fanaticism, so integrating them into the official security structure outside engaging them in "community policing" is a security risk on its own.

Fourthly, the filling of one's religion in any official document has done more harm than good in the management of Nigeria's diversity, therefore, it is not important and should be jettison. Finally, we advocate for realignment of the Nigeria polity as well as strategic, fair and purposeful leadership both within the zone and the state at large to tackle the menace of insecurity.

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