

Insecurity and Development Dilemma in Nigeria: A Retrospection

¹*Moshood, Abdul-Wasi B., PhD & Thovoethin, Paul-Sewa, PhD*

Abstract

The negative impacts of insecurity on development are obvious across Africa. Despite the enormous financial, material and human resources spent to enhance security in Africa most countries especially in the Sahel region still suffer various forms of insecurity. In recent time, Nigeria remains one of the most affected countries on the issue of insecurity. The fact that insecurity continues to stare the country in the face, makes the search for a resolution a noble one. On Wednesday 27 of December, 2023 suspected herdsmen killed almost two hundred people in Plateau state and destroyed properties worth several millions of naira. Insecurity has become like a circuit in the country, starting with the militancy in the Niger Delta in the Fourth Republic to Boko Haram and Banditry in the North-East, the North-West respectively. Through qualitative method, the study attempts to answer questions such as: what are the causes and consequences of insecurity in Nigeria? To what extent is insecurity an albatross to national development? What are the options available to enhance security in Nigeria? The study recommends a multi-sectorial approach to addressing the complex security situation in country.

Keywords: insecurity, development, insurgency, Boko Haram, banditry

Introduction

Security is an essential component in the life of a nation that desires to develop. It should be noted that one of the cardinal functions of a state is to provide security of lives and properties. The failure of the state to perform this important function results in insecurity which hampers

1 The authors are of the Dept. of Political Science, Lagos State University, Ojo Campus, Nigeria

other areas of human existence. Thus, insecurity has continued to affect national development in Africa at large and Nigeria in particular. Over several decades, there have been a recurrent and sustained argument that the Nigerian state, like its counterparts in Africa and other developing world, is underperforming due to lack of state capacity to deal with the complex security situation. At the moment a number of countries on the continent of Africa are having development challenges as a result of insecurity which also became worsen with the global covid-19 pandemic. There is no gainsaying that Nigeria was under worse situation before COVID-19 pandemic, this among others includes: reduced incomes, disrupted supply chains, and acute hunger as farmers' herders' crisis has worsened insecurity and prevented farming activity in some parts of the country. This portends great danger for the country as Okoli (2022) reported that there is no part of the country that is spared with insecurity. He argues that as Boko Haram terrorist is winding down in the north-east, banditry is famous in the north-west, separatist in the eastern part of Nigeria, farmers herder's crisis continues in the north-central, while the western part of the country is not spared of the gang court and ritual violence.

Piracy and oil theft still continue in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. There is therefore, no controversy about the fact that security situation is at the tipping point. Causes of insecurity in every country could either be endogenous or exogenous. The exogenous security challenges come from outside the country. Countries like Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and other in the Sahel have suffered continued infiltration of foreign influence in their countries which have occasioned coups in recent times (Muhammad & Onapajo, 2022). Nigeria as a country is not also exonerated from foreign infiltration in her polity. The interest on oil on the one hand and the location of multinational oil companies have always represented the interest of foreign influence. Watts and Ibaba (2011) argue that oil theft in the Niger Delta is aided with the exchange of oil for arm. In fact, one of these researchers argues elsewhere that it was the level of

arms in circulation occasioned by oil for arm in the Niger Delta and the desperation of political class in Nigeria prior to the 2015 election that made the United State foreign mission to predict Nigeria's disintegration by 2015 (Moshood 2023, *The Cable*, 2015). The significance of Nigeria is also seen in the interest shown by the foreign powers in the election monitoring and clandestine support they often offer to various political parties. The Bakassi peninsula saga between the Nigeria and Cameroon is another high point in the foreign influence triggers of conflict in Nigeria. While it could be argued that the impact of foreign influence on Nigeria's insecurity situation is minimal compared to countries like Mali and others. Also, the level of insecurity in the country falls substantially on the internal drivers and mismanagement of the leaders. Therefore, attention in this paper will be devoted to causes of internally induced form of insecurity in Nigeria. Other causes of insecurity as it affects Nigeria that have been exhaustively discussed in the literature include: crisis of leadership, lack of institutional capacity, porous border, ethnoreligious crisis, weak security architecture, climate change among others. The study attempts to evaluate the extent of insecurity on national development in Nigeria and how the challenges posed by this could be mitigated.

Through qualitative method, the paper undertakes a study of the security dilemma in Nigeria and the extent it has impacted on national development in the country. This is divided into five sections beginning with introduction, followed by, the theoretical anchor of the study, the third section takes an overview of security situation in the country. The fourth section looks at insecurity and development nexus in the country, and concludes with some recommendations. The next segment focuses on the leadership dilemma theory.

Leadership Dilemma Theory

The predetermined set of assumptions on how leadership works and how to exercise it is often the focus of leadership theory. These assumptions are firmly bolted to our DNA, expecting that there is one unique theory to solve the leadership challenges of a country or an organization. It

is exceedingly difficult to pry us loose from these deeply entrenched beliefs. However, we must be willing to let go. Why? Because many of the challenges that confront a nation today are enormously complex and varied, and existing leadership theory doesn't always work in solving them. Souba (2006) submits that contemporary leadership challenges require modern approaches for their resolution. The continuous usage of old approaches for modern day challenges have remained an albatross for leadership success. But not infrequently the obstacles are not clear or we are not aware of them and we are left not knowing how to tackle a leadership challenge that we are occasionally faced as a country (Souba 2006).

In specific term, dilemmas are complex, tension-fraught problems that arise when a leader is challenged to achieve more than one objective. Faced with such daunting problems, leaders typically adopt a stance associated with the common belief related to resolving dilemmas: that they are irresolvable (Cardno 2007). A leadership dilemma can occur when there is a discrepancy between varying choices of equal alternatives that are available for decision making. Irrespective of ways a leader acts there is likely to be an uncomfortable situation for one of the parties involved. This can create indecisiveness on the part of a leader until they act definitely to resolve the situation which will not go away unless it is dealt with thoroughly.

When a leader is faced with a dilemma, he/she is expected to choose between two equally unattractive options, it is not surprising to surmise that dilemma cannot be resolved." Dilemmas are exceedingly complex problems, the very idea that they can be managed is unthinkable. Dimmock" (1999 cited in Cardno 2007). Cardono further explains that "whilst problems may be solved, dilemmas are distinguishable from problems in that they are taken to be irresolvable because in attending to one element or horn of a dilemma, others are left unresolved" (Cardno 2007, p.4). In Cuban's view, dilemmas are messy, complicated, a conflict-filled situation that requires undesirable choices between competing and, highly-prized values that cannot be simultaneously or fully satisfied.

He further said that” dilemmas arise when: people compete for limited resources, hold conflicting values, and wrestle with diverse expectations held by others” (Cuban 2001, p.10). Both Dimmock and Cuban believe that dilemma cannot be resolved. Dimmock asserts that to” manage dilemma begins with the ability to conceptualise, reconceptualise, and redefine the situation, and then identify its elements and other values underlying it” (Dimmock 1999, p. 110). Cuban while arguing that dilemmas cannot be solved but managed, avers that” management of dilemma is like satisficing, which requires compromise and helps one to cope with the debris of disappointment” (Cuban 2001, p.16). If this position is agreeable, the best one can conclude is the understanding that problems are solved but dilemmas recur. The best a leader or country can do in this instance of leadership dilemma is to continue to create compromises in managing it array of challenges. Developing a more robust meaning system for the word leadership is essential. For example, Cuban (2001) argues that one must be clear that there is a difference between a leader and leadership. One refers to a person, the other to an activity or a capacity. Some leaders exercise good leadership, some exercise bad leadership and others don't lead at all. To tackle the challenge of leadership dilemma, the starting point is getting the right type leadership.

In the context of Nigeria, Achebe (1982), noted that the country is blessed with the best flora and fauna. The problem of Nigeria, is not in its climate, or dearth of resources but in who to manage the abundant resources. While it has been established that dilemma itself is a complex problem that cannot be solved but at best managed, it becomes more complicating when a country is bereft with quality leadership that will manage the country's complex situations. When this is the case, the identity crisis widens, political upheaval becomes a regular issue, and neighbours who once lived together at one point become enemies. The conflict in the country took different dimension because the leadership allowed it to fester, and at times deliberately orchestrate conflict in other to advance and perpetuate selfish interest. Examples of these are given in the next section. So, the leadership dilemma in Nigeria's context is

not about leadership being faced with arrays of complex choices alone but also the inability to choose the right type of leadership at a time to manage the Nigeria's complex situation, hence, the choice of this theory. The next section overviews the insecurity situations in Nigeria.

Overview of Insecurity in Nigeria

The insecurity in the country has become a recurring decima. This climaxed with the invasion of the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA) in the early hours of 24 August, 2021 where two officers were killed and another officer abducted. This kind of attack is quite instructive, because if the insecurity is already getting to the national defence fabric, it means that no one is safe in the country anymore. Nigeria did not find herself under this type of situation overnight. The level of insecurity as it is today started gradually and is getting out of control. Thus, we shall try as much as possible to take a historical overview of the progression of insecurity in Nigeria, especially from the advent of democratic rule in 1999 up to the present moment. In doing this, attempt would be made to link some of the different forms of insecurity to the causal factors of insecurity that have been highlighted in the introductory part.

We begin with the Niger Delta Crisis which the ember was sown with the discovery of oil in Oloibiri in the present day Bayelsa state. The activities of the oil multinationals have great impact on the environment and several peaceful protest to draw the attention of the government to the plight of the people in the region fell on deaf ears of the government, it became aggravated in the 1990s and the first in the fourth republic (Moshood 2016; Obi 2014). With the advent of the fourth republic, the democratic space gave the opportunity for the bottled-up anger which the military has repressed to resurface and in a more devastating form. Commenting on the activities of the oil multinationals, Obi (2014) argues that the Niger Delta conflict arose in the 1990s due to tensions between international oil companies (IOCs) and some representatives of Niger Delta minority ethnic groups who felt they were being exploited without due compensation from the oil exploited in the region. Thus, ethnic

and political unrest continued in the region throughout the 1990s and persisted for more than a decade. As Nwagboso (2012) notes, the inability of the government to address the root causes of the agitation including environmental problems, poverty, unemployment, lack of basic amenities, and the others in the Niger Delta region, resulted in the spawning of ethnic militias and subsequent militarisation of the entire region.

From the outset of the conflict, government has instituted several palliatives aimed at addressing the challenges such as environmental degradation and the absolute poverty in the region. Government established some institutions or agencies to douse the tension in the area such as the Oil Mineral Producing Areas Development Commission (OMPADEC), Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and Ministry of Niger Delta (MND); this intervention, notwithstanding, the conflicts and insecurity in the Niger Delta region persisted. In fact, the region witnessed severe security threats and the emergence of other agitating groups affiliated to the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) controlled by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari and the Niger Delta vigilante (NDV) led by Ateke Tom. The introduction of these groups gave the struggle the violent phase it later assumed (Moshood, 2016; Nwagboso, 2012).

In other to find lasting solution to the conflict, the federal government employed discreet, but subtle military approach, what in other word is known as carrot-and-stick approach to cower the militants into accepting its proposal for amnesty. This happened under the leadership of the late President Umaru Yar'Adua, who announced the granting of Amnesty and unconditional pardon to militants in the region (Moshood, 2016). Therefore, due to this Federal Government's amnesty offer the militants led their groups to surrender their weapons which included rocket-propelled grenades, guns, explosives, ammunition, gunboats, among others. Although the federal governments' Amnesty Programme reduced the rate of militancy in the region, yet, the conflict has created a contagion effect where the use of kidnapping, ransom taking and other criminal activities have snowballed into other region in the country.

It is therefore not wrong to observe that kidnapping in the Southeast could be traced to hostilities, conflicts and violence in the Niger-Delta region (Nwagboso, 2012). Kidnapping, which is the act of abducting somebody and keeping the person within the enclave of the kidnappers in order to get a ransom for his/her release, suddenly took on a whole new economic attraction in the South-Eastern part of Nigeria. This new source of making quick huge money thrived in the South-East zone, especially in Abia and Imo states, where prominent indigenes and residents of the states were easy targets. Furthermore, following the 2007 general elections in Nigeria, this social problem became virulent in the South-East as youth that were used as political thugs by politicians during the 2007 general elections subsequently diverted their guns, skills and energy into the ugly trade as a new means of survival after the elections. Thus, from 2007 to the present moment, several prominent residents in the South-East have been kidnapped for ransom. In fact, these kidnappers went as far as abducting school children, traditional rulers, and innocent citizens at various locations. (Okoro, 2019; Onifade *et al*, 2013).

Just about the same time militancy was receding in the Niger Delta region, secessionist conflict in the southeast was rearing its ugly head, the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast became another very important form of insecurity which has given the Nigerian state the greatest security challenge. This remains a major security nightmare in Nigeria which has adversely affected every aspect of the Nigerian state. Agbiboa (2013) explains that “boko” means book or western civilization and the Arabic “haram” figuratively means “sin” or literally something forbidden. Which connotatively means western civilization is forbidden. Boko Haram is a controversial Nigerian militant terrorist group that has sought to impose its radical aspect of Islam in the northeast region. The ambiguous goal of the group and its radical ideological leaning is noticed in its indiscriminate killings of both Muslims and Christians in the country. Since its inception, the group has killed over 98,000 people, and destroyed both government and private facilities worth several millions of naira (Nigeria Security Tracker, 2023).

The conflict situation has become hydra-headed, because the country is faced with multiple levels of insecurity. While the government is consolidating on the little gains made so far in fighting Boko Haram terrorist group, banditry has surfaced in the Northwest. The methodology and mode of operations of the bandits have warranted the claim that bandits equally have the renegade of Boko Haram in their midst. The issue of banditry initially started as local disputes between herders and farmers over access to land which overtime developed into issue of national significance. The level of rural banditry escalated between 2014 and 2021 and affected population living In Zamfara and part of its neighbouring states like Kastina, Kaduna, Kebbi, Sokoto, Niger, Benue, Nassarawa and Plateau in the North-Central. These rampaging gangs of armed bandits which engaged in violent act like attacking, abducting, killing, and robbing villagers and travellers and engaging in cattle rustling have remained one of the major security challenges to the Nigerian state (Alfakoro, 2021). The bandits have been operating in the North-Western region for over a decade, but have grown in strength and sophistication in the last few years. These criminal gangs are without any central leadership (Arvin, 2021), this explains why negotiating the group out of conflict may be difficult.

Recently, the bandits have resorted to increasing kidnap of school children for ransom. Families also have withheld their children from attending classes due to this wave of kidnapping. Since December 2020, the bandits have emulated Boko Haram tactics who abducted 276 Chibok girls in 2014 by committing mass abduction. Over 1,000 school children have been abducted by bandits to extort ransom across the Northern Nigeria. The bandits have involved in committing small scale kidnapping of highway travellers, and have recently employed political pressure through school kidnappings to force more lucrative deal (Iwara, 2021).

From the foregoing, it is clear that the major security challenges facing the country is endogenous. This cannot be divorced from the leadership dilemma that has bedevilled the country for several decades. There have been occasions where the leadership deliberately left the conflict to fester due to their inactivity or dilemma of taking the right decision, not knowing

what to do, being complicit or a combination of all these reasons. President Olusegun Obasanjo was alleged to deliberately allowed the Odua People's Congress (O.P.C) conflict with the Hausa in Shagamu 1999 to fester for political reason. Goodluck Jonathan at the initial stage did not take the issue of the Boko Haram and the kidnapping of the Chibok girls seriously until it went out of hand. The same gesture explains inactivity and the lacklustre of the Buhari's Administration over the Fulani/herder's conflict. In spite of These challenges, government have made security a pivotal issue that has culminated in the allocation of country's huge resources to the protection of lives and properties. It has also forced government to channel resources meant for developmental purposes to security. Also, the frightening rate at which the economic, political, social and religious affairs of the nation are deteriorating at present is a real indication of insecurity. Similarly, insecurity has threatened the desperate attempt to industrialize, the existing socio-cultural tranquillity and sustainable development. The implication is that Nigeria symbolises unsafe place of abode and has also been included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Therefore, investors, foreigners, expatriate and even indigenes of Nigeria are scared about investing and committing their resources in lucrative businesses in Nigeria (Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019). In subsequent section, we will be discussing insecurity and national development nexus.

Insecurity and National Development Nexus

It has been established in this paper that insecurity has impacted greatly on the country socio-development fabric. In view of this, attempt under this section is to establish the correlation between insecurity and national development. According to Denney (2013) the relationship between insecurity and underdevelopment is much stronger than the relationship between peace and development. That is, where there is conflict there is often development challenges. This view is shared by Dike (2008) when he asserts that lack of security of lives and property of citizens is a major hindrance to meaningful development. According to

him, climate of fear frightens domestic and foreign agencies interested in carrying out development programmes or investment and it also limits people's ability to develop economically. Similarly, Ugwu (2013) noted that many communities cannot benefit from any development project because of unresolved protracted conflicts. This is because it is difficult to mobilise members of such community to get involved in development process since workers cannot enter conflict prone communities for fear of hostility. Imobighein in Ugwu (2013) further buttresses this by asserting that in conflict prone areas, unemployment rises, financial and banking systems become in-operative as investors have no confidence anymore and move to more secure areas.

In trying to link insecurity and community development, Ugwu (2013) holds that during conflicts there is inadequate cooperation among community members, absence of outside support, destruction of completed projects, among others will retard community development. These far-reaching effects of insecurity in most cases put a halt on development in affected communities. In this instance, children and youth are more vulnerable to conflict through the indirect impact of a weak state and social system. He however, noted that breakdown of social structures can be detrimental to the development of children and youth in their most important years.

Insecurity also has impact on the level of poverty in a country. During severe conflicts, there is always wanton destruction of lives and property which makes life insecure. According to the World Bank Data on poverty (2020) it is noted that almost half of poor people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in just five countries: Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Madagascar. According to the report more than 40 percent of the global poor live in economies affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and the number is expected to rise to 67 percent in the next decade (*The World Bank*, 2020). It is therefore not surprising that Nigeria is one of the few countries with a high poverty rate.

It is also imperative to note that countries which are struggling with the challenges of development are also prone to experience higher rate

of insecurity. There is the wise saying that a hungry person is an angry person. Therefore, when the populace is hungry, they are prone to engage in act of criminality which are quite antithetical to development. It is therefore surprising that the security-development convergence explains the reason every successive government, since Nigeria's independence has reiterated the importance of security as the core goal of government (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019) and have struggled to entrenched it in the country. The next segment focuses on the national development options.

National Development Options

It has been established in the course of the paper that national development is not realistic where insecurity is at the alarming rate. As a Siamese twin that share a contradictory identity, insecurity inhibits development, where national development is also expected to foster peace and security in the country. The security situation facing the entire globe in the 21st century has remained a dilemma. While insecurity is found everywhere in the world, the security situation in the sub-Saharan Africa has remained an enigma. Nigeria has been mostly affected by problem of insecurity, therefore, the need to find a lasting solution to the security dilemma is not a matter of chance but a necessity. In this segment we will attempt to give some options that may improve security situation in the country as follows:

Military intelligence: The security situation in contemporary time required sophistication in gathering intelligence. To achieve this, there is the need to build the capacity of the Nigerian military and intelligent agencies in this regard. It is tough to avoid violence against groups committing massacres of students and civilians every week or taking mass of people for ransom, but the need for a coordinated intelligence gathering will be useful. While effort is made to improve the intelligence gathering of the military and the police alike, the need to train and improve the capacity of Nigerian Police Force is equally important. This should be done alongside building the capacity of leadership in the police and the military. The need for total reorganisation of the military is more daunting

now. This will allow the provision of necessary equipment of operation when the right type of leaders is in place.

Coordinated/compact military operation: There is also the need for coordinated policy among security agencies and governors of affected states. Experience over the years shows that there is no central body for coordinating these security agencies that are responsible for curtailing increase in insecurity. In some cases, there is rivalry between the police and the military. Thus, security architecture in the country is in complete disarray because there is no coordinated/compact operation among security agencies or governors in affected states. This weakness is exploited by criminal gangs. Therefore, attempt at ending the crisis requires leadership from the federal government, which means developing a clear policy to coordinate the activities of the security personnel. As Omole, Adejumo and Adejumo (2019) suggest, the governors of the affected state should be on the same page and ensure a cooperative operation exist among the security unit operating in their states.

Getting to the root cause: There is the need to raise the caveat that security efforts as suggested in the above paragraphs can help curtail the situation, but they will not solve the underlying causes of insecurity. This caveat is premised on the fact that there are deeply-seated socioeconomic and political grievances pushing young people to criminality and violent extremism in Nigeria. It is known that the overwhelming majority of these criminal gangs, if not all, have never gone to school. So, they have never had the opportunity to get education and that is one of the grievances they have expressed in their messages. Without proper education, many of these groups cannot find employment in the Nigerian system, so they resort to crime. Therefore, investing in quality education is one of the ways to get at the root causes. When education is guaranteed for all, the possibility of being easily sway into criminality is less feasible.

Besides quality education, the Nigerian government also need to invest in the economy and develop infrastructure in rural areas, including in the remotest areas. Building essential access roads will stop many of these criminals because security forces can then pursue them into the forest.

Investing in infrastructure can help create good-paying jobs that will take people away from criminality and extremism. Another important thing that must be done is to add other initiatives to reinforce the bond between ordinary Nigerians and the state. The average Nigerian does not see the worth of democracy in the country because it has not worked for them. The believe of most Nigerians is that democracy works for the few in government, so there is this widespread frustration with democracy. One of the conditions of reducing insecurity is to address the problem of the lack of good governance through investment in the economy, infrastructure, and other initiatives to take people out of abject poverty and strengthen the social bond (Iwara, 2021; Omole et al, 2019).

The security situation becomes direr because some people have seen crime as lucrative and easy way to get money. This make it more worrisome because some of those people who have been exposed to this lifestyle will actually find it difficult to go back to farming or pastoralism. What the government need to do in this instance is to ensure any other alternative to peace will be a costly venture. This means while government is improving the economy and providing requisite development and education in the affected areas, it also ensures the security formations are well mobilised and properly motivated to curb subsequent criminality. Once the lineage of recruitment into criminality is blocked and crime is made less lucrative and enterprising, it is just a matter of time before a few bad elements are pushed out of relevance. This also means the government should seek necessary help from global partners who could help in the area of training the military in the area of intelligence gathering, production of military arsenal and facilities to develop an independent and robust military structure. The Nigerian university and the academe have important role to play here, and it is the government that will drive it.

In order to enhance security and engender national development there is the need for commitment to achieve development and the capacity to do so by the Nigerian political class. Empirical findings confirm that development is dictated by the ability of the political elite to pursue collective goods instead of private ones. The implication of this position is

that resource abundance may not lead to development when state policies effectively serve private interests rather than collective good (Thovoethin, & Avosetinyen, 2015). The Nigerian political elite as presently constituted are dominated by people who are self-serving, hence often strive to protect their interest instead of collective interests. In this process, policies formulated and implemented by them are meant to protect the interest of the existing political and economic class. Therefore, to achieve national development the Nigerian political class must be committed to development and increase state capacity for development (Thovoethin, 2016).

Conclusion

We have demonstrated in this paper that the problem of insecurity in Nigeria is increasing at alarming rate. This is especially worrisome in the Northern part of Nigeria as a result of the activities of the Boko Haram sect, and increase in banditry and kidnapping for ransom that have almost enveloped the country. There is no country around the world that can achieve any meaningful development in the face of this disastrous level of insecurity as presently witnessed in Nigeria. Thus, having established the nexus between insecurity and national development which has constituted a 21st century dilemma for Nigeria, this paper has suggested structural changes in the security architecture of the country, the need to address the deficiencies in the Nigerian education system, an improved infrastructural development and the formulation of economic policies as necessary conditions for moving Nigeria out of challenges of insecurity especially in relation to national development. The contribution of the international community in the task of ending or reducing insecurity in Nigeria was also captured. Emphasis is therefore placed in building local capacity, while no country can be an island on its own, the need to invest in the Nigerian academe to ensure necessary capacity is built in armoury will be a good direction for the future. The role of leadership is key to advancing a stable system, that is the reason the leadership dilemma explains why lack of political will or deficient of it has always been at

the core of security situation in the country. It is envisaged that adopting this multi-sectoral approach could help improve security situation in the country.

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