

Security and National Development in Nigeria: The Threat of Boko Haram

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Abstract

One of the major setbacks to development in Nigeria is insecurity. Until very recently, plethora of explanations on the crawling pace of development in Nigeria tends to pay infinitesimal attention to the centrality of security to national development. It is no surprise therefore that since 1999 when Nigeria returned to civil rule insecurity tends to have hampered national development. Security is evidently the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. The development strides in most Western Capitalist States that place premium on security lend credence to this assertion. Whilst Nigeria is endowed with abundant resources, negligence to numerous challenges of insecurity of the environment appears to have created porous security condition that engendered violence and retards development. This paper relies on sequential technique of qualitative analysis as it looks at the imminent security danger posed by Boko Haram in the light of the present onslaught and the extent the insurgence has shape development trajectories in Nigeria. It is the opinion of the paper that security avails the opportunity for development. The paper thus, concludes that Nigeria can achieve sustainable development only through firm prioritization of security in the development agenda.

Key Words: Security, National Development, Nigeria, Boko Haram.

Introduction

In May 1999 Nigeria's return to civil rule was accompanied with fresh hopes and latent optimism. This optimism is predicated on the fact that democracy would guarantee freedom, liberty, and equity and enhances security of lives and property, which would indeed repositions development trajectories to sustainability. Regrettably this optimism seems to be a mirage. Nigeria is presently rated as one of the poorest Nations in the world with debilitating youths unemployment. For instance, Aganga (2009) observed that over ten million Nigerians were unemployed by March 2009 and unemployment is running at around 19.7 percent on average (see National Bureau of Statistics Report 2009). This figure geometrically increases yearly with less realistic efforts by the managers of the state to abate the rampaging unemployment problem. In Nigeria, like many other developing countries, about 70% of the population live in poverty (Otto and Ukpere 2012: 6767). Majority of the population seem to lack access to pipe borne water, health care facilities, electricity and affordable quality education.

Amidst these development challenges, the security situation in the country deteriorated drastically. Nigeria's return to democratic rule is threatened by security disaster. Arguably, considerable progress has been achieved in the areas of freedom of speech and liberty, but series of resource based conflict (Niger Delta), ethno-religious crisis (Jos crisis), and communal conflicts persisted. The climax of these security threats is the insurgence of a group called Boko Haram in the Northern Nigeria. Thus, a considerable effort to end the violence and build a sustainable peace to steer the economy to sustainability seems far from realization. The basic questions are: why development has continued to elude Nigeria in spite of numerous amounts of human and material resources? To what extent has security crisis impacted or contributed to development crisis in Nigeria? Is Boko Haram really a threat to development in Nigeria? These pertinent but complex questions needed urgent attention especially now Nigeria is struggling to be among twentieth world developed countries in 2020.

It is against this backdrop that this study addresses the interface between security and development in Nigeria. Particularly, it seeks to demonstrate that insecurity is a major impediment to development in Nigeria with a particular reference to Boko Haram's activities. The paper is therefore divided into five parts: first is the introductory section, the second is the conceptual explanations, followed by the dimensions of security in Nigeria, the fourth seeks to explain whether Boko Haram is actually a threat to Nigeria and the last is conclusion and recommendations.

Security and Development: Conceptual Explanations

The concept of security is not alien and has been central even in the primitive societies. The need for security necessitated the social contract in which people willingly surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. For decades, issues relating to security tend to occupy the centre stage in the development discourse. With the end of the cold war, there have been attempts to shift conceptualization of security from a state-centric perspective to a broader view that places premium on individuals, in which human security that embodies elements of national security, human rights and national development remain major barometer for explaining the concept. At the heart of this debate there have been attempts to deepen and widen the concept of security from the level of the states to societies and individuals, and from military to non-military issues (Krahmann, 2003:9).

Majorly, two contending perspectives tend to provide the basis for the conceptualization of human security. One is a neo-realist theoretical framework, which is predicated on the primacy and centrality of state in conceptualizing security. It tends to explain security from the standpoint of state primary responsibility. Within this context, Buzan (1991) argued that the 'straitjacket' militaristic approach to security that dominated the discourse during the Cold War was 'simple-minded' and subsequently led to the underdevelopment of the concept. For him, human security includes political, economic, social and environmental threats including those that are militaristic. Thus, Buzan (1991) illustrated a tripartite concept analysis of security based on international system, state level and individual level but submitted that sovereign states should remain the most effective security provider.

The second approach is a postmodernist or pluralist view that seeks to displace the state as a major provider of security but rather places greater emphasis on non-state actors. Advocates of this approach tend to argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. According to Booth (1994) states and implicitly governments must no longer be the primary referents of security because governments which are supposed to be the 'guardians of their peoples' security' have instead become the primary source of insecurity for the many people who live under their sovereignty. As a result, Booth (1994) further argued that human security is ultimately more important than state security. While concurring with Booth, Nwabueze (1989:2) posited that economic security of the individual is or should be of far greater concern to the government and society than the security of the state.

Thus, some scholars seem to place emphasis on absence of threat to acquire values or tendencies that would undermine national cohesion and peace as criteria for determining what security connotes (David 2006; Wolfrs 1962; Oche 2001). In his view, David (2006) posited that security is the condition or feeling of safety from harm or danger, the defence, protection and the absence of threats to acquire values (cited in Igbuzor, 2011:2). Security in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquire values, in subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Wolfrs, 1962). In spite of its conceptual complexities, the understanding of the term shows that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. Thus:

“Security has to do with freedom from danger or with threats to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and legitimate interests and enhance the well being of its people. Thus, internal security could be seen as the freedom from or the absence of those tendencies which could undermine internal cohesion and the cooperate existence of the nation and its ability to maintain its vital institutions for the promotion of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, as well as meet the legitimate aspirations of the people. Internal security also implies freedom from danger to life and prosperity” (Imobighe cited in Oche 2001:76-77).

It therefore refers to the search to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflict- whether the threat originates from other states, non-state actors, or structural socio-economic conditions (Stan, 2004:2).

It is apparent from the foregoing that national security is a desideratum, *sine qua non* for economic growth and development of any country (Oladeji and Folorunso 2007:42). Security seems to be critical in the life of any nation as it attracts and propels development.

The concept of development seems to be in a state of flux since the end of the Second World War. In the early 1940s the ideological differences between the Socialist East and the Capitalist West appears to have influenced the meaning and the conceptualization of the term. Ake (2001:9) argues that the ideology of development itself became a problem for development because of the conflict between its manifest and latent functions. At the time when development seems to be conceived as the outcome of economic growth, many theorists as Rostow (1952) and Harrod and Domar (1957), among others proposed models of development, generally identifying structural changes, savings and investments as the source of economic development and growth (Otto and Ukpere, 2012:6766). The assumption was that economic growth would generate fund for investment and infrastructural development that would guarantee better living condition of people.

Thus, at the tail end of 1970s it appears that economic growth in most developing and underdeveloped societies especially in the Latin America and Africa do not provide corresponding social goods. Evidently, economic growth could not sufficiently address the spate of unemployment, poverty, disease, hunger, illiteracy and ever increasing crimes and wars. Thus, post development thought has called for a return to the stress on people as both the measures and determinants of development (Rapley 2007:6). This seems to have necessitated the new thinking and redefinition of development from economic growth centred perspective to human centred approach. Development is now seen as a transformation of the society, a move from the old ways of thinking, and old form of social and economic organization to new ones (Stiglitz cited in Afeikhena 2004:207). As Chandler (2007:367) rightly observed that development has been redefined, taking the emphasis away from traditional economic indicators of GDP and trade and broadening out the concept to take in psychological and material factors related to the measurement of human well-being. Specifically, Rodney (1972), Nnoli (1981), Ake (2001) have argued that development is multifaceted and indeed centered on man. For Nnoli (1981) development could be seen as a dialectical phenomenon in which the individual and the society interact with their physical, biological and inter human environments transforming them for own betterment and that of humanity at large and being transformed in the process. This view or conception of development according to Okolie (2009) pointedly improves man's potentials and capacities and subsequently eliminates and/or reduces poverty, penury, inequality, unemployment and generally enhances the condition for human existence and self-reproduction. Development therefore, could be seen as the process of empowering people to maximise their potentials and the ability to exploit nature to meet daily human needs. It can also be seen as a process by which quality of human lives and capacity to surmount daily needs are considerably improved.

However, Sen (1999) observed the centrality of freedom in the process of development. For him, development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over-activity of repressive states (Sen, 1999:3). In the last two decades, development trajectories in Asia (Asian tigers) and Middle East depict that developing nations need to formulate a functional home-grown development models if they really want to escape the pains of underdevelopment.

Since the end of the Cold War, security and development concerns have been increasingly interlinked (Chandler, 2007:362). In fact, no sustainable development can be achieved in the atmosphere of conflicts, crisis and war and Nigeria is not an exception. Understandably, security and development are two different concepts but tend to affect each other, making both concepts inseparable. This relationship has recently triggered debates on security – development nexus (see Chandler, 2007; Stan, 2004).

Dimensions of Security Crisis in Nigeria: Implications for National Development

In the discourse of security in Nigeria, Okorie (2011), Jega (2002), Salawu (2010), Onyishi (2011), Ezeoha (2011), Lewis (2002), have identified several causes of security crisis in Nigeria that pose grave consequences to national development. Chief among them is ethno-religious conflicts that tend to have claim many lives in Nigeria. By 'ethnic-religious' it means a situation in which the relationship between members of one ethnic or religious and another of such group in a multiethnic and multi-religious society is characterized by lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion and fear, and a tendency towards violent confrontation (Salawu, 2010:346).

Since independence, Nigeria appears to have been bedevilled with ethno-religious conflicts. Over the past decades of her Nationhood, Nigeria has experience a palpable intensification of religious polarization, manifest in political mobilization, sectarian social movements, and increasing violence (Lewis 2002:1).

Ethnic and religious affiliations determine who gets what in Nigeria; it is so central and seems to perpetuate discrimination. The return to civil rule in 1999 tends to have provided ample leverage for multiplicity of ethno-religious conflicts. Uhumwangu and Epelle (2011:1) contended that democracy has increased the culture of impunity in some people while political differences are believed to have fuelled some of the violence that have erupted. With over (400) ethnic group, belonging to several religious sects, Nigeria since independence has remained a multi-ethnic nation state, which has been grappling and trying to cope with the problem of ethnicity and ethno-religious conflicts (Salawu, 2010:345). It has occurred in places like Shagamu (Ogun State), Lagos, Abia, Kano, Bauchi, Nassarawa, Jos, Taraba, Ebonyi and Enugu State respectively (Onyishi, 2011:176). For instance, the ethno-religious crisis in Plateau State has persisted and implicitly reinforces the problem of indigene/settler dichotomy that seems to lack constitutional remedy. It has become so prevalent in Jos, such that made Plateau State go down with the unenviable record as the first state in the Fourth Republic where a state of emergency was declared (Uhumwangu and Epelle 2011:1).

However, the inability of the Nigerian leaders to tackle development challenges, distribute state resources equitably and render good services to the people appear to be one of the causes of ethno-religious violence. Salawu (2010:348) argued that a major cause of what we now see as ethnic-religious conflicts in Nigeria has to do with the accusation and allegations of neglect, oppression, domination, exploitation, victimization, discrimination, marginalization, nepotism and bigotry.

The second is the grinding youth's unemployment. Youth's unemployment seems to have contributed in the rising cases of violent conflict in Nigeria. Unemployment according to the International Labour Organization could be seen as numbers of the economically active population who are without work but available for and seeking work, including people who have voluntarily left work (World Bank 1998:63). It constitutes the total number of people that are out of work. Arguably, unemployment seems to be a global trend. However, Nigeria's unemployment situation deteriorated sequel to state inability to put in place appropriate mitigating mechanisms to abate or control its spread and impacts. For instance, over ten million Nigerians were unemployed by March 2009 and unemployment is running at around 19.7 percent on average according to Aganga the former minister of finance (see National Bureau of Statistics report 2009). Breaking it down, the report reveals that the national unemployment rates for Nigeria between 2000 and 2009 showed that the number of unemployed persons constituted 31.1% in 2000; 31.6% in 2001; 12.6% in 2002; 14.8% in 2003; 13.4% in 2004; 11.9% in 2005; also in 2006 it was 13.7%; in 2007 14.6%; in 2008 14.9%; in 2009 19.7% (National Bureau of Statistics 2009:238). From the above, it can be stated that unemployment has a severe negative implication on national development in Nigeria as most of its productive force are unemployed. What this means theoretically is that poverty and unemployment increase the number of people who are prepared to kill or be killed for a given course at token benefit Salawu (2010). It could predispose one to engaging in illicit activities that would undermine security of the environment.

The third issue is related to political aspect in Nigeria. Apart from the issue of poor governance and leadership failure, the electoral politics appears to have assumed a satanic dimension since 1999. A cursory look at electoral politics in Nigeria since 1999 depicts a catalogue of election related assassinations. For instance, on 23rd of December, 2001, the former Attorney General of the Federation Chief Bola Ige was assassinated and on March 5, 2003, Harry Marshall- the national Vice Chairman for the South-South Zone of All Nigeria Peoples Party was also assassinated (Iduh 2011). The former Nigerian Bar Association Chairman, Onitsha Branch in Anambra State Barnabas Igwe and his wife were gruesomely murdered on September 1, 2002 and Engr. Funsho Williams, Dr. Ayodeji Daramola former gubernatorial candidates of PDP in Lagos and Ekiti State suffer the same fate (see Iduh 2011). Recently, a serving Senator from Plateau State, Senator Dantong Gyang Daylop, the majority leader of Plateau State House of Assembly Honourable Gyang Fulani were gruesomely murdered while many were left injured by unidentified gunmen (see sun newspaper July 9, 2012:2). Indeed, incessant political violence in Nigeria could be attributed to over-zealousness and desperation by political gladiators to win elections or remain in office at all cost. A good example is former president Obasanjo who publicly declared that that the 2007 general elections would be 'do or die' affair.

Such remark does not only endanger political developments but connotes a violent call for everyone to augment political arsenals for the contest.

Also systemic and political corruption in Nigeria seems to have added another dimension of violent conflicts which has eroded National values. Corruption is bad not because money and benefits change hands, and not because of the motives of participants, but because it privatizes valuable aspects of public life, bypassing processes of representation, debate, and choice (Thompson cited in Graflambsdorff 2001:97). It has been described in the academic circles as cancer militating against Nigeria's development; corruption is deeply threatening the fabric of the Nigeria society (Iduh 2011:124). Corruption hampers economic growth, disproportionately burdens the poor and undermines the effectiveness of investment and aid (Iyare, 2008:27). The existence of two anti-graft agencies; Independence Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) and Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) since 1999 appear to have done little in an effort to totally eradicate corrupt practices in Nigeria. The ICPC and EFCC seem to have come under severe criticisms owing to what appeared as 'selective' prosecution in handling corrupt related matters under Obasanjo administration. For instance Iyare, (2008:46), argued that the EFCC derailed completely as it became the tool of the Obasanjo government to silence and witch hunt Obasanjo's political opponent.

More succinctly, Jega captures the symptoms that cause insecurity in Nigeria when he observed that Nigeria is one of the nations in the world whose political landscape has been inundated, suffused with and deeply enmeshed in spectrum of recurring complex conflicts ranging from resource, communal, to political and ethno-religious conflicts (Jega, 2002:35). The implication of all these setbacks is poor implementation of policies, rising unemployment, hardship, economic and political stagnation that gives rise to the present threatening insecurity which seems to be developing beyond the capacity of state.

Is Boko Haram a Threat to National Security in Nigeria

Boko Haram is a religious Islamic sect that came into the limelight in 2002 when the presence of the radical Islamic sect was first reported in Kanama (Yobe state) and also in Gwoza (Borno state). "Boko Haram," which in the local Hausa language means "Western education is forbidden," officially calls itself "Jama'atul Alhul Sunnah Lidda'wati wal Jihad," which means "people committed to the propagation of the Prophet's teachings and jihad" (Meehan and Speier 2011: 6). Beyond religious explanations, Boko Haram could be arguably described as a 'home-grown' terrorist group that romances with some desperate politicians in the North. It appears that the sect enjoys effective support from some well-to-do individuals, religious leaders, allies, admirers of their ideology and highly placed politicians in the North who claim to be Nigerians but are clandestinely working against the State. For instance, Lister, (2012), observed that it is no longer a sect of Islamic fanatics but has the support of disgruntled politicians and their paid thugs (cited in Adagba, Ugwu and Eme, 2012:85). Recently, revelations and security investigations into the activities of the sect tend to affirm that the group is also sponsored from within the country. This simultaneously transpire within the period when a serving Senator from the North is on trial for aiding the activities of Boko Haram. Thus, a senior official of Boko Haram allegedly granted an interview detailing how the sect had been on the payroll of a few governors of the North (Adagba et al, 2012).

Thus, Boko Haram seems to be a destructive political tool with a cosmetic pretension of being religious. The bombing of Nigeria Police Force Headquarters' in Abuja on June 16, 2011, the U.N house in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and other high profile bombings attest to this assertion. Nigeria does not seem to have suffering only the economic setbacks caused by Boko Haram's bombings but also suffers from the battered image and humanitarian disaster the group inflicted on her. For instance, between July 27, 2009 and February 17, 2012, Boko Haram has launched fifty three (53) attacks in which 1157 people were killed and hundreds of people injured in the Northern Nigeria (adapted from a graph in Adagba et al, 2012). This indiscriminate and sporadic bombing seem to make Northern Nigeria increasingly unsafe and has compelled most non-indigenes of the region to relocate especially the Igbos. This phobia of being attacked especially in cities like Kano, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Jalingo and Yola was responsible for the exodus of people from the North to other parts of the country as witnessed in the last few months. According to Idika, in a press statement;

The Igbos resident in Kano are living with naked fear and apprehension. Though there are few of us who like to stay and defend ourselves, the majority of us, particularly, women and children, numbering over three stling to leave the North (Kano), because unfolding events indicate that the North (Kano) is no longer safe for easterners... Ohanaeze Ndigbo Kano, hereby calls on the governors of the eastern states in the South-South to provide means of transportation with adequate security to evacuate our brethren who would want to leave because human life is precious and should be protected as such. (cited in Phillip, 2012:16)

Furthermore, many from various ethnic groups seem to have followed suit in the exodus, while economic activities in the North have drastically been reduced as a result of this crisis. The implication is that the crisis is rather under-developing already underdeveloped Northern region and threatens Nigeria's prospect of joining the league of highly developed countries in 2020. Generally, Boko Haram's activities have perforated the peace and tend to have impacted negatively on socio-economic development in Nigeria. At the same time, it seems to reincarnate the issue of suspicion among regions which preceded the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970.

Conclusion

From all indications security is a big challenge in Nigeria's effort to develop and Boko Haram insurgency has compounded the existing threatening security situation in Nigeria. While it could be true that security is a major issue globally, Nigeria's security situation has over the years deteriorated owing to poor governance, political desperation and government inability to deliver the needed dividend. To this end, there is need for government and stakeholders to explore alternative avenues (basically dialogue) rather than force to finding lasting solution to the security lapses and the menace of Boko Haram if actually Nigeria wants to develop. This is because use of force approach appears to have been inflaming the crisis and diverting attention from the fundamental issues that nurtures and propels the insurgency. Doing this, demands that governments in the North should retrace their steps to deliver dividend of democracy in lieu of the present elitist-centred distribution of state resources. Federal government should also complement this effort knowing full well that hardship and poverty could induce crisis and that financial viability of rebellion sometimes serves as motivation for engagement.

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