



NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF INSURGENCE

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ABSTRACT

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The consciousness and philosophy of the security of a nation assumed a different dimension after World War II. Defense of a nation has been employed to justify military incursion into politics by many African States. In Nigeria, the emergence of military regimes is always seen as measure to guard or defend National Security which is panacea for sustaining dictate of law, justice and democracy. In the years gone by, national security have been threatened and traumatized with internal crisis like the civil war, ethnic rivalry, religious uprisings, and currently, activities of other sect such as Boko Haram. The unprecedented rise of insurgency in many parts of Nigeria has constituted a challenge to sustainable democracy. The unconventional methods of warfare, adopted by these sect, in addition with the seeming inability of the Nigeria security drives to incapacitate their operational tactics, questions the willingness of our national defense to sustain democracy. This ugly development portrays negative signal on the security of our nation and democratization with its consequences on political stability. Against this backdrop, this paper looks at the challenges insurgency has posed on the security of Nigeria and its democracy. It argues that if the Nigeria State does not decisively debilitate the sects that are posing security challenges, the possibility of achieving sustainable democracy will be a mirage. This is because, by then the Bush - fire - effects of the killer groups may have done great damage to the democratic structure in the country.

Contribution/ Originality: This study is one of the few studies which have investigated the relationship between national security and sustainance of democracy in Nigeria. It is hoped to sensitize the public on national security issues and inculcates in them that democracy and national development does not thrive in an atmosphere of chaos and insecurity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Security and its related issues have remained on the fore front of societal concern all over the world. Today, the print and electronic media are awash with security issues. The Second World War which ended in 1945 may have assisted the movement for decolonization of Africa, Asia and Latin American countries under the shackles of the

imperialists. Hitherto, the agitation for self-rule, determination and sustained democracy has been one of the greatest challenges of these emerging Nation/States.

A good number of these emerging nations/states have been challenged with the problem of how to achieve the security of their nations/states; a problems which they are confused on how to tackle them. These problems though at varying degrees and dimension includes, military incursion into political matters, electioneering campaign crisis, inter and intra party politics, internal civil disturbances and ethno-regional conflicts, secessionist threat, militancy, kidnapping religious uprising, the activities of Fulani herdsmen and so forth. These problems had brought about total upset of Nigerian democratic structure.

The level of insecurity in the country today has increased. Primary causes are traceable lips service usually paid to internal security (security negligence) and misplacement of national priority. This may have informed (Nnamdi, 2009) to say that the task of achieving democratic stability, national integration and sustainable socio-economic development has proven problematic since Nigeria became an independent country in 1960.

It was recorded in the Nuhu (2010) according to Nuhu Ribadu that “after about half a century of independence, Nigeria was unable to realize the great vision of modernity and effective governance. This has been directly linked to our inability to ensure the security of lives and properties of the people”. It is reasoned therefore that any country that needs sustainable democracy should take seriously issues bordering on her security.

Unless and until freedom of expression, right to life, right to dignity of human personality, right to personal liberty, right to fair hearings, right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, press, peaceful assembly and association, movement, political participation, identified as fundamental human rights by Anuye *et al.* (2015) are achieved, sustainable democracy remains a mirage.

Since the state of relative insecurity in Nigeria may be because of the nature of democratic governance. The challenge is to ensure that democracy is sustained and it becomes a way of life acceptable and workable for the people. This involves managing internal tendencies especially security issues and problems that could pose a threat to democratic ideals. It is therefore the position of this paper to establish the relationship between national security and sustainable democracy.

1.1. Concept of National Security

Security in broader term can be viewed as the arrangement to secure the most basic necessities of life. Guzau (2006) view national security as the security interest of all individuals, communities, ethnic groups, political entities and institutions which inhabit the territory of Nigeria.

National security, specifically, implies the security of life, property, and socio-economic well being of a nation and its people. It is sovereignty from threats to a nation’s ability to protect its cherished values, defend itself and improve the well being of its citizens. Ake (1996) posits that it embraces not only the protective measures to safeguard persons, property and information from every form of danger, but also to guarantee the peace and tranquility welfare of citizens.

Safeguarding the territorial integrity of any nation is the major focus of a nation’s security policy. Other guiding principles are African co-existence and independence, non-intervention in the affairs of other states, and regional economic development and security co-operation. Subordinate goals include military self sufficiency and regional leadership. Following that the core issues of national security according to Magaji (2013) is law and order, it means that national security are measures taken to preserve law and order in a nation.

Nigeria as an active participant in the United Nations Organization (UNO), the African Union and Economic Community of West African States, highly needed internal and external security for democratization process. Without the preservation of law and order in a nation sustainance of democracy will be intricate.

1.2. Threats to National Security in Nigeria

Primarily, Nigeria's national defense policy aims at ensuring there is maximum security, in which citizens enjoy a free, peaceful, safe environment, accessibility to resources and protection. It also facilitates individuals and groups in the conduct of their legitimate businesses without any threat, hindrance and molestation. A nation's security may be undermined either by external or internal conflicts or violence emanating from social, political, religious and economic misunderstandings.

It is reasoned that the feeling of insecurity among citizens and situations could result to indiscipline, loss of trust in authority, frustration, apathy, desperation, agitation, anarchy and lawlessness. This is of course the situation in Nigeria today.

Elaigwu (2005) argued that in Nigeria, as in other societies, there is evidence of correlation between democratic governance and the state of security. The major security problems currently confronting the nation have been identified to include; political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, terrorism, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality, organized crimes and corruption. These identified problems constitute threats to the peace, security and development and invariably, they have implications for the continuity and survival of democracy. On the other hand, we need to explore if democracy can itself be deliberately strengthened as a positive response to these problems.

Nwankwo (2005) says that military incursion into politics is a security breach from culmination of security and political developments. The political and sometimes socio-economic developments are security concerns that were not addressed or managed by the existing state structure. Apart from coups, there are other security issues that have threatened and indeed, rattled the democratic political system. Among them, is civil or organized rebellion occasioned by a number of socio-political developments including ethnic disagreements, national resource contentions, misapplication of the federal character and so forth.

The Nigeria and Biafra Civil War is an example of such security breakdown as a result of failure to manage ethnic and social problems. Electoral fraud poses a major challenge to democracy in Nigeria and by implication; it is a threat to the security of a nation. Electoral fraud violates the sanctity of democracy and weakens its capacity as an instrument for the mobilization of national, human and material resources for development.

Another serious threat to Nigeria security is the imbalance in the ethnic, religious and regional composition and manipulation of such identities. This can be said to be responsible for the various ethno-religious and communal conflicts in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country. It also explains the attacks, in the past decade and recently on the easterners living in the North on one hand and the reprisal attacks on Northerners in the East. Similarly, the various ethno/religious conflicts and the activities of Boko Haram in parts of Northern Nigeria and the Avengers in the Niger Delta region pose serious security challenge.

In many parts of Nigeria today, the Fulani herdsmen are marauding and killing. Attah (2017) reported that the herdsmen are allowed to go on the rampage, rape women and kill people as they feel and we do not pursue them with the same kind of force applied on Boko-Haram. This attitude may be because it has not been felt that their rampaging activities may cause security threat and national disorder.

These disturbances undermine the democratic process and makes governance much more difficult. This situation generates anger and frustration from the populace because they feel uncomfortable. The anger and frustration heightens when they see corrupt officials living very comfortably while they languish in abject poverty. People then resort to violence and crime, such as kidnapping, bombing, etc to register their displeasure with the system.

Statistics shows that since civil rule in 1999, Nigeria have witnessed over ninety violent ethno-religious, communal, political etc conflicts (Elaigwu, 2005). As the May 2011 presidential election result was declared, thousands of persons were brutally murdered in some parts of Nigeria including youths on national assignment.

Also since the commencement of the present political administration, Nigeria has witnessed increasing number of security problems that constitute threats to the sustenance and survival of its democratic political system.

The security framework of any nation determines its democratic sustenance and largely its development. For instance, a breakdown of government laws and order, leading to chaos or anarchy is an indication that there is widespread insecurity in a country. [Smith \(2016\)](#) who identified a strong relationship between democracy and economic development holds same view. In the same vein and from the foregoing anything that affects national security affects sustainable democracy.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework adopted for this study is the relative deprivation theory. The theory was first formulated by [Samuel \(1949\)](#) in his wartime study - *The American Soldier*. According to this theory, relative deprivation is “the conscious experience of a negative incongruity between legitimate expectations and present activities.” This framework is applied more in the social sciences to establish the levels of economic, social, cultural, and political deprivation among citizens of a state.

The theory explains both the behavior and attitude of people as they pursue their objective in the society, including their desire for political power in the state. Such attitude and behavior include feeling of stress, political attitude, and participation in political activities. It further argue that relative deprivation occurs when individuals and/or groups subjectively perceive themselves as unfairly disadvantaged over others who possess similar quality and deserving similar rewards.

Similarly, relative deprivation as citizens’ recognition of inconsistency between their environment’s manifestation value potentialities (what the system have for them), with the indicators of such potentials expected to be known to the citizens. Those who feel that they are disadvantaged of the value potentials of the society, resort to violence as a medium to either express their deprivation or demand for the restoration of their value potentials. Their violence is usually in opposition to the leaders and the state.

Men quickly aspire beyond their social means and are angry when those means prove inadequate, but slow to accept limitations. This results in the variation between value expectations and value capabilities. The apparent difference between value expectations and value capabilities leads to constant crisis and violence in the state, as a means for the citizens to communicate their anger for their deprivation of certain rights in the state.

The relevance of this theory on national security in Nigeria finds expression in the state’s inability to provide adequate opportunity for both the leadership and the followership class to participate equitably in the governance of the state. The follower-ships, which are in majority, are deprived of their rights by the leadership, who are in minority, from effective participation or inculcate into the system their own philosophy. The effect is that the ruled resort to push down their ideas and an attempt to disagree with the rulers, and / or demand for their participation in the areas of their interest. This is exactly what is happening with ethnic militia in Nigeria. The sect may feel that they are deprived of their right, thus they have resorted to violence through bombing, kidnapping/hostage taking, rapping and so forth.

2.1. Sustainable Democracy

[Jega \(2002\)](#) argues that democracy is a multiplicity of conceptions which often are contradictory, also democracy mean “different things to different people”. However, despite the differences which often manifest in the various definitions or conceptions of democracy, democracy can be said to refer to a political practice or a mode of governance based on popular sovereignty, the rule of law, accountability, participation and leadership renewal or change ([Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2001](#)).

[Diamond \(1995\)](#) posits that democratic activities involve behavioral and institutional changes that normalize democratic policy and narrow its certainty. This normalization gives the citizens access to development, democratic

citizenship and culture, broadening of leadership recruitment and training, and the functioning of the civil society. For democracy to be sustainable, it must be internalized in the society. It must become a way of life and manifest itself at all levels of the socio-political and national systems.

Democratic arrangement ensures accountability, equity in the distribution of available resources, equal rights and justice. It is in line with this philosophy, that Akanbi (2004) argued that people in a democratic society should hold their leaders responsible for their action.

However, in the past, there has been growing concern of the efficacy of traditional security strategies for ensuring the goals of orderly, secured and safe society. This may have led some countries develop new models for the sustainability of national peace, democratic principles and security.

2.2. Insurgence and Democracy in Nigeria

Every political system developed or developing usually has contending groups that fight for their interest. Africa and especially Nigeria is not left out as dominant parties, vigilantes, ethnic and security groups are always the main feature of the system. For instance, ethnic groups like the Odua People's Congress (OPC), Bakasi Boys, Egbesu Boys of Africa, Operation Zaki-Zaki, Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Niger Delta volunteer Force (NDVF), the Avengers amongst others have different modes of operations in projecting their course individually or jointly.

Boko Haram insurgence assumed a serious dimension, in the North-Eastern states; Yobe, Borno and Adamawa, and in some other states like Bauchi, Plateau, Kaduna, Nasarawa and even the federal capital territory. Political events in Africa, particularly Nigeria – the largest economy in African continent, have been seriously threatened by the insurgent group.

2.3. Implications of Insurgence on National Security and Democratization in Nigeria

Of a truth insurgence is a threat to national security and democratization in Nigeria. The last general election in Nigeria where many internally displaced persons (IDP) were disenfranchised is a pointer to that. Boko Haram insurgence truly launched attack against western ideology, of which election is one. That Boko Haram insurgent group continued their fight particularly in parts of North East of Nigeria during the 2015 general election against all counter efforts of the government questions the national security intelligence arrangement in Nigeria. Today the Avengers are threatening to blow oil pipelines, the herdsmen are killing un-wantonly and tension is rising.

Careful observation reveals that voters during the last 2015 general election voted with fear as nobody can tell which area and person will be the next victim. Choice among alternatives and political participation cannot be rational and active in an insecure society.

3. CONCLUSION

The various sects have not made any mention of their attack against democracy in Nigeria, but their body language indicates strong opposition to programs of the government. They have vowed not only to discredit the government but fight to ensure that activities contrary to their belief are resisted by resorting to the use of bush-fire approach to press on their demand.

These disturbances undermine the democratic process and makes governance much more difficult. This situation generates anger and frustration from the populace because they feel uncomfortable. The anger and frustration heightens when they see the society polarized (the very rich and very poor). People then resort to violence and crime, such as kidnapping and hostage taking, bombing, etc to register their displeasure with the system.

Identified as the major security problems currently confronting the nation are: political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, terrorism, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality,

kidnapping, and militancy, activities of Fulani herdsmen, organized crimes and corruption. These identified problems constitute threats to the peace, security and development and invariably, they have implications for the continuity and survival of democracy. This shows that there is relationship between democratic governance and the state of security, [Elaigwu \(2005\)](#) holds the same view.

[Smith \(2016\)](#) established relationship between national security and democracy and by extension its economic development. Further, the atmosphere of insecurity created by Boko Haram during 2015 general election, hindered voters from exercising their civic rights. Democracy does not thrive in such atmosphere of chaos where electorates and electoral body cannot freely exercise their constitutional rights and duties. Indeed, politicization of activities poses a serious danger to democracy; it makes democratic structures to be weak and shaky.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

We attempted to create a relationship between national security and sustainance of democracy in Nigeria. From our findings, we discovered that insurgence posed a serious challenge to security and democracy. This ugly situation, if not properly checked will affect democratic sustainability in Nigeria. It is our view that, if democracy is to be sustained in Nigeria proactive measures by the government should be taken, and these measures include:

- i. The various security agencies must be provided with modern security gadgets and train regularly on modern security challenges.
- ii. Security agents should desist from being used and manipulated.
- iii. Security consciousness among Nigerians should be awakened. There should be national orientation to as a matter of urgency sensitize the public on national security matters. Neighborhood security consciousness should be inculcated into very growing Nigerian.
- iv. Creation of job for the youths and engaging them in meaningful ventures, so that they will be occupied and focused rather than being idle and destructive.
- v. The issue of security should not be perceived as the sole responsibility of the government. Every Nigerian should be involved in security matters.
- vi. Security agents should live up expectations by displaying acceptable level of professionalism especially in information handling and intelligence.
- vii. x. The judiciary should be prepared to handle objectively cases of breach of laws in Nigeria.
- viii. xi. Finally, the fight against insurgence should be a joint and global project, thus, Nigeria government should seek the assistance of other nations such as the U.S. France and Britain as to effectively stamp out insurgence and eventually pave way for sustainable democracy.

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