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INTERNAL SECURITY THREATS: CHALLENGES TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Since Nigeria's return to democracy on May 29, 1999, the country has experienced turbulent security challenges. Agitations from different sections of the country-bred several ethnic and religious militias among them are the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Boko Haram, the Odua People's Congress (OPC), issues of banditry, and farmers–herders' conflicts. Aside from these are the non-conventional security spheres which include human security and these have been in negative perpetuation for over three decades. These phenomena have led to capital flight out of the country and an unprecedented mass exodus of young Nigerians to abroad (mostly Europe and America). This movement has formed a new lexicon known as "japaism". Therefore, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will continue to be elusive to the country if these security threats are not wholistically and frantically subdued. This study utilized the Mertonian Anomie-Strain Theory to explain the phenomenon of internal security threats and how they affect sustainable development in Nigeria. The study relied on related literature sourced from the internet, textbooks, and journals. Secondary data were sourced from the websites of the World Bank, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), and daily/periodic Newspapers. The study also adopted the explanatory research method which provides for literature review and finding knowledge gaps. The objectives of the study are: to find out the factors of security challenges in Nigeria since 1999; and to find out how internal security threats affect sustainable development in Nigeria since 1999. The study recommends that the government should make a genuine commitment to curb insecurity by investing massively in human capital and infrastructural sectors. A better economic policy will attract foreign investment and these will lead to achieving sustainable development in the country.

Keywords: Anomie, Development, Militias, Security, Threats.

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Introduction

The debate on global security has been on the front burner since after the Second World War (Bevir, Daddow & Hall, 2013). Similarly, Monar (2014) states that since the evolution of the contemporary nation-state in the 17th – 18th century and its conceived thoughts in the work of Hobbes, Hocke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau, the issue of security to citizens has continued to be an integral aspect for justification, legitimacy and prerogative functions of the state. This is obvious as it is

captured in the constitutional provisions of state taking the responsibilities in matters of internal security.

According to Parker and Sitter (2016) all over the world, there have been internal security threats. Furthermore, the United Nations (UN, 2018), and Monar (2014) state that the security threats in the 9/11 2001 bombing of the World Trade Center (WTC) in USA, and other threats in Europe like the 2004 Madrid and 2005 London terrorist attacks posed as threats to global security. States in Africa have also experienced a fair share of internal security threats. Kenya and Tanzania were attacked in

1998 by Al-Qeada and since then, many other have been plunged into the debates of internal security threats (Kindl, 2017). In a study Alumona, Osita and Onuoha (2019) state that:

It was the 9/11 attacks in the United States, together with similar attacks ... that brought to fore the need for states to reinforce their internal security mechanisms to meet up with the challenges of protecting citizens and other nationals living within their territorial boundaries. The resultant effect of these global indices of insecurity is that in contemporary international politics, the ability of a state to ensure adequate security has become a principal variable in measuring the success or failure of the state (p.1-2).

Needless to say, that internal security tops states priorities as this influences the development of the states. Several studies (Knutson 2011, Mourad & Avery 2019: Ali 2013: and Kolagar & Sanaei 2022) have shown that there is a correlation between security and development. Corroborating this, Kolagar and Sanaei (2022) state that internal security threats have negative impact to sustainable development because the money that is supposed to be for other developmental projects are allocated to the military allowing those other sectors to languish and rot. Also, internal security threats deter foreign investments hence, capital flight. It is “observed that domestic security threats have significant negative effects on human development, while there is no meaningful relationship between external security threats and human development. Therefore, states with domestic security threats are more likely to experience lower growth in development” (Kolagar & Sanaei 2022).

Internal insecurity has claimed several lives and property worth millions of dollars were destroyed. According to Amani Africa (2022), in 2021 alone, civil disturbances and conflicts recorded were 30,866 in Africa and a death toll of 43791 was recorded. In Nigeria an Africa as a whole, certain factors have been observed as most serious obstacles to security which result to civil disturbances and conflicts. These factors include political exclusion, economic and social marginalization which are vividly blown through religious polarization (Nnoli, 2006).

Internal insecurity in Nigeria has been on an unprecedented rise since the return to democratic rule on May 1999 (Alumona, Oshita & Onuoha 2019). The experiences of the insecurity in Nigeria for over the last two decades have rocked the fabrics of the Nation that many have seen that it remains a miracle that Nigeria still exists as a country (Enenche 2019). In addition, Alumona, Oshita and Onuoha (2019) state that in Nigeria.

Admittedly, the rising concern about insecurity cannot be explained outside the numerous terrorist attacks by Boko Haram and other similar sects, the litany of kidnappings, increasing crime rate, the emerging culture of violence ... youth militancy and cultism, the herdsmen – farmers conflict and other factors of insecurity have become a regular feature of life in the country (p.2).

This explains the magnitude of flagrant insecurity in the country. So many lives have been taken unaccounted for and the destruction of property in the country has affected the development of the state.

Theoretical perspectives

The study utilizes two theoretical perspectives in the explanation of internal security challenges and how they influenced sustainable development in Nigeria. These theories are, thus:

The Conflict Theory

This theory is deeply rooted in Marxism. The theory emanated from the work of Hegel and Marx (Apkuru-Aja, 1997). The major tenants of the theory anchored on class struggle and exploitation (Omonijo, Obiorah, Oliver, Uche, Auyaegbunam, Shaibu & Ogunwa, 2017). Conflict theory was pioneered by Hegel and was later championed by Karl Marx. In a work, Marx and Engels (1882) argued that the history of every human society is rooted in class struggle hence, conflict. Conflict theory hinges on the argument that the society is made up of two classes – the bourgeois and proletariat. While the former is the owner of the means of production and they determine the order /forms of the social relations of production, the later are the workers or labourers in the

production process. In the production relation, Ritzer and Goodman (2004) argued that there is a massive exploitation. It is the exploitation that erupted into disagreement or conflict. Conflict as Marx opined results from the contradictions in the production relation in the society. Even so, Neo-Marxists like Coser and Dahrendorf postulate that these contradictions evolve to open confrontations of war and violence.

The class structure as stated by the conflict theorists refer as the rich and poor classes in Nigeria. The rich class have the resources and means of production while the poor are those who offer their labour for their livelihood. There have been frequent confrontations as a result of the contradictions arising from the production relation. The disagreements in some instances lead to violence and insecurity as a result of perceived marginalization of the poor (labourers).

The poor are faced with issues of existentialism due to marginalization, high rate of unemployment, social exclusionism etc these pose challenges to security and sustainable development.

Nonetheless, the conflict theory has been criticized on several grounds. For example, the theory is heavily dependent on conflict, disagreement and struggles in the society. The theory did not recognize that the society also experience some levels of harmony and tranquility. Rather it argues that what makes up the society are oppressing and subjective laws by the powerful bourgeois in order to continually suppress the proletariat (the poor) while their exploitation flourishes. Another aspect of the critique is that conflict theory explains social change in the society in the form of revolution through violent means. It does not acknowledge that social change can be achieved through dialogue, negotiation and evolutionary processes.

The Elite Theory

This theory originated from the work of Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858 – 1941). According to Epstein (2011), the Elite theory emanated as a reaction to the conception of Marx's power and state also Abraham Lincoln's postulations on democracy.

The Elite theory like the conflict theory argues that the society is grouped into two classes – the ruler and the ruled. While the ruler constitutes the minority, the ruled are the majority but the ruler is in possession of power and manoeuvre it to its favour but to the disadvantage of the ruled. This manipulation is to enable the ruler appropriate nation's resources and wealth at the detriment of the ruled. The elite has a firm and rigid structure though, individuals in the group may be altered. Whenever an old member dies or leaves the scene, new members are recruited and must be from the group's jurisdiction or must have a strong recommendation by the members of the group (ruler). Hence, power is retained and regulated within the domain of the ruler group. (Omonijo et al, 2017).

The manipulative instinct of the ruler has generated disagreement, strife, and violence in Nigeria since independence. The disagreement and subsequent declaration of war which led to the Nigerian Civil war in the 70s was as a result of some power manipulations by the elitists. In the ideology of Marxism, the substructure (economy) determines the superstructure (law, politics, education, religion). On the contrary, in Nigeria it is the superstructure (politics) that influences the substructure. Such contradictions and manipulations result to violence and insecurity in the country, these have serious consequences on sustainable development in the country. The argument is that there is also a value orientation/educational manipulation by the elite class on the ruled. This could further explain the religious manipulation of Boko Haram terrorist group of using religious ideological manipulations on members to recruit and have a stronghold.

The elite theory like any other theory, is faced with some criticisms. The theory seems to explain features of underdeveloped states and does not clearly explain how this can fit in developed societies where there is a clear demarcation of division of powers and rule of law which makes the superstructure determines the substructure. The theory also did not explain that through accepting the societal goals and means of achieving the goals an individual could move to the elite group (ruler). Rather,

the theory explained that the ruler class is constantly unchanged.

Theoretical Framework

The Merton Strain Theory

This theory was developed by Robert King Merton (1910-2003). The theory is an offshoot of the structural functionalism school. The theory was motivated by Durkheim's anomie postulation. Merton was curious to know about the society and cultural institutions and not just the weak nature of an individual in deviance or crime. In a study, Merton (1957) observed that there is a dysfunction between cultural value and means of achieving societal goals. It is the stringent measure of aspirations and achievement that Merton (1957), referred

to as strain theory. Furthermore, Merton (1938) argued that antisocial behaviours and serious societal offences (crime, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, insurgency etc) are as a result of the values of the society by placing premium on material aspirations as the sign of individuals' successes without a comprehensive provision of approved means to attain the goals. The variation between the goal and the means known as the strain creates different methods of individual adaptation with some accepting or rejecting the means and goals of the society. With people's aspirations on high premium for success without proportionate measures for achievement, individuals may sought for alternative (non-statutory) means of getting the goals (Halliru, 2012). This phenomenon is presented in the table below:

Table 1: Merton's typology of individual's adaptive behaviours to cultural goals and institutionalised means		
Adaptive behaviour	Cultural goals	Institutional means
Conformity	+	+
Innovation	+	–
Ritualism	–	+
Retreatism	–	–
Rebellion	±	±
Key		
+ accept either goals or means		
– reject either goals or means		
± reject all but substitute with new means and new goals		
Source: Carrabine, Cox, Lee, Plummer, and South, (2009, p. 79).		

Applying Marton's strain theory to internal insecurity, retreatism are those who have withdrawn from the society completely. They have lost fate in the Nigeria project and have carved a niche for themselves. Among these people are: alcoholic, gamblers, street-children, motor pack touts etc. They could form a large chunk of public nuisance and create unrest or violence at any given time. These group of people have already formed an underground battalion to be used for violence at any point. Another group is the rebellion, they completely erase both the means and the goals of the society and replaced them with their own new goals and means. Some good examples in Nigeria are Boko Haram whose aim is to create Islamic Caliphate in some parts of the

country in order to have their own laws different from that in Nigeria. There are also the Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB). They feel that Nigeria do not have any good promise for them and want to secede from the Nigeria state. The IPOB have continuously use violent means to cause security risks in the Eastern part of the country. The Odua People's Congress (OPC) is also another group in the Western part of Nigeria which mission is to create a Yoruba state which would be governed by the Yoruba traditions. They have used several nonconventional means that breached security in the Western part of the country. In the Northern part of the country is there is the Arewa People's Congress (APC) which has its youth wing that have radical ideology. They have threatened to adopt any illegal

means to achieve the goals they set for the Northern people.

One major criticism of the Marton strain theory is that it places much emphasis on the lower class who are deprived of socio-economic resources. It explains as if crime and violence are perpetuated only by the lower class. The strain theory of Marton does not explain the criminality or deviance of the upper class (Siegel, 2012). Notwithstanding, the Merton Strain Theory relevance cannot be overemphasized in explaining security phenomena such as these in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study utilized the explanatory research method. This method allows for a review of literature to find out knowledge gaps. The data used for illustration were secondary data and were sought for from the websites of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, (OECD), the internet, journals, books etc. Tables were used as means of secondary data for illustration and of the phenomenon.

Literature Review

In the philosophical premise of the Hobbesian, security is the utmost responsibility of the state (Ewetan & Urhie, 2014). In line with this, “the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically states that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of the government” (Ewetan & Urhie 2014, p. 40). But the government has not been able to meet up with these responsibilities as internal security challenges have gulped several lives and property in the country. Needless to say, that the trend and pattern of complex crimes and terrorism in Nigeria have reached an alarming level (Enenche, 2019).

For several decades, the debate on security related issue have raged on (Shedrach & Eze, 2023). According to Tela (2015), attempts have also been made since the early period of the cold war in redefining security from a state-centered view to a wider perspective which put much emphasis on the citizens in which the national security reflects human security, human rights and

sustainable development as the main parameter for the explanation of the concept of security (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). In a study Enenche (2019) categorized the concept of security into two broad perspectives, thus: the conventional perspective and the nonconventional perspective. The main argument of the former is that threats are in form of strength and power and to counter them depends on the military readiness while the latter argues that the concept of security does not need strength and power rather it is the threat to

individual economic and human rights, Barry Buzan is the major proponent of this concept. Similarly, several studies (Oche 2001, Igbanzor 2011, Nwanegbo & Odigbo 2013) have revealed that security is a threat to peace, stability, national unity and socio-economic prosperity of the state. Hence, there is a conformity in the studies that security is essential for national unity, harmony and sustainable development in a state. (Tela, 2015). In addition, Beland (2005) state that insecurity is a condition of apprehension as a result of the absence of protection. To further buttress this, Achumba, Ighomereho, & Apkan-Robaro (2013), postulate that insecurity could be viewed from two dimensions. One is that insecurity is being unprotected and disclosed to harm, threats and danger. The second aspect is that insecurity is a condition of being exposed to risk or apprehension which are the unpleasant feelings in anticipation of uncertainty.

Table 2: Some selected Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) directly affected by internal security threats in Nigeria			
Goals and Targets	Indicators	Nigeria's Status	
Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere			
Target 1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day	1.1.1 Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural)	Sixty-three percent or 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor. These people either cook with dung, wood or charcoal. They lack basic healthcare, live in poor sanitary environment and are faced with acute food security and housing, National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022)	
Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture			
Target 2.1 By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round	2.1.2 Prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity in the population, based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES)	Between 2020 and 2022, on average 21.3 percent of population in Nigeria experienced hunger. People in severe food insecurity would go for entire days without food, due to lack of money or other resources (Statista, 2023)	
Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels			
Target 16.1 Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	2021-2022 Incidents of Banditry is 554 and 4,016 deaths in one and a half of the years in North west and North Central alone. Incidents of terrorism is 125 and 1,040 deaths in North East alone for one and a half of the years. Extra-judicial killings by security forces, 13,241 Nigerians were killed between 2011 and 2021 (Nextier, 2022).	
Sources: Author's compilation November, 2023			

Factors that Facilitate Internal Security Threats in Nigeria

Several factors have contributed to internal security threats in Nigeria, among these are the following:

- i. Ethnic and religious contradictions. Nigeria is a diverse country with so many ethnic groups, cultural diversity and religious plurality. These various forms of diversity instead of providing the bases for the country's strength for a sustainable development, have turned out

to be the debacle and albatross for the country's development. Several crises in the country that have led to loss of lives and property have either ethnic or religious connotations. Such crises include the Ife – Modakeke communal clashes in the early 2000s, the Maitatsine religious uprising in the 1980s, the protracted Jos crisis of the 1990s to early 2000s, the protracted Tiv – Jukun communal clashes etc.

ii. Poverty and failure of governance. The ever-rising level of poverty in the country has contributed to the internal insecurity of the state. According to the NBS (2022), 133 million Nigerians are multidimensionally poor. In addition, Amare, Abay, Tiberty and Chamberlin (2021) state that the World Bank classified Nigeria as one of the three countries in the world with the highest level of poor people. However, there is a correlation between poverty and insecurity. This means that poverty is a factor of crime and insecurity in the country. In a study, Musa, Magaji, and Yakeen (2022, p.51) argued that “the consequences of poverty can also lead to an increase in the crime rate; an increase in child labour; an increase in child trafficking and other forms of social vices”. On the other hand, failure in governance has led to dire corrupt practices in Nigeria. For more than a decade the country has been rated among first to fourth most corrupt state globally Transparency International (TI, 2022). Similarly, it is further stated that:

... the severity of corruption and its devastating impact both on Nigeria's development and its citizens have become very conspicuous that real development is jettison for personal aggrandizement. The present situation in Nigeria as caused by protracted corrupt practices is very perilous as the country faces intense crises in its socio-political and economic development (Enenche 2017, p.19-20).

Both poverty and failure in governance are veritable ingredients for insecurity in a state because poverty could trigger people to strive by any means possible for survival while failed government would lead to a state of anomie (Thompson, 2002).

iii. Proliferation of small arms and light weapon trafficking. The illegal possession of arms and explosives is becoming widespread in Nigeria and other

West African countries. This scenario is a trigger to insecurity in Nigeria and the region entirely (Yahaya, Liman & Adadu, 2018). The fast-growing illicit market of small arms and light weapons has fueled criminal and insurgent activities such as the dreaded banditry, Boko Haram, communal and inter-ethnic conflict etc. According to several studies (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD 2018, Alemika 2013, Shaw and Mangan 2014) the fall of Gadaffi in Libya became a booster to illicit arms market in West Africa and this has triggered so many crises and insurgent/terrorist activities in the region.

iv. Land ownership/Resource control. The struggle for the acquisition of land and control of natural resources have been on the front burner of internal insecurity in Nigeria. The Jos crisis of September 7, 2001 was triggered by the lingering question on indigene and settlers. Also, the Zango – Kataf conflict in the 1990s. Several others had similar background features which hinge on land ownership and resource control struggle (Nweze, 2004). The struggle for resource control has led to the challenges of internal security in the Niger Delta region. Several activist groups such as Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) etc have created huge chaos in the region in ways for the struggle for resource control with its attendant insecurity consequences which also had dire economic effect on the entire nation.

v. Militarization of the state. State that experienced protracted strife and internal confrontations are prone to internal security challenges. The experiences from war and conflict within the state are harbingers of internal security challenges. According to Nweze (2004)

Military experiences have constituted good training in the use of fire-arms and weapons especially for those who use them to commit crime. Wars and military rule have always encouraged the building-up of arms and weapons in the country or region. These weapons which soon become left behind after the hostilities, find their way into the hands of wrong people and criminals (p.76-77).

The prolong military rule in Nigeria and the incessant civil disturbances snowballed into full fledged conflicts/wars in so many communities in the country immediately at the dawn of democracy on May 29, 1999. Pre-1999 served as an incubation period for fatal internal insurrections in the country as almost every part of the country echoed crises and scores of lives and property worth millions of naira been destroyed. Millions of people are permanently displaced.

Conclusion

Since the return to democracy in Nigeria on May 29, 1999 the threats to internal security have continued to mount. Some pundits argued that it remains a miracle that the country still remains one nation up till now. Though, countries globally are faced with one form of insecurity or the other but the magnitude at which it occurred in Nigeria was hitherto beyond imagination. Several factors are attributed to the internal security challenges in the country among such are: religious, boundary adjustment, land ownership question and resource control etc. Millions of people have died and millions are internally displaced as a result of internal security threats in Nigeria. These are major reasons why the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were not achieved in Nigeria and now the SDGs are almost becoming illusive to the country. According to Mertonian theory, the societal goals and means to achieve the goals are very stringent and that makes the individuals to adopt deviant means which leads to threats to internal security. As the major issues of internal insecurity centred on the economy (survival), the poverty alleviation programme should be very robust and vigorously pursuit unlike the lip service given to it previously that made it not to achieve its desired aim.

Recommendations

- i. The federal government through the National Boundary Commission should make sure that boundary adjustments are clearly done devoid of political interference and people of the areas should be called to participate in the activities. This will reduce the incidence of boundary/communal clashes. The issue of indigene and settler question should be cancelled

by the federal government. The National Assembly should enact working laws that there is nothing like indigeneship in Nigeria but citizenship just as it is practiced in other developed countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, France, even Ghana etc. Also, there should be stiffer penalties against religious fanaticism. Religious zealots these days preach in open places with loud megaphones inciting the masses and gradually recruiting people into their republic of zealots and fanaticism.

- ii. On the issue of poverty, the government should take a proactive step in seeing that all the programmes on poverty alleviation is brought to satisfactory conclusion. There should be a complete drift from how previous failed poverty alleviation programmes were handled. Since a lot of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are reputable for prudence and accountability, the government could employ the services of some of the well-known NGOs to handle the disbursement of poverty relieve packages to the targeted masses. As previously, the packages were looted by politicians who later used them as weapons for electioneering campaign. The usance of soft loans to start up small and medium scale businesses by the government should be sustained and expanded as this will bring so many people out of poverty and reduced the rate of insecurity in the country as poverty has correlation with crime and insecurity. Also, the existing anti-corruption laws should be strengthened. There should not be any secret cow. Culprits should be decisively delt with according to the provisional laws. The anti-corruption agencies should be financially independent. Their salary should be derived directly from the federation account just as the presidency, legislators and the judiciary. This will bolden the agencies to perform their constitutional responsibilities without fear or favour. These efforts will reduce corruption and the tendency to constitute internal insecurity in the country. This policy will also give confidence to foreign investors as it will attract them to the country and boost foreign direct investment (FDI).

- iii. There should be an independent government anti proliferation agency. This body should be empowered to fight against illegal arms trafficking in the country. Most of the conflicts and civil disturbances were triggered by the influx of illegal arms and ammunitions into the country. The agency responsible for the control of these illegal arms should be financially independent and should have a way of appointment of personnel into respectful position without any political interference but there should be and ombudsman for the agency.
- iv. The issue of land ownership and resource control should be resolved without any prejudice by the government. The federal government should use a better derivation formula for the component units.

This entails that there should be a comprehensive discussion on the issues of land ownership and resource control. This discussion should be done by representatives of the units. This is not a constitutional conference as it was done previously but a wholistic meeting of representatives from the states and the federal government on issues of land ownership and resource control. This will help solve communal clashes and restiveness in the country.

- iv. There should be a comprehensive demobilization of people in a conflict area. These people should be compensated and undergo a wholistic programme of reintegration into the society. This will help deescalate the phenomenon of militarization in the state.

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