

Crime, Violence and Security Challenge in Nigeria: Implication on National Development Since 1960

James C. Chukwu & Marcia Chidimma Udem
Department of History and International Studies
Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

Abstract

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country with a population of over 200 million people. With such a large number of people, security challenges could be said to be inevitable. Also expected is a proper response from law enforcement agencies to ensure the security of lives and properties. Regrettably however, there is an increased dimension in the patterns and trends of crime and other forms of insecurity in Nigeria on a geometric rate which constitutes serious threat to lives and properties, hinders business activities and discourages local and foreign investors. This paper is historical; hence, it adopted a qualitative method of analysis. Useful pieces of information were obtained from important relevant documents, reports and array of secondary sources. Nigerians expect that leadership should guarantee the security of the people who in return will be law abiding. But this is not achieved due to series of crime, violence and insecurity in the country. It is becoming worrisome that people sleep with one of their eyes open. The paper thus argues that the reason is that state institutions and agencies are not effective and efficient. The country has not been able to fulfill its potentials due to the existence of threats in the polity. The paper further argues that this ugly situation has given Nigeria a bad name. Investors are cautious of coming to a country where their lives and investments are not safe. The therefore recommends that the rising wave of violent crime in Nigeria must be properly checked otherwise it could be detrimental to socio-political cum economic development of the country.

Keywords: Crime, Violence, Security, Insecurity, National Development

Introduction

Crime, violence and insecurity remain serious concerns of the world and Nigeria in particular. Nigeria has suffered immensely from several crime, violence and insecurity since independence in 1960. Different strategies and efforts have been made to curb these cankerworms that have bedeviled the Nigeria nation but have proved abortive and it still remains an endemic threat to Nigeria's national development. It is a fact of history that development thrives in a peaceful environment¹. It therefore means that in an instance of

crime, violence and insecurity in a nation, national development is retarded. Omoyibo and Akpomera opined that security is a concept that is prior to the state, and the state exists in order to provide that concept². Life by nature, according to Thomas Hobbes, was brutish, nasty, delicate and cruel³. Every man competes for survival. The rule of life then was survival of the fittest. The state thereby existed to ensure that there is a peaceful co-existence among the people as every individual now has the liberty to acquire property and live freely with a central body (the state) regulating the affairs of man. The state therefore has the responsibility of maintaining law and order in the society and also to protect and defend the national integrity of the state. In recognition of the above, 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 government”⁴.

However, it appears government has failed to provide a secured and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of economic activities. The rate of increase in criminal activities in Nigeria is alarming. Since the country’s independence in October 1st, 1960, security of life and property has been so threatened. Some of the major security problems currently confronting the nation have been identified to include: political and electioneering conflicts, socio-economic agitations, ethno-religious crises, ethnic militias, boundary disputes, cultism, criminality and organized crimes. These problems individually and collectively constitute threats to the peace, security and national development of the country⁵.

In an attempt to fight the increasing waves of violent crime in Nigeria, the federal government has enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2011, strengthened the Ministry of Defense with huge allocation of fund to fight insecurity in the 2013 and 2014 budget. For example, the National Assemble recently approved a loan of One Billion US Dollar (US\$1Bn) to fight terrorism. All these monies were meant to purchase fighting equipment and organized special training for the security forces. The National Security Adviser (NSA) has organized several training programmes both local and international. Despite these, it appears the level of violent crime in the country is still high, and a confirmation of this is the low ranking of Nigeria in the Global Peace Index and the declaration of Nigeria as a terrorist Nation by US.

The paper is divided into six parts. The first part is introduction. The second section deals with the conceptual clarification. This is followed by the theoretical framework. The fourth part discusses the insecurity situation and national development in Nigeria. The penultimate section examines the implication of crime, violence and insecurity on national development in Nigeria. The last part is the conclusion. The argument tends to suggest that the absence

of security leads to political and economic instability. The work argues that Nigerians expect that leadership should guarantee the security of the populace who in return will be law abiding. This paper deduces that increased dimension in the patterns and trends of crime and other forms of insecurity in Nigeria on a geometric rate which constitutes serious threat to lives and properties, hinders business activities and discourages local and foreign investors. The work further argues that the relationship between security and development has also been conceived to be bilateral in nature. There will be no development without security and no security without development.

Conceptual Clarification

Crime

Crime can be seen as an: illegal act (an action prohibited by Law or failure to act as required by law); illegal activity that involves breaking the Law; immoral activity that is considered unacceptable act that is shameful, unwise or regrettable⁶. Crime by the Law of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is defined as “An act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment under the criminal code, or any Act or Law”⁷. Crime is brought about by the violation of the law as established by the government at all levels. Crime is an infraction of both the basic principles of law and order and the norms of civilized behavior. Crime is an offence against the values system of a society. The cost and effects of crime vary among the various segments of the population and touch almost everyone by some degree and in general as the economic growth and development of countries increase, it would be expected that crime level reduces. This may not necessarily be. The various cost of crime to victims and the society or the economy include; loss of income, property losses, loss in community productivity etc. Some other cost of crime, which are less tangible; include psychological trauma on victims and their family and friends, pain and suffering and a lower quality of life. In all of these and other associated losses, the ultimate cost is loss of life⁸

Violence

Violent is the physical force destructive in nature capable of causing fear in the mind of people. Therefore, violent crimes are those criminal activities that employs the use of violence to intimidate or cause terror (fear) in the mind of people with intend to coerce an individual, group of people or the government in order to affect the conduct of the individual, group of people or influence the policy of the government. No society is immune from this knotty social problem but what differs is the frequency and magnitude of the situation and the response mechanisms to address it. But the most alarming and terrifying is the present escalation of violent crimes and the barbarity, lethality and trauma the

perpetrators unleash on the hapless citizenry across the length and breadth of the country. Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, ransom-driven kidnapping and terrorism which are now ravaging the Nigeria polity like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety with kidnappings for ransom and terrorism at the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs. The high rate of violent crime has created an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and tension – a state of insecurity. Okechukwu argued that:

Violent crimes such as murder, armed robbery, kidnapping and terrorism are the most inhumane crimes that continue to plague Nigeria.... Lately, kidnappings for ransom and terrorism have taken the centre stage leading to bloodshed and economic set-backs.... The causes are not farfetched as studies have associated rising youth unemployment to the increase in violent crimes⁹.

For the purpose of this paper, we define security as a state of reduced or contained threats and tension in which the stability of a state is not in an imminent danger of disruption from within and without¹⁰. Stability is here viewed as the order, regularity and pattern, which characterized the state's condition over an extended period.

Insecurity

Security has traditionally been conceived as mainly a protection of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state from external military threats, which is the rationale behind national security with emphasis on the capability of the military. It should be noted that there are divergent approaches to conceptualizing security which is the antithesis of insecurity. This paper therefore seeks to examine the concept of security to facilitate a good understanding of the concept of insecurity. Security need was the basis of the social contract between the people and the state, in which people willingly surrendered their rights to an organ (government) who oversees the survival of all. In this light security embodies the mechanism put in place to avoid, prevent, reduce, or resolve violent conflicts, and threats that originate from other states, non-state actors, or structural socio-political and economic conditions¹¹. For decades, issues relating to security were on the front burner in the development discourse. According to Chukwu and Udem, What constitutes security in modern times is a question that has never been answered satisfactorily by scholars.¹² Several attempts have been made since the cold war ended to redefine the concept 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 issues¹³

According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo¹⁴ the divergent approaches to the conceptualization of human security in the theoretical literature can be categorized into two major strands. One is a neo-realist theoretical strand that conceptualizes security as primary responsibilities of the state. The second strand, a postmodernist or plural view, conceptualizes security as the responsibilities of non-state actors and displaces the state as a major provider of security. Proponents of this approach argue that the concept of security goes beyond a military determination of threats. They are of the view that government should be more concern with the economic security of individual than the security of the state because the root causes of insecurity are economic in nature. Igbuzor in conceptualizing security placed emphasis on the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country¹⁵. Thus, there is a general consensus in the contemporary literature that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. It is therefore apparent that national security is a desideratum, sine qua non for economic growth and development of any country¹⁶. In the intelligence community there is a consensus that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the existence of a robust mechanism to respond proactively to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency, expertise, and in real time.

The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety. Beland is of the view that insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection¹⁷. Achumba et al defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune¹⁸. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. In the context of this paper insecurity is defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

Development

Development is a relative and mostly contested concept¹⁹. Nevertheless, it is possible to arrive at some specific indicators of development that are widely acceptable. For instance, it is easy to argue that every human society aspires to strong, efficient and dynamic

economic and political institutions that anticipate the yearnings of their people and respond to them accordingly and promptly. It is also possible to argue that in every society there are minimum expectations which all members share. These include access to functional health facilities, access to safe drinking water, universal qualitative education, and equal opportunity for all members in public affairs where competition based on merit is upheld over and above other considerations. All these are universal values that transcend cultural and political boundaries.

Thus, if there is anything actually relative about our conception of development that may largely be because of perspectives from which one chooses to understand it. This is why students so often try to isolate the elements of national development and talk of them as individual topics. Thus, one hears about cultural, social, economic, political, and even religious development as if it is possible to provide a proper analysis of development without integrating these and considering development from a holistic perspective. For instance, Gopinath²⁰ argues that development can only be measured in monetary terms, and consequently, a developing country is one in which “there is a significant potential to raise the per capita standard of living” of its people. This, no doubt, is the hangover from the intellectual segregation that dominates developmental literature in the 1960s and 1970s when most models of development drew their theoretical sustenance from classical economics. In that conception, economic growth was equated with development and was generally considered as the fundamental objective of the decolonized states of Asia and Africa²¹. Even in these isolationist conceptions, it is possible to discern an overriding understanding in which the notion of a qualitative transformation occurs in space and time through the trickle-down effect. Therefore, development is no more than a description of a particular state or physical condition in which there is a corresponding progress in both the physical growth and maturity of a particular object. Applied to human societies, development simply refers to a state, condition or stage, which entails positive transformation in both quantity and quality of life for all members of a particular society. Where there is corresponding decline or retrogression in the quality of life for a significant portion of the population, we describe that as the state of under-development²². In effect, development and underdevelopment connotes a relational state in which one mirrors the exact absence of the other. Mirakhor and Askari write that development means “quantitative growth, qualitative improvement, and expansion in the capabilities, capacities, and choices of individuals, groups or states”²³. Similarly, Tisdell writes that development is “the modification of the biosphere and the application of human, financial, living and non-living resources to satisfy human needs and improve the quality of life”²⁴. A distinct thread that permeates these conceptions of development concerns the recognition that improvement on

the quality of life of all members of human society is the fundamental objective as well as the primary goal of development. The point here is the emphasis on empowerment and skill building among members of the society to be able to transform their living conditions.

The best, succinct, and analytical conception on development remains that given by Dudley Seers who raises fundamental socio-economic and political questions in his definition and seeks to relate them to human development. According to Seers:

The questions to ask about a country's development are what have been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from higher levels, then beyond doubt this has been a period of development for the country concerned. If one or two of these problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result 'development', even, if per capita income doubled²⁵.

The emphasis, thus, is on the individual as the integral member of the community; the object of any transformation, not on economic growth based on abstract statistics. It is the position of this paper that this conception of development provides an excellent analytical framework from which a proper explanation on the relationship between development and security can be carried. Instructively, the three indicators, as provided by Seers, form the basis upon which this paper proceeds with its analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The theory most relevant to this work is the theory of relative deprivation. This classical theory explains why people engage in violence (riots, rebellion, coups, criminal activities etc.). According to Gurr²⁶, this is the tension between your actual state, and what you feel you should be able to achieve. It examines the psychological causes involving frustration and aggression as the primary source of human capacity for violence. Frustration is neither necessary nor sufficiently leads to violence but greed may drive to violence. Frustration is a much stronger motivating force and prolonged frustration may cause greater probability for aggression. Relative deprivation is the discrepancy between what people think they deserve and what they actually think they can get²⁷. Deprivation therefore occurs when your value expectations exceed your value capabilities. Values expectations include welfare, security, self-actualization etc. while value capabilities are those legitimate means of achieving the expectations – employment for instance. Here "incentives for success are provided by the established values of the culture, and the avenues available for moving toward this goal is largely limited by the class structure. It is the combination of the cultural emphasis and the social structure which produces intense pressure for deviation. Relative

deprivation is generally considered to be the central variable in the explanation of social movements and is used to explain the quest for social change that inspires social movements; social movements emerge from collective feelings of relative deprivation²⁸It is noteworthy that Gurr does not look to a more absolute or objective indicator of deprivation as the source of violence. People can get used to a bad state of affairs, even one that offers so little access to life sustaining resources that members of the group are starving or dying of remediable diseases or exposure. However, if there is a significant discrepancy between what they think they deserve and what they think they will get, there is a likelihood of rebellion. Gurr posits this to be the case because there is a feeling that their expectation cannot be met if the current status quo is maintained. The first situation may be a desperate one, but it is the second that will be frustrating. So, frustration produces aggression at individual, group and societal levels. This theory could be used to link rising number of unemployed youths and violent crimes in Nigeria. The 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, states that: “the state shall control the National economy in such a manner as to secure the maximum welfare, freedom and happiness of every citizen on the basis of social justice and equality of status and opportunity”²⁹. This constitutional responsibility of the state has far been abandoned by the government. In Nigeria, many of the qualified youth have been deprived of employment opportunity. A country that produces thousands of university graduates every year without commensurate employment opportunities may be creating a fertile ground for a feeling of frustration among these unemployed graduates. Naturally, there is a feeling of joy and great expectations when a student graduates from a university- these expectations gradually fade away and are replaced by feeling of frustration after some years of joblessness caused by little opportunities the society offers the young graduates. This condition has placed most of our youths idle, creating more frustration in the life wire of the society. As frustration prolongs and the feeling of deprivation of what that is expected increases, there is a greater probability that the individual or people can resort to illegitimate activities in order to actualize their expectations in the society.

The rise in violent crimes (robbery, kidnapping, thuggery, terrorism) committed by youths is a sign of “gap” in the society. The society already has expectations for individuals and established means of achieving them. When the means are limited as the youth unemployment is 46.5% in 2011, people are forced to achieve the goals through illegal means to fulfil societal expectations. Kidnappings are on the increase across Nigeria and the unemployed youths view the business lucrative. The rising trend of crime in Nigeria is usually blamed on the high rate of unemployment³⁰. The high rate of youth unemployment

in Nigeria has made available, large people for recruitment by high profile criminals for violent crimes. This leads to a culture that at least accept if not approve, violent action as a means to an end. Growing joblessness and economic hardship will give rise to discontent and protest. Without countervailing international pressure, governments will be tempted to respond to protests with violence and repression. Deprivation can also lead to enhanced competition for limited resources that can spark armed conflict and its often-attendant atrocities and displacement.

Insecurity Situation and National Development in Nigeria

After sixty years of nationhood Nigeria still ranks among the poorest countries in the world, also ranks low in all socio-economic indicators such as life expectancy, death rate, access to water, poverty rate, mortality rate, and crime rate, and still carries the tag of a developing economy. Nigeria is a classic illustration of an oxymoron, a poor country in the midst of abundant human and natural resources. This scenario has contributed to security challenges that have bedeviled the country since independence till now with grave consequences for socio-economic development. There is no nation that can achieve national development in an environment of socio and physical insecurity. The increasing challenge of insecurity in Nigeria has also been linked to failure of leadership to deliver good governance, and secure the welfare of persons on the principles of freedom, equality, and justice. The ruling elites in Nigeria in both the military and democratic dispensation are dependent, parasitic, and very corrupt in nature, and mal-administration³¹.

The various constitutions that Nigeria has operated including the 1999 constitutions make provisions for the rights of citizens to include; right to life, right to social security, right to work, right to livelihood, just and favorable remuneration, right to a standard of living adequate for the health, and well-being of individual and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and right to education. No doubt, Nigeria is blessed with abundant human, and natural resources to guarantee the attainment of these rights³². Regrettably previous and present governments have failed to guarantee these rights and thus the onus is on individuals to seek for means to provide the basic necessities of life for him and his family. The inability of government to provide a secure and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of business and economic activities has led to resentment and disaffection among ethnic groups. This has resulted in ethnic violence, communal clashes, and religious violence in different parts of the country that has destroyed lives and properties, disrupted businesses and economic activities, and retarded economic growth and development of Nigeria. There is no investor whether local or foreign that will be motivated to invest in an unsafe and insecure environment. In a globalized world investors are not

only looking for high returns on their investments but also safe haven for their investments. Thus, the alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has made the economy unattractive to foreign investors, and this has impacted negatively on economic growth and national development.

The Implication of Crime, Violence and Insecurity on National Development in Nigeria

The developmental challenges threatening Nigeria include endemic rural and urban poverty high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, very large domestic debt, and rising stock of external debt³³. This scenario has been attributed to amongst other factors, to the high rate of crime violence and insecurity in Nigeria. Crime is dysfunctional as it threatens the stability of a nation³⁴. Economic development does not thrive in an atmosphere of instability. Ivan and Ginkel argue that there is a complex but important connection between political violence and socio-economic development³⁵. Chandler identified strong links between security and development since the cold war ended. He argued that development cannot be achieved in any nation where there are conflicts, crisis and war³⁶. In the same vein, Imobighe believes that everything about a nation revolves around the security trend of that country. It is a standard measurement of the viability of any Nation³⁷. He argued that no warring nation can boast of good health to her people or can build good, viable and sustainable economic development to her people, instead such Nation experiences destruction of the existing socio-economic infrastructure³⁸.

The assertion of Imobighe could be seen manifesting in the activities of the Niger- Delta Militant whose actions have cost a lot of destruction to the oil facilities of the nation (vandalizing oil pipeline, causing oil spillage and environmental degradation). Again, in the case of the Northern part of the country, where many productive Nigerians have been killed by insurgents, industries closed down and many investors both foreign and local has been sent away. All these are anti – development to national economy. In the same vein, the Economics Council of European Union posits that the Sub-Saharan Africa is poorer now than it was 10 years ago in which the economic failure is linked to political problems and violent conflict. Even the huge amount of the nation's fund that could have been used for more socio-economic development is now committed to the fight against crime, violence and insecurity and replacement of destroyed infrastructures.

Annually, the National Assembly approved the whopping sum of one billion US Dollars for the fight against Terrorism. This money if not for the problem of insecurity, could have been used for socio-economic development of the country. Ewetan and Urchia pointed out that:

Insecurity in Nigeria has retarded socio economic development in Nigeria in the following ways: Social dislocation and population displacement; Heightens citizenship question which encourages hostility between “indigenes” and “settlers”; Dislocation and disruption of family and communal life; General atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy; Dehumanization of women, children, and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war; Deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity; Discourages local and foreign investment as it makes investment unattractive to business people; Halts business operations during period of violence and outright closure of many enterprises in the areas or zones where incidence of insecurity is rife and are on daily occurrence; Increases security spending by business organizations and governments; Migration of people from area or region where there is prevalence of insecurity³⁹.

Socio economic development is the primary goal of every well-meaning government, and it is essentially dependent on the level of economic activities in a country; the level of economic activities is in turn enhanced by peaceful co-existence of the people. In the absence of security, socio-economic development cannot be sustained as it destroys economic, human and social capital. Nevertheless, the relationship between security and development has also been conceived to be bilateral in nature. There will be no development without security and no security without development. And both development and security also depend on respect for human rights and the rule of law. Klingebiel argued that in an increasingly interconnected world, progress in the areas of development, security and human rights must go hand in hand⁴⁰. Development is necessary for security to thrive while security on the other hand is a precondition for development.

Conclusion

It is apparent that Nigeria is passing through a turbulent period: a period characterized by high level of poverty and insecurity with their attendant effects on national development. Incidence of insurgency and criminality are high and widely spread, making it difficult to provide security of lives and property; and improve the living conditions of the people. Therefore, it can be concluded that one of the greatest threats to national security and development in Nigeria is the large army of poor people. Thus, national development can be achieved in Nigeria only if poverty and insecurity are combated. If poverty and insecurity

are allowed to prevail in Nigerian communities, then the dream of sustainable national development and national stability will be a mirage. This is because, 'if a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich'.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

1. Due to the increasing rate of poverty and attendant security threats in Nigeria, there is the need for government to restructure and redesign approaches that will permanently reduce poverty through the provision of basic infrastructure and services that are efficient. It is not enough that these are provided but that the cost should be affordable to the poor.
2. There is also the need for greater investment in human development, evidence shows that investment in human capital, especially in planned education, shelter, and social services, increase the productivity of the poor and make the state less vulnerable to lack of security. Government at the same time needs to address the ever-increasing rate of socio-economic disparity which has a tendency to increase the number of poor people in the society.
3. Government should enforce strict ammunition control and consider a sharp reduction in the availability of weapons such as handguns in the country, since aggression is also elicited by aggressive stimuli. Thus, strict enforcement of the gun control law in Nigeria is needed to mop up the array of small and light arms in the hands of unauthorized people (especially the youth) across the country.
4. The Political leaders should be transparent in their governance and accountable to the people. If the government is accountable and transparent, much of the violence experience in Nigeria today will wither away. Most of the policies of the government that do not favour the poor should be reviewed in order to prevent officials who use state policies for criminal ends to enable them live in affluence from doing so. Such attitude causes envy, jealousy and anger among the poor and unemployed masses that feel alienated and cannot make any meaning out of government policies, and makes them to resort to kidnappings, violent crimes and assassinations that pervert the country nowadays. If government policies are made to be humane in forms and applications, the country would become safer to live in.
5. Government should ensure timely collection and analysis of data such as survey of poverty and unemployment rates purposely to provide policy makers with an important tool for decision making on pro-poor policies.

6. The Judicial system in the country should be reviewed and strengthened to ensure that justice is dispensed no matter whose ox is gored. Nepotism and a culture of impunity must be eschewed from our national psyche and life.
7. Participatory democracy in Nigeria should be broadened by playing the political game according to the established rules and equally avoid 'do or die' and winner takes all syndromes

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