



ISSN: 2321-8819 (Online) 2348-7186 (Print) Impact Factor: 1.498 Vol. 8, Issue 4, April, 2020

Combating Rising Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria: An Alternative Approach

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ABSTRACT

A Nigerian student studying abroad recently averred that his school abroad nearly disallowed him from returning to Nigeria owing to the security situation of the country. The security situation in the country appears to be deteriorating at the dawn of each day with the citizens of the country in a quagmire as the government is yet to demonstrate her ability to nip this terrible situation in the bud. Kidnapping, armed robbery, boko haram insurgency, land border/communal clashes, farmer—herder conflicts and in recent times, the activities of bandits have become reoccurring headlines. The government and her security agencies have fought these challenges with considerable successes but leaving much to be desired. This paper adopting a qualitative research methodology which is thematic and analytical and also using and interpreting both primary and secondary sources interrogates the security challenges that are prevalent in present day Nigeria and proffers alternative approaches apart from the use of force in tackling them. The paper finds that the various security challenges bedeviling the country have an adverse effect on every sector of the country and her image amongst community of nations. The paper submits that the war against insecurity in Nigeria can be won if the Nigerian government takes into consideration beyond lip service the issues of provision of jobs, investing in quality education, technology advancement and diversifying the nation's economy through harnessing the myriads of other mineral resources available in the country.

Key Words: Nigeria, Security, Insecurity, Economy, Education, Mineral resources, Job creation.

Introduction

Part of the major responsibilities of the government is the provision for the safety of her citizens. This responsibility of government appears to have continually eluded the Nigerian government particularly with the rising cases of insecurity in the country. There have been rising cases of herdsmen invasions, banditry, armed robbery, assassinations, kidnapping and their likes in Nigeria. The security agencies whose task it is to curtail this menace have continued to fight crime and criminality in the country with some measures of successes recorded. The Nigerian Armed Forces have for instance continued to fight the Boko Haram insurgents over a decade now. While

considerable breakthroughs have been recorded, in the areas of limiting their spread from the North East region to other regions, reclaiming of territories from the terrorists, it must be admitted that much still needs to be done to see that the North—Eastern part of the country, which happens to be the major theatre of war in the battle against Boko Haram is completely ridden of terror.

With this heightened level of insecurity in Nigeria, the government have appeared to have prioritized the issue of national security. This is demonstrated in the huge allocation of the national budget to security (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). The government has invested in her security agencies in the areas of trainings and equipment. One of the recent expenditure on security that generated a lot of controversy was the approval of the sum of 1 Billion US dollars in December 2017 by the National Economic Council (NEC) for the war against Boko Haram (*Vanguard*, 2017).

Despite these expenses on security, the security challenge in Nigeria has remained hydra headed. One could then wonder if the security challenge in Nigeria is surmountable. It is on this premise that this paper seeks to proffer alternative approaches to curbing the security challenges that have bedeviled the country for a long while.

Insecurity in Nigeria: An Overview and Implications

Nigeria has faced varying degrees of security challenges since independence till date. Some of them would be discussed in this section. Militancy became rampant in the history of Nigeria in the Niger Delta oil region owing to the resource control question and the perceived marginalization of the people of the region by the government on one hand and the multinational oil firms. The agitations in the Niger Delta which has its beginnings even before independence have over the years taken a more violent outlook amongst the youths of the region leading to the formation of armed militant groups such as, Movement for the Survival of the Ijaw in the Niger Delta (MOSIND), Niger Delta People Volunteer Force (NDPVF), and



Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) (Ogege, 2011). Part of the ways they vent their grievances are through kidnappings of expatriates and destruction of oil pipelines and other oil facilities. The region which has embedded in it oil which has remained a major source of revenue of the government is yet to receive adequate attention. An instance is the Ogoni cleanup which till date has not been successfully done despite being flagged off by President Muhammadu Buhari in 2016 (*Premiuntimes*, 2016). The cleanup of the region which has suffered tremendous pollution owing to the exploration of oil in the region was recommended by the United Nation Environmental Programme (UNEP) in its report in 2011 (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2011).

Boko Haram insurgency has been adjudged the hottest insecurity case in Nigeria (Ezeah, Osayi, 2014) with its inception in the year 2009, the terrorist group has continued to unleash mayhem on the country particularly in the North Eastern part of the country. The Boko Haram sect has an ideology that is antagonistic to western form of education and seeks an enthronement of Islamic government in the whole of Northern Nigeria (Obayori, Osai, Ahmodu and Maeba, 2018). It is believed that the group has external links with some other armed terrorist groups such as the *Ansar Dine, al-Qaeda* of Mali in the Islamic Maghreb (AQUIM), Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), Islamic States of Iraq (ISIS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), *Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimins Fi Biladis-Sudan* (Ansaru) (Fineman, 2018). One of the attacks by the sect that attracted and sustained international attention to Boko Haram is the April 2014 abduction of 276 school girls from the Government Secondary School in Chibok in Borno State (Fineman, 2018). Between 2014 and February 2019, it is reported that Boko Haram has been responsible for more than 2,800 events and more than 31,000 reported fatalities making it one of the world's deadliest armed groups (Matfess, 2019).

In February 2018 the Boko Haram terrorists attacked and kidnapped over 100 young secondary school girls from the Government Girls Science and Technology College Dapchi, Yobe state (BBC, 2018). It was revealed that 110 girls were originally kidnapped, but five did not survive the ordeal. The government negotiated with the terrorists and got more than 100 of the kidnapped school girls released with one of them, Leah Sharibu still kept in captivity till date (*Sahara Reporters*, 2019) because she refused to convert from Christianity to Islam (BBC, 2018). The Nigerian Armed forces

have continued to lose her personnel to the war against Boko Haram, a major attack on the Nigerian troops in the North-East was the Metele attack in northern Borno in November 18 2018 (*All Africa*, 2018). It was reported that about 100 soldiers lost their lives but the Nigerian Army in a press release said that 23 soldiers were killed in the attack while 31 others were injured (*Punch*, 2018). In December 2018 the army reported that some soldiers on escort duty were attacked and killed in Yobe by armed Boko Haram terrorists who had earlier ambushed them (*Aljazeera*, 2018). On 25 May 2019, the Nigeria Security Tracker, produced by the Washington based Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), reported that Boko Haram killed 25 Nigerian soldiers and three Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) members in Sabon-Gari, Borno (CFR, 2019). It is most times difficult to ascertain the actual number of security personnel casualties as it appears to be shrouded in secrecy by the force headquarters.

The increasing rate of farmer—herder conflicts in the country have become a major concern to Nigerians. Between 1997 and 2011, it has been discovered that the conflict between herdsmen and farmers are pronounced in specific geographical locations namely the middle belt; Plateau, Nassarawa and Benue states while few other cases were reported in other states (Akejiir, 2018). Global Terrorism Index records that the farmer—herder crisis got to an alarming rate in the year 2014 with the herdsmen killing 1,229 people in comparison with 80 deaths in 2013 (Global Terrorist Index, 2015). Loss of lives caused by herdsmen attacks on farming communities have continued to be on the increase, in the year 2016 it was reported that 435 deaths were recorded between February to July (Okwor, 2016). In Benue state villages like Loggo, Katsina-Ala, Gwer West, Gunna, Makurdi and Agatu have experienced attacks from Herders (Akejiir, 2018). Still in the year 2016, 25 April precisely it was reported that nine villages in Uzo-Uwani local government area of Enugu state in Southeast region of Nigeria were attacked by herdsmen which left in its wake destruction of lives and properties (Akejiir, 2018). Kaduna state is caught in a humanitarian crisis owing to the onslaught of Fulani herdsmen on farming communities particularly in the southern part of the state (Kazzah, 2018). Southern Kaduna has been described as an epicentre of deadly violence because of these deadly attacks by armed herdsmen. Properties are destroyed and people are slaughtered after each attack. The Catholic Archdiocese of Kafanchan, Kaduna in her records, submitted that 1,422 houses, 16 churches, 19 shops,



and one primary school were destroyed since September 2016 across 53 villages in Southern Kaduna

(<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Southern-Kaduna.pdf>, 2017). It is also on record that between 24th September and 24th October 2016, Godogo, a village in Southern Kaduna recorded about 30 deaths, 16 wounded casualties and the destruction of 326 houses (<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Southern-Kaduna.pdf>, 2017).

Armed banditry has begun to make headlines in Nigeria. The rising spate of this menace competes with the activities of Boko Haram and armed herders attacks in recent times. Zamfara state North-West Nigeria happens to be the worst hit of the activities of armed bandits in Nigeria. Zamfara state is associated with artisanal gold mining and other mineral resources under the soil (Haidara, Mudansiru, Muhammed, and Yakubu, 2017), the attacks, destruction of properties and killings of the people of that region has been linked to the illegal mining activities that takes place there (*Punch*, 2019). It is on record that from 2014 to 2019 about 5,000 people have lost their lives to the marauding bandits (*Punch*, 2019). A local journalist in Nigeria alleged in April 2019, that between 30, 40 and 50 people are buried every day in Zamfara villages that are hit by the bandit attacks (BBC, 2019). According to CFR's report captured by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), 262 civilian deaths were recorded in the beginning of 2019 in Zamfara as against 288 in 2018 (BBC, 2019). The growth in the informal mining activity in the mineral rich region has attracted people from outside the state thus further fuelling instability in the state. The Nigerian government in April 2019 responded to the concerns over increasing levels of violence and suspended all mining activities in the state and deployed more troops to the region (BBC, 2019). The traditional rulers in Zamfara have accused the Nigeria Air Force pilots of missing the actual culprits and eliminating innocent villagers instead in misdirected airstrikes (*Punch*, 2019). This accusation has been since responded to by the Nigeria Air Force, they insisted that they did not miss their target nor kill innocent citizens (*Tribune*, 2019).

No meaningful progress can be made in a society torn with security challenges. Insecurity has been identified as one of the hindrances to sustainable development (Igbuzor, 2011). It has led to the migration and death of so many Nigerians who should have contributed to the human labour force of the nation.

Some businesses are closed down owing to rising insecurity in the country. Some indigenes and non—indigenes who reside in the North—Eastern region of the country have left their businesses in those areas due to the Boko Haram insurgency and have migrated to other parts of the country. The banditry menace also has triggered similar migrations to other parts of the country. Some of the migrants upon arrival find it difficult to reintegrate to the society they have found themselves and to kick start another business. In the Global Peace Index (GPI) report of 2018, Nigeria ranked 15th most dangerous country, the report was measured using the level of safety and security in the society, the extent of domestic and international conflict and the degree of militarization as indices (Global Peace Index Report, 2018). Nigeria's ranking in the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) is alarming as Nigeria remains the third most terrorized country (*Premiumtimes*, 2018; Global Terrorism Index Report, 2018). With these reports, foreign investors become skeptical of coming into Nigeria and to invest or domicile their business in the country.

Another implication of these increasing security challenges in Nigeria is that it has led to increases on security spending by business organizations as well as the government (Ewetan, Urbie, 2014). For instance, oil firms in Nigeria and related firms spend on the provision of security men for their workers in order to wade off kidnapers. The government on the other hand, have continued to allocate a substantial part of the yearly budget on security thus leaving certain sectors like health and education poorly funded. The allocation on security for the 2019 budget supersedes that allocated to health and education (<http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng/index.php/breakdown-of-2019-fgn-approved-budget?lnohdjeknohlfkfc>, 2019). In his public presentation of the 2019 budget, the Minister of Budget & National Planning, Sen. Udoma Udo Udoma, said among other things that the 2019 Budget of Continuity, underscores the government's commitment to increase investment in national security (<http://www.budgetoffice.gov.ng/index.php/breakdown-of-2019-fgn-approved-budget?lnohdjeknohlfkfc>, 2019). This is demonstrated in the allocation that security sector gets. In as much as the security sector should be given adequate attention, it should not be done at the expense of other sectors.

Farming communities that have witnessed attacks from herdsmen have lost farmers and surviving farmers steer clear of their farmlands for



fear of the invading herdsmen. This massacre of farming communities contributes to the high cost of food and food insecurity that is being witnessed in the country.

Combating Insecurity: Alternative Approaches

Appreciation and encouragement must be accorded to the nation's security men and women who have relentlessly combated the rising spate of insecurity in the country. It must be noted that this paper does not in any way disregard the efforts of the security agencies but rather suggests other approaches that could be adopted in curbing the challenge of insecurity in Nigeria. Some of these approaches are discussed below.

There seems to be a relationship between crime and education. It has been observed that policymakers interested in combating crime often focus on enforcement and punishment. Recent research suggests that other policy mechanisms particularly those geared towards improved education can also be effective in fighting crime

(Hjalmarsson, Lochner, 2012). Criminologists and educators have speculated that increasing the educational achievement of young males might lower the probability of their engaging in criminal activities (Moretti, 2005). Education constitutes an essential pillar for any nation's meaningful and sustainable economic development and also plays a pivotal role in empowering people to achieve economic and social freedom (Egwakhe, Osabuohien, 2009). In spite of the importance of education in national development, education has not been enjoying adequate funding in Nigeria (Matthew, 2016). The trends of financial allocation to the education sector from the pre—independence era to the present, reveals fluctuating and low allocation (Matthew, 2016). The poor funding of the education sector in Nigeria is further demonstrated in the table below showing the Nigeria's federal government's allocation to education between 2009 and 2018.

Year	Budget	Education Allocation	% of budget
2009	3.049trn	N221.19bn	7.25
2010	5.160trn	N249.09bn	4.83
2011	4.972trn	N306.3bn	6.16
2012	4.877trn	N400.15bn	8.20
2013	4.987trn	N426.53bn	8.55
2014	4.962trn	N493bn	9.94
2015	5.068trn	N392.2bn	7.74
2016	6.061trn	N369.6bn	6.10
2017	7.444trn	N550bn	7.38
2018	8.612trn	N605.8bn	7.03
Total	55.19trn	N3.90	7.0

Source: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/education-free-fall, 2018.>

This has contributed to the poor quality of education in the country. More so, this lack of adequate attention given to education in the country has a link with the increase of criminality especially among youths in the country. This view is supported by A.J. Egwakhe and E.S.C. Osabuohien, they aver thus:

The misdirection of Nigerian educational priorities and commitments (gauged by frequency of academic strikes and government allocation to infrastructure and scholars' compensation) has led to the frequency of sophisticated crimes commonly observed. (Egwakhe, Osabuohien, 2009, p. 68)



The Northern region of the country is in dire need of a revolution in education. The attitude to education in that region is relatively very poor compared to other parts of the country. The administration of President Goodluck Jonathan, was poised to addressing the issue of education in the North with the introduction of what was referred to as *Almajiri Education Programme*. In a paper presented by the then Minister of State for Education, Chief (Barr) Ezenwo Nyesom Wike to the National Economic Council in July 2013, he revealed that the high occurrence of out-of-school children in Nigeria was estimated at 10.5 million and that the *Almajiris* (Itinerant Qur'anic School Pupils) made up over 9 million of the above number who are concentrated mainly in the Northern part of Nigeria and a significant number in South-West Nigeria (Wike, 2013). In his presentation he posited that the large number of out-of-school children in Nigeria was a threat to social cohesion and active citizenship and that it bred social exclusion and anti-social tendencies amongst the youths and adults (Wike, 2013). President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan's administration envisaged that the *Almajiri Education Programme* would enable the country achieve the Millennium Development Goals schools and engage the young population in the northern region in a more fruitful enterprise and thus make them increasingly unavailable for mischief makers. This dream was however cut short and discontinued with his defeat in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria.

The Nigerian government ought to therefore declare a state of emergency in the education sector with immediate effect, do a proper upward review of the budget allocation to the education sector to the end that her young population across the six geo-political zones be provided with adequate education. When the youths are engaged in any form of education, they become increasingly averse to criminality and other social vices. Premium must also be placed on technological innovations and advancements in the education sector as well. This for instance could prompt researches into making the Northern region green again thus reducing the continuous migration of herders from the North to the Southern region in search of food for their cattle. This migration down South has been seen as one of the causes of the farmer—herders hostilities.

The nexus between unemployment and crime cannot be overemphasized. The rate of unemployment in Nigeria which tends to poverty must be checked and nipped in the bud if insecurity will be combated effectively. Unemployment and

poverty among Nigerians particularly the youths have been considered as one of the major causes of insecurity and violent crimes in Nigeria (Adagba, Ugwu, & Eme, 2012), like the saying goes, an idle mind is the devil's workshop. The Nigeria youth unemployment rate according to Trading Economics, averaged 23.63 percent from 2014 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 38 percent in the second quarter of 2018 (<https://tradingeconomics.com/nigeria/youth-unemployment-rate>, 2019). Unemployment and poverty appears to be 'weaponized' in Nigeria as various administrations end up just making empty promises on providing jobs for the teeming Nigerian youth population. It appears 'weaponized' in the sense that unscrupulous elements in the government would love to have willing hands to employ when pursuing one selfish end or the other. Such people would readily sabotage government's efforts in checking unemployment and poverty. Government should quit paying lip service to the matter of providing jobs and alleviating poverty. Government policy makers should see to it that policies that will support the provision of employment opportunities and alleviation of poverty are prioritized. If this is done, it will reduce to a very large extent, the crime rate in the country. Those who tend more to violence are those who are not gainfully employed and those made extremely vulnerable by hunger.

Before the oil boom in Nigeria, agriculture was the mainstay of Nigeria's economy. But with the discovery of oil in Bayelsa state in the 1950s, it seemed as though agriculture was relegated to the background with some level of attention given to it from time to time. It has been observed that the reason for the poor performance of Nigeria's economy is partly due to the fact that a substantial proportion of the wide expanse of agricultural lands are yet to be cultivated while most of the minerals are yet to be exploited (Evbuomwan, 2016). The focus on oil and other related mineral resources have been a source of conflicts and violence in certain parts of the country. For instance, the oil in the Niger Delta region and the gold in Zamfara, North West Nigeria have made those areas volatile. The table below shows some other mineral resources in Nigeria that could be harnessed in order to achieve diversification of the country's economy.



Mineral	Location(s)
Iron Ore	Itakkpe, Chakochoke, Ajabonoko, Obajana, Ebija, and Okudu in Kogi State; Muro in Plateau State; Bingi and Maraba in Maru District of Niger State; Ajase in Osun State; Bimi Kebbi and Gusaka in Sokoto State.
Ironstone	Dakingari in Sokoto State; Tajimi in Kaduna State; Rishi in Bauchi State; Karfa in Bomo State; Ejieja in Benue State; Nsude in Enugu State; Lokoja and Akpanya in Kogi State; Batati and Sakpe in Niger State.
Cassiterite	Jos in Plateau State as well as in Bauchi State.
Columbite	Plateau, Kaduna, Kano, Bauchi, Ondo and Kwara States and Abuja(FCT)
Tantalite	Plateau, Bauchi, Kaduna and Ondo, states.
Manganese	Kaduna State, and Zaria.
Vanadium	Abuja.
Nickel	Ife and Ilesha in Osun State.
Chromite	Sokoto and Katsina States.
Molybdenum	Plateau State.
Wolfram	Bauchi, Kano and Kaduna States.
Ilmenite	Plateau, Kaduna, Niger, Osun and Kwara States.
Tourmaline	Plateau, Kaduna and Kwara States.
Zircon	Kaduna State.
Limestone	Nkalagu in Enugu State; Odumoke in Ebonyi State; Mfamoshi and Odukpau in Cross River State; Ewekoro in Ogun State; Igumale, Ogbolokuta and Yandev in Benue State; Ashaka, Bauchi, Kanawa, Kambiena in Sokoto State; Umu-Obom and Ohafia in Abia State.
Dolomite	Osara and Elebu in Kogi State; Burum and Taka Lafia in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT); and Igbetti in Oyo State.
Emerald	Nasarawa.
Coal	Enugu, Benue, Kogi, Obi-Lafia in Nassarawa State.
Amethyst	Zaria Dala Panama Ilemga Hill in Kaduna State and Tafawa Balewa in Bauchi State.
Lignite	Enugu and Anambra States.

Source: (Evuomwan, 2016, p.54).

Government must therefore devise practicable modalities for the diversification of the country's economy, through encouraging and conducting researches in the uses of some of these minerals. If this is done, the country could become industrialized and this will lead to more employment opportunities. Innovativeness and known international best practices should be encouraged and implemented in the agricultural sector. Undue attention should not be given to any particular resource this would happen when other

resources are neglected. These will go a long way in curbing the insecurity challenges in the country.

Conclusion

The cost of insecurity in Nigeria is enormous as it has brought the nation to lime light negatively. The security operatives in Nigeria have no doubt done a lot in combating this menace. The government should in addition to the use of force provide jobs for the teeming youth population of the country, invest more in the quality education of her citizens and harness other mineral resources in the nation.

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