

# **THE CHALLENGE OF NATIONAL SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT**

**BY**

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## **Prologue**

Rapid economic development and social well-being constitute the development imperative of developing countries of the world and indeed, remain the normative goal of the international community. This involves the attainment of sufficient levels of economic growth to allow for a progressive improvement in the material standard of living of the populace.

However, for Nigeria and most African countries the economies are in an abysmal state. The worsening economic conditions have been generating a mix of domestic social and political tension. Normally, citizens expect their governments to provide them with political stability and socio economic security, including employment, healthcare and shelter, the non-fulfillment of which breeds discontent and social unrest or even serious political challenge. Unfortunately, Nigeria is, today plagued with social disorder, insecurity, poverty, illiteracy, balance of payment deficit, poor health statistics, ethnic and religious conflicts, corruption, crime and criminality and political crisis and all these mean that we are very insecure in terms of human well-being. In this state of things development is elusive like a mirage!

In this connection, it is easy to establish a nexus between national security and development. Accordingly, it is meaningless to talk of development in the absence of national security. In other words, insecurity in a nation is a

threat to development hence the topic “**National Security and development**” is well apt for this discourse.

### **The Concept of National Security**

The term “national security” does not appear to lend itself to any precise definition. This is partly because, the nature and concept of national security may vary from one State to the other. Like other contested concepts, the term contains an ideological element which renders empirical evidence irrelevant as a means of resolving the debate.

However, two main tendencies in defining national security are identifiable.

- (a) The first is the **State-centred concept** which views national security in terms of defence and survival of the State. This conception –
- (i) equates “defence” with “security” and bestows its protection to the military as the custodians of national security, and
  - (ii) equates national security with the security of the State.

The poverty of this conception is that it is based on the erroneous belief that in all circumstances “**nation**” equates to a “**State**” and therefore the object of national security is the **nation**. But, this is not always the case in many countries. Giving the definition of a nation as a large community of people sharing a common history, culture and language and living in a particular territory under one government, a nation may not always coincide with the

**State.** For instance, the Nigerian State is made up of many ethnic nationalities with different cultural, religious and social backgrounds.

Where they coincide, the object and purpose of the State will be to protect the sacred attributes of the nation. But where they do not, the State becomes an instrument in the hands of the dominating nationality to pursue and protect its survival. In this connection, it would appear that a State without nationality crisis may have the capacity to view its national security in terms of protecting its internal values from outside threat and interference.

The 1999 Constitution however, attempts to close the gap in this nation and State dichotomy perhaps, by describing Nigeria as a **nation** in its Preamble and declaring it as a **State** in Section 2(1) as follows:

“We the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria: Having firmly and solemnly resolved: To live in unity and harmony as one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign **Nation** ...”

“Nigeria is one indivisible and indissoluble Sovereign **State** ...” (S.2(1)).

However, it is advisable to view security in a state with nationality crisis in terms of contending groups, organizations and individuals, as the prime object of security. This dispenses with the narrow-minded conception of a national security primarily from its military-strategic dimension particularly in terms of defending its territory and sovereignty but recognises that the process of nation building with the inherent contradictions constitute major national security threat.

(b) The second tendency in the definition of national security involves the factoring of the State and the individual into the constituents of the definition. According to this definition, security involves freedom from danger or threat to a nation's ability to protect and develop itself, promote its cherished values and well-being of its people. This takes into account the significance of human well-being in the security considerations of a country especially in a developing country like ours.

As we have already pointed out, one of the greatest crisis in Nigeria today is poverty. Accordingly, national security must include the capacity to provide the citizens with social, economic and political conditions conducive to happiness and relative prosperity. Thus, tranquility and well-being of a society are necessary components of national security. According to Professor Al-Mashal, national security should address "the physical, social and psychological quality of life of a society and its members both in domestic setting and within the larger regional and global system."

This is more in accord with the Nigerian milieu. The Fundamental Objectives and Directive Principles of State Policy under the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria contain many social-economic and political rights which, if fully implemented, would go a long way towards ensuring national security and development. These rights are comparable to the Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966. Failure of the Nigerian State, despite availability of resources, to take necessary steps to give

effect to these rights account in part, for the intractable conflicts in the country today. Government has not provided enough essential services, nor built the social and physical infrastructure in large parts of the country, necessary to ensure a minimum acceptable level of the rights to health, education, and access to drinking water, and an adequate standard of living. The lack of realization of the economic, social and cultural rights affects all sections of the society.

Admittedly, apart from the need to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity there is the dire need in Nigeria today to address some other real and tangible issues that pose a great challenge to national security and development and, indeed, the very corporate existence of the country as a State.

### **The Threat of Corruption**

Bribery and corruption are now so endemic in our country nowadays to require any definition. This includes all dishonest and illegal acts in return for money or personal gain. Indeed, in a country rated as the most corrupt nation in the world few years ago, it is unnecessary to define the term corruption. According to ASUU (2005) "In Nigeria, corruption is not a series of accidental occurrences resulting from defective individual character; it is not the characteristic of any ethnic, cultural, religious groups. Since 1960, corruption has been an essential tool in the hands of the ruling class in Nigeria, for the accumulation of wealth and for the seizure and sustenance of political power. Unable to organize a productive economy, generally unconcerned about productive generation of wealth, lacking a sense of historical mission, our rulers

have used state power essentially as a base for leading a style and standard of living that cannot be sustained without helping themselves to the treasury. The history of our country, both during military dictatorships (1966-79; 83-99), and the civilian regimes (1963-66, 1979-83, 1999 – date) is, in a major way, a history of progressive development of the culture of corruption.”

Thus, despite the existing laws and the presence of anti-corruption agencies like the ICPC and EFCC today, bribery and corruption thrive in our nation. Indeed, allegations are rife that some officials of these agencies have been compromised either by the ruling class or by those being investigated to the point that they are recording little or no success in the fight against corruption.

From 1966 to date each successive government had taunted the slogan of wiping out corruption to gain legitimacy. From Aguiyi-Ironsi to General Gowon to Murtala Muhammed/Obasanjo to Buhari, the struggle against corruption appeared to have gathered little momentum until Babangida took over in 1985 with the official entrenchment of corruption. Till date, the country appears to have lost the battle against corruption. Corruption now manifests itself arrogantly in all spheres of our national life leading to severe economic and socio-political consequences.

It seems that corruption in politics is about the fastest path to wealth, being the quickest means of acquiring riches through direct self-enrichment and state patronage. Electioneering campaign involves a lot of ill-gotten money thus excluding the poor Nigerians who are otherwise honest from ever attempting to

seek election into political offices. Secondly, money politics has a way of compromising the Independent National Electoral Commission to the extent that we have not been able to hold any free and fair election up till now. Furthermore, it breeds a set of violent able-bodied young men riddled with poverty, illiteracy and half education being used as thugs to rig elections all over the country for monetary reward at the risk of their lives!

The resultant effect of this high cost of electioneering appears to be that this heavy "investment" has to be recovered through all sorts of corrupt practices including contract inflation, kick-backs, treasury, looting and pillage of public resources, leaving little or no more for development. In reality, there is stark disproportionate distribution of wealth. Thus, the few rich become richer while the majority poor become poorer. This has led us to where we are now today - mass poverty, insecurity of life, violent conflicts, armed robbery, kidnapping, poor quality of infrastructure (roads, electricity, communication) and decay of social services etc.

The problem of corruption is exacerbated by the fact that those who have benefited immensely and who derive political power from corruption are morally and politically too weakened and compromised to deal ruthlessly with the cancer of corruption and thus provide the needed and decisive dangerous therapy to cure this dangerous ailment! Unfortunately, for Nigeria, these are the people who determine who is accused and punished and who is not; and this has created serious credibility problems and handicaps in the war against corruption.

This may account, in part, for the reason why the Report of the Electoral Reform Committee is itself enmeshed in the murky waters of politics without hope of survival before the next election.

The recent massive bank failure was a product of corruption in the banking sector of the economy. Between April and September 2009, an all-time record of ten banks had failed in Nigeria causing unprecedented panic in the financial sector of the economy. Avarice and greed had led bank executives into mis-appropriation of funds entrusted to their care according to the revelation by the Governor of Central Bank of Nigeria, Sanusi Lamido Sanusi widely reported in some national dailies. Our dailies are agog with information that while some converted the money and invested into stocks and shares which have crashed due to global economic meltdown, others helped themselves with depositors' money for personal aggrandizement through the purchase of private jets etc. and the shareholders, we are told, have lost their capital in the result!

Similarly, the cankerworm of corruption has eaten deep into the privatization and commercialization of public enterprises in Nigeria. It has since come to light that a few individuals with State power, their partners, allies, families and cronies are the chief buyers of public property and beneficiaries under this programme while poor Nigerians become more impoverished, less healthy, less educated and more deprived of human dignity.

Unemployment problem is similarly compounded by corruption. The majority who are unable to pay the price remain unemployed, while those few

who have enough political power and means get jobs. Thousands of graduates from the university and other educational institutions are sent to the labour markets yearly without buyers to swell the number in the unemployment industry. Government campaign promises to create employment in many cases has yet to be fulfilled and where attempt has been made at all, it is both selective and only a tip of the ice-berg. A great number of these embrace crime and criminality out of frustration.

The educational system is not left out. From primary school to the University is replete with all forms of corruption from admission to graduation. There is widespread examination malpractices and misconduct that have since defied any check including all the relevant laws, rules and regulations on the subject. The result is that many of the degrees now awarded are hardly valuable. Similarly, the health care delivery system is in a dangerous state with the presence of fake drugs, adulterated food and other contraband items flowing into the country with the control agencies like NAFDAC and the Customs and Excise Department seemingly rendered helpless by corruption.

### **The Niger Delta Crisis**

This crisis started with the call for resource control. This call is not evil in itself. It is a simple demand for a part of the proceeds of the huge resources exploited from the area to be used for the development of the area which has since been left devastated through drilling activities leaving the area helpless with poverty, pollution and youth restiveness.

In summary, the Niger Delta people have consistently demanded the following:

- (i) A larger proportion of Nigeria's oil wealth should be spent on their communities, basing their demands on the 50% derivation formula under the 1960 and 1963 Federal Constitutions.
- (ii) The repeal of the Petroleum Act, the Land Use Act, the National Inland Waterways Authority Act and other laws that concentrate too much power in the hands of the federal government and contribute to the unequal distribution of revenue, and
- (iii) A true national development plan that is reflective of the national character and not selective development.

The Federal Government has largely ignored these demands. Rather than exploring peaceful alternative in resolving these disagreements and attendant conflicts, the federal government had consistently employed military repression in quelling agitations. In response, youths from these communities have formed militant groups to launch operations against energy infrastructure and authorities. These operations are already short-circuiting the government's budgetary projection from the energy sector due to constant disruptions in crude oil production in the Niger Delta hence, the present attempt by the federal government at peace-making through the present "Amnesty" programme.

The colonial masters had set the constitutional and legal framework for the development of the area under the 1960 and 1963 Constitutions respectively

by providing for 50% mineral derivation in respect of royalties to the Regions/States. It was only in 1966 that the military junta under General Gowon announced a suspension of this arrangement as a temporary measure in order to pull all our resources together to prosecute the war efforts. The war ended in January 1970. Yet, almost 40 years after, the temporary suspension has not been lifted. Instead, the Federal Government for some mysterious inexplicable reasons has progressively reduced the derivation principle until the 13% or less arising from the onshore and off-shore dichotomy upheld by the Supreme Court in **Attorney-General of the Federation v. Attorney-General of Abia State and Others (2002) 6, N.W.L.R.** (pt.764) 542. This position remains unsatisfactory despite the enactment of the **Allocation of Revenue (Abolition of Dichotomy) In the Application of Principles of Derivation Act, 2004** which made some little concession in this regard and upheld by the Supreme Court in **Attorney-General of Adamawa State v. Attorney-General of the Federation (2005) 18 N.W.L.R.** (pt. 958) 581 one later.

The struggle to regain this unjustified seizure of 50% derivation for development of the area has resulted partly in what the Federal Government classified as "militancy." The present attempt at amnesty must have to address the root cause or it will not last. From all indications, militants leaders have already alerted on serious threat to the programme. The Federal Government must be told in divine language: **"Thou shall not mussle the horse that treads out the corn."**

The effect of the Niger Delta crisis is too obvious – it is a veritable threat to national security and development, it hinders foreign investment for development so long it continues.

### **Crime and Violence**

It needs no citation of authority to establish the overwhelming presence of crime and violence in Nigeria today. Despite various laws (old and new) armed robbery, ethnic/communal clashes, religious riots and upheavals leaving many dead and others maimed and homeless are the order of the day. Many Nigerians have fallen to the assassins' bullets/letter bombs. Others have been kidnapped and only released on huge ransom which re-payment they may not be able to achieve for the rest of their lives. From Dele Giwa, Bola Ige, and recently Ohu, all security agencies Police, SSS, army etc. have not been able to unravel the whereabouts of the assassins. Kidnapping has become a very fast-growing industry enriching the criminals with millions of Naira on daily basis. The Police and the SSS appeared to be compromised while the government is either insensitive or helpless too. The Billions of Naira voted for security both at State and Federal levels for inexplicable reasons are not made available to combat these problems. Meanwhile citizens continued to pay their taxes and fulfill other obligations to the Government of the day amid this state of insecurity, fear and siege.

Similarly, electioneering campaigns and indeed the election itself are marred with violence and riggings. Even judicial intervention in some cases

ordering re-run polls or even nullifying elections do not appear to deter violence in subsequent election. Rather, there are attempts even to compromise the judiciary directly or indirectly today leading to fears in some quarters that the Court of Appeal appears to be the weakest link in the Judiciary today with some “questionable” decisions in election petition cases.

### **Epilogue**

This paper has examined the various causes of conflicts and some real and tangible issues touching on our national security and development. The sooner we address these issues positively the better for our rapid socio-economic and political development and the human well-being of the citizens as envisaged under the 1999 Constitution. Wisdom dictates that we give these issues the serious consideration they deserve otherwise our national security and development will continue to be in jeopardy. “A stitch in time saves nine”.

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