Development Agenda in Nigeria: The Imperatives of New Approach to National Security

Ajibola Samuel Emmanuel

Department of Political Science University of Ibadan, P.O.Box 21462 University of Ibadan Oyo State Nigeria

Abstract

The changing perception of threats to national security has called for a broad understanding of the nature and drivers of security threats to the nation as well as raised the need to rejig our approach to addressing the threats taking into account that modern day security is no longer only the concern of defense but steering the society towards achieving sustainable development. The perceived deep-seated animosity and disillusionment in Nigeria are giving rising to virtual epidemic of threats to national security raising the need for Nigerian policy-makers to pay attention on the softer side of threats to national security as well as adopting new approach to stemming the rising waves of security challenges across the land different from the usual conventional measures. The paper examines the changing nature of security threats to the nation and the imperatives for new designs, programs and strategies to deal with these threats in order to rekindle public confidence.

Keywords: Development Agenda, Expanding Threats and National Security

Introduction

The changing perception of threats to national security has called for a broad understanding of the nature and drivers of security threats to the nation. The ways which these threats manifest pose an existential threat to national and global peace altogether. Unlike the preceding periods before 1990 when national security was defined in narrow strategic and geographical terms, contemporary security threats are fundamentally diffused, dynamic, fluid and flow from systemic failure or weakness of the state but more general flaws in political, social, economic and cultural realm such that simply augmenting local security forces may not be enough to stem the threats (Divya, 2014; Steven, 2007; Susan Rice, 2009).

This acknowledgement has made it imperative for policy-makers to extend their conception of national security to include a long term strategies for tackling poverty, state building and development. There is a consensus that security matter has gone from being a concern of defense to that of developmental agenda (Hussein, Gnisci and Wanjiru, 2004: 11). Many drivers of these threats are developmental challenges such as socio-economic inequalities, repression, endemic corruption, crime, disenfranchisement, environmental pollution and poor governance often create an atmosphere for grievance instigated threats to become radical and violent extremism (USAID, 2011).

The Nigerian state is today faced less by military threats than incidence of absolute poverty, hunger, HIV/AIDs, water and food scarcity, corruption, underinvestment in production capacity and infrastructure among others (Niklas, 2010, Stewark, 2006, David, 1995). Often time, these issues are considered minor and have been drown in policy formulation by issues such as climate change, terrorism, youth restiveness, organized crime, proliferation of weapons. The gradual move at recognizing diverse issues posing as security threats to the state has opened up discussion on the understanding the relationship between governance, security, conflict and development as well demonstrates the need to redefine policy agenda towards addressing these issues in a comprehensive way using multi-sectorial approach other than the usual fragmented stand-alone approach.

Analysts have argued that the main logic of contemporary security agenda is giving high priority to such issues as poverty eradication, human rights protection, social justice, job creation, environmental protection, food security which have the potential of addressing security threats in a sustainable way other than giving priority to the survival of the ruling regime (UNDA, 2007). The way policy makers identify security challenge precisely in developing countries (Nigeria inclusive) is influenced by perceived threat to the ruling regime rather than focusing on how to deliver the "public good"; contrary to the established theoretical approach related to survival and sustenance of the nation-state (Tung, 2010; Janusz and Vladimir, 1995). Due to this reasoning, it is clear that genuine security and stability cannot be achieved if problems related to extreme poverty, climate change; urban crime, social injustice and exclusion, discrimination and rights violation are not addressed.

Contrary to the euphoria that the end of the Cold War rivalry and improved relationship between and among the major actors in the international community would promote internal political stability and economic development across the globe, the period ushered in new complex security challenges as a result of the security vacuum left in parts of developing regions of the world (Hans, 2015; Schutte, 2015; Abdi, 2011; Mimmi, 2003; Leonid, 1996). Instead of a clear security concern in East-West rivalry; nation-states now have to contend with diffused threats even which a nation no matter powerful it may be, cannot handle unilaterally.

With the East-West confrontation already a part of our historical past, the world is today faced with new security challenges and uncertainties arising from the new international system which is not based on balance of

power but balance of interests (Leonid, 1996: 1). There are evidence that the sources of present and potential threats are linked to underdevelopment, social injustice and exclusion, poverty, violations of human rights and existing inequality as a result of weak and failing states (Pinelopi and Nina, 2001). The weakening of states, the erosion of their capacity and implosion represent an important source of new form of threat. This therefore requires new policy and institutional measures to tackle in the interest of national survival and wellbeing as well as save the world the ripple effects.

Contemporary security discussion is no longer a situation free of dangers but a disposition of social steering of modern societies through a process of social and political interaction in which social values and norms, collective identities and cultural traditions are essential (Hans, 2015). While focus on non-tradition security threats has received positive attention in terms of elevating the soft security threats, there has been a failure to understand how they overlap and reinforce traditional security as well as strengthened the position of illegal activities (Niklas, 2010: 36). Policy-makers and media attention therefore should be focused on how to facilitate the understanding of the nature of and appropriate responses through a realistic and multiplicity framework that would address the root causes of these threats.

By the same token, development experts and scholars alike acknowledged that with the emerging situations in the world today, any development framework which is not grounded in efforts at addressing key areas in domestic agenda may be seen as additional source of instability and would undermine security in itself (SAFERWORLD, 2014; Tung, 2010; Peter, 2006; Brauch, 2005). They see development as one of the several tools of national powers such that should be deployed at tackling these dynamic and diffused drivers of national threats in the mold ranging of poverty reduction, gender equality, social integration, health, governance, infrastructural development (Edward, 2008). This perspective represents the application of specific area of policy concern that encompass the security of individuals not just the state. The agenda should encompass systemic issues

Security endeavors of most states nowadays seem to redefine the content of their national security policies arising from the awareness that modern security is a complex ingredient encompassing various areas of social life and effective if only it can be considered in all its totality (Farooq, 2014; Anton, 1994). It recognizes the comprehensive and collaborative efforts that include a multi-sectorial responses that would bring together the agendas of all those dealing with security, developments and human rights issues.

Conceptual Clarification: National Security and Development

Security is too broad to be defined as a concept. It is broad enough to embrace such issues as power, interdependence, welfare, co-operation, conflict, public interest as parts of its analysis as well as areas like international relations, international political economy, conflicts and peace studies, human rights, development studies as its province (David, 1995: 139). Arising from this, it is argued that there are no experts on national security but only experts on aspects of national challenge.

Similarly, the notion of security has become more and more poly-semantic with the deepening of international economic and political links as well as the need to respond to global problem on a planetary scale (Hitoshi, 2011; Janusz and Vladimir, 1995:11). The guarantee of survival and stability in all aspects as well as the right to comprehensive and sustainable development are now considered as the key elements of modern security rather than the traditional threat against the state mainly in form of military attack. Here, military strategy is less important as a means to pursue national security than it was used before the 1990s past, though certainly not irrelevant to the broader view of addressing domestic issues.

Also, nowhere is the damning effect of non-traditional threats to national security higher than the post-colonial states or post-Soviet states where most of them lack the structure and capacity to provide purposeful and responsible governance which not only reinforces negative development but threatens the very fabrics of the states (Stewark, 2006: 4). A cursory look at the negative development in these states, shows that some of the issues treated as non-priority and neglected as inconsequential concerns are such that threaten the very sustainability of these states (Niklas, 2010). There is an increasing engagement by individuals, social groups, civil society organizations operating beyond the state capacity to maintain its territorial integrity and possibilities.

The notion of security in contemporary time has lessened and substituted the traditional role of the military or isolated response for a comprehensive multi-sectorial approach threats which are mutually reinforcing and interconnected through policy agenda than with the concept of security itself (UN Human Security Unit, 2009; Olabanji and Ese, 2014; David, 1997; Anton, 1994: 39). Often, this takes the form of giving high priority to issues such as human rights, economics, environment, drug trafficking, crime or social injustices in addition to the traditional concern from external threats. The new understanding of security therefore has gone past safeguarding the state from external threats to a broader perspective of placing high priority on how to improve the material conditions of citizens and ensuring equitable access to the good things of life (Orji, 2012; Toyin and Abe, 2011; Nicholas, 2006). This way, poverty and exclusion are removed or drastically reduced.

Development policy is essentially not limited to economic exercise but also a systemic issue such as socio-

economic and political essential to sustenance of any country (UNDP, 2007). It embraces various areas of social life including socio-economic, health, environmental, physical, food and political security of the people, protecting dominant values, ideology and ways of life from assault making development a structural element modern security and barometer for assessing the performance of states (Anton, 1994: 38). In fact, some now see security as development and development as security.

Expanding Threat to Nigeria's National Security and the Imperatives of New Approach

Amidst the deteriorating security situation in the world, Nigeria is confronted with daunting developmental challenges which pose a serious threat to socio-economic and political development. These developmental challenges include endemic rural and urban poverty, high inflation rate, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, large domestic debt and rising stock of external debt (Olabanji and Ese, 2014). The Nigerian case provides a telling confirmation of how government insensitivity and corruption could undermine development rather than the classical Dutch disease often associated with natural resource endowed states (Paul, Chukwuma and Catherine, 2008).

The present security challenge in Nigeria is partly a reaction to policy failure to deliver (Omodia and Aliu, 2013; Benedict and Kanayo, 2010). Despite the great expectations that accompanied the return to civil rule in Nigeria in 1999, Nigerians are disenchanted with the performance of the political class to deliver the public goods through policies that emphasis democratization of development, broad-based economic growth and social accommodation that can facilitate long term stability (Omodia and Aliyu, 2013). Lack of people centred approach to governance is at the core of the threats to the survival of the Nigerian state.

Political and economic governance and management are suffering from fundamental defects. Nowhere has the structural weakness of the Nigerian economy been more glaring than in agriculture and manufacturing hence; the continued erosion of the job-creating potentials of the nation's manufacturing sector (Soludo, 2008). In spite of the abundance of human and natural resources in the country, government policy has failed to achieve the intended goals and development. Since oil became the mainstay of the economy, government has failed to diversify the economy through agriculture and agro-based exports in spite of the expanding global market for agricultural exports with the rise of India and Chinese economies.

Patronage politics is denying the country of the much needed resource for developmental purpose. The electoral process is undermined by intensity of electoral competition thereby leading to diversion of public funds for patronage politics and personal aggrandizement (Victoria et al, 2008; Paul, 2008). The absence of checks and balances enable politicians to overwhelming spend public funds rather than saving it wisely. There is a need to put in a limit on campaign expenditure to free politicians from the burden of the pressure for patronage so as to allow them pursue the larger public interest while also, allowing honest politicians to join the fray.

Upsurge in violent conflict is a major deterrent to buildup of sustainable political institutions, economic growth and social reconciliation as well as undermine trust and respect for government, constraining its ability to provide leadership and foster popular participation. Political and economic isolation of community cause strained relations between the communities and state thus encouraging assault on state apparatus as a way of challenging state negligence and failure to provide basic utilities for socio-economic and meaningful development (Orji, 2012: 199; Hans, 2008). Available data on the level and dimension of security threats to the corporate existence of the country as one indivisible entity reveals an increase over time to threats to lives and properties hinder business activities and discourage both local and foreign investors, all which stifle and retard the country (Ibrahim, 2014; Bruce, 2010). Sound re-tinkering of the developmental agenda with regard to the various key areas of relevance is required. Improved standard of living of the citizens and efficient security are *sine qua non* for an effective national security.

Recommendation

Analysts and developmental experts recognize that developmental agenda can only be achieved if efforts are geared towards addressing the root causes of threat to security. The foundation for a virile economy and development is anchored on good governance and responsible leadership. Mass investment in infrastructure and energy to create the required environment for speedy industrialization would develop the state capacity to dictate the direction of the nation's development while at the same time address inequality through the redistribution of public resources.

A diverse society such as Nigeria tends to work better if it can restructure and strengthen vital institutions of governance to make them relevant and active. Central to the meeting the poverty challenge is a policy mix of restructuring and diversification of the economy for rapid industrialization, employment generation, and export-oriented trade. This is most critical for tackling poverty induced threat as well as boosting the nation's revenue base through export and diversification of exports; by increasing value-added in terms of processing and semi processing of such agricultural products in order to change the revenue base positively while at the same time

creating employment generation while also making policy to be people centred.

There are little questions that the Nigeria's developmental challenge has been instigated by and protected by state bankruptcy; attributable to wrong policy choices rather than external shocks and a transition crisis arising from domestic political and economic disruption. There is a need to place severe limits on campaign funds for electioneering. This would reduce both the scope for politicians to buy votes through patronage and the need for them to raise money for campaigning by selling favors. Electoral competition without checks is particularly catastrophic to national security. Intensity of electoral contest encourages identity politics and heats up the polity.

The growing threats to national security underscore the importance of police forces to national security. There is a need to realign the police to better meet the contemporary internal security challenges. Lack of resources, institutional capacity and in some cases, the preference for the military are undermining the effectiveness of the police force. As long as the police is neglected, and not position to carry out their statutory functions, there would be an upsurge in criminality which the military might not be able to handle.

Conclusion

Addressing Nigeria's present and potential threats to national security in contemporary time requires broadening the notion of security beyond traditional threats to areas which are considered non-consequential as well as adopting a wide range of social, economic and institutional measures to address them. A very strong focus should be concentrated on those crucial components that would reduce poverty, generate employment, enthrone social justice, promote social inclusiveness, and strengthens institution of governance.

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