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Exploring the Nexus Between Insecurity, Development, and Electoral Integrity: Implications for Local Governance in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the intricate connections between development, election integrity, and insecurity in Nigeria, focusing on the implications for local government. Using a holistic approach, it investigates how insecurity undermines democratic processes, jeopardizing the goals of the community and the socio-political system. The study uses both empirical data and theoretical frameworks to clarify these connections. The research highlights the difficulties communities have in holding fair elections and investigates the relationship between election fraud, underdevelopment, and insecurity in Nigeria in light of security concerns. The research highlights the difficulties communities encounter in holding fair elections in light of security concerns and investigates the relationship between election fraud, underdevelopment.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria, the biggest country in Africa, has sociopolitical issues because of racial, religious, and social divides. Even under a federalist system, local government faces challenges including underfunding, dishonesty, and instability that seriously impair its efficacy and, as a result, influence service delivery and decision-making. In Nigeria, electoral procedures and local governance are greatly impacted by the pervasive and complex problem of insecurity. The country faces several insecurity challenges, each with distinct origins and manifestations. Nigeria faces a number of security challenges, such as the insurgency led by Boko Haram, conflicts between farmers and herders, banditry, and tensions between ethnic and religious groups. These challenges not only result in casualties and population displacement, but they also foster an atmosphere of mistrust, anxiety, and instability, which poses a serious threat to local governance structures and social cohesion (Black, 2018).

Furthermore, inadequate development and governance exacerbate the vulnerabilities of Nigerian communities, intensifying the impact of insecurity on socioeconomic well-being and political stability. Nigeria has several security difficulties, such as the Boko Haram insurgency, conflicts between farmer-herders, banditry, and tensions between ethnic and religious groups, despite its abundance of natural and human resources. Since these issues not only cause death and population movement but also foster an atmosphere of mistrust, fear, and instability, they pose a major threat to social cohesion and local government institutions (Black, 2018). In addition, inadequacies in administration and development amplify the vulnerabilities of Nigerian communities, exacerbating the effects of insecurity on political stability and socioeconomic well-being. Nigeria has a wealth of natural and human resources, but it also faces challenges including widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential services like clean water, healthcare, and education. Due to problems like these, the unequal distribution of developmental gains exacerbates social inequality and erodes public trust in government institutions resources, the country grapples with widespread poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential services such as clean water, healthcare, and education.

The unequal distribution of developmental benefits exacerbates social inequality and erodes public faith in government institutions due to issues like inefficiency, corruption, and a lack of accountability (Black, 2018). Furthermore, the integrity of election procedures is crucial to democratic government's capacity to maintain political legitimacy, accountability, and representation. However, violence, manipulation, and contradictions routinely contaminate Nigerian local voting procedures, undermining democratic administration's credibility and inclusion. Therefore, election malpractices such ballot stuffing, violence, intimidation, and vote-buying increase political tensions and erode public confidence in the democratic process,

1 In this study, the words "app" and "platform" are used interchangeably

particularly in areas where social disintegration and insecurity are prevalent.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the many aspects of insecurity in Nigeria, taking into account its root causes, manifestations, and impacts on local communities, democratic governance, and election procedures. The research's findings are therefore expected to have an impact on practice and policy by supplying data and recommendations to decision-makers in the domains of development, elections, and civil society organizations that strive to promote democracy, prosperity, and peace in Nigeria's local communities.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Concept of Insecurity

The concept of insecurity has several facets, including absence of safety, danger, hazard, and lack of protection. Ewetan & Urhie (2014) define insecurity as a state of anxiety or fear spurred on by inadequate or nonexistent protection. Ozoigbo (2019) posits that insecurity may be interpreted as either the condition of vulnerability or exposure to danger, or as the state of being exposed to risk or concern, characterized by the anticipation of terrible things happening. According to Ewetan & Urhie (2014), who emphasize the lack or inadequacy of safety, "the state of fear or anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection" is the definition of insecurity. The most obvious kind of insecurity, physical insecurity, also exists in the social and economic spheres and feeds into more widespread forms of it.

Conversely, insurgency presents a multifaceted and intricate problem. As stated by the US Department of Defense (2007) and cited by Ozoigbo (2019), an insurgency is a planned movement that overthrows a lawful government by military force and subversive methods. This term states that rebel groups pursue their political, religious, social, or ideological goals by unlawful means. An insurgency's primary objective is to topple an existing government in order to make agreements on power sharing or seize control of resources and authority. Ozoigbo (2019). Insecurity, according to Ewetan and Urhie (2014), is a condition marked by a lack of safety and independence from unintended damage. This includes the absence of dread and the absence of the physical and psychological safety stress caused by a lack of confidence in one's acceptability, prospects, and ability to realize one's potential. From an alternative perspective, Okolie, Onyema, and Baseey (2019) characterize insecurity as the feeling of being uneasy, vulnerable, or in danger.

Comparably, feelings of unease and unsafety, insufficient security or protection, worries, threats, and uncertainties are all included in the concept of insecurity together with the lack of safety. Eneji and Agri (2020). Ewetan & Urhie (2014) assert that insecurity can originate from both external and internal causes. These include sentimental responses to unforeseen external threats and religious beliefs. Emotions of fear, concern, uncertainty, poverty, injustice, unemployment, and many forms of social violence all contribute to a climate of political instability. Furthermore, concern or sensitivity to threats are signs of insecurity. According to Adofu & Alhassan (2018), security is a dynamic state that is closely related to a state's ability to lessen threats to its core objectives and values. Adofu & Alhassan (2018) posit that a nation's security is predicated on two fundamental tenets: firstly, the promotion of a preferred international order that mitigates risks to fundamental values, interests, and domestic stability; and secondly, the maintenance and protection of the socioeconomic order against internal and external threats. However, Ozoigbo (2019) views security as a broad concept and highlights the need for a network of armed troops to protect territory.

Accordingly, Adofu & Alhassan (2018) highlight the nuanced idea of security even further, proposing that it encompasses elements like happiness, safety, and tranquility in addition to the preservation of human and material resources and the absence of natural catastrophes. Consequently, the term "insecurity" is intended to be generally interpreted to indicate being exposed to many forms of vulnerability in all areas of life, including fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, and harassment. Okolie, Onyema, and Baseey (2019), for instance, argued that challenges to the state may be a sign of insecurity, which would therefore encourage the proliferation of weapons including nuclear weapons for defense. Furthermore, electoral security measures include the preservation of people and material resources during elections. It also encompasses the broader objective of preserving the legitimacy of the electoral process and its outcomes. In this context, integrity refers to the behavior, principles, norms, and results of elections, as well as the procedures and safeguards that uphold the legitimacy of the legal system. The integrity of several stakeholders, including candidates, electoral officials, voters, and election monitors and observers, is determined by election security measures.

Nigeria has a confusing and complicated security environment with persistent threats that affect every state in the nation and are not adequately addressed by all levels of government. There are ongoing challenges that the government's security apparatus must overcome in order to guarantee safety and security, which casts doubt on the possibility of maintaining security inside Nigeria (Adegbami, 2013). Various factors have led to various forms of instability in the nation, including civil war, insurgency, recurring violent religious disputes, militancy spurred by socioeconomic inequalities and ethnic tensions, and crises stemming from aspirations for independence. Because of this, the history of Nigeria during the previous fifty to sixty years highlights how crucial security problems are to the public discourse (Adegbami, 2013).

Economic Disruption: Insecurity breeds uncertainty, which deters investment and impedes economic expansion. When violence or instability strikes the affected areas, businesses are disinclined to invest because they are worried about the safety

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of their workers, the security of their assets, and the reliability of the supply chain. This reluctance to make investments causes the economy to stagnate or slow down, which reduces the number of options for raising income, generating employment, and putting poverty-reduction plans into action. Consequently, emerging nations may experience a cycle of inaction and lack of advancement.

Increased Poverty and Inequality: Insecurity increases the prevalence of poverty and inequality, particularly for vulnerable communities. The lack of access to basic healthcare, educational opportunities, and work opportunities for those living in conflict-affected areas feeds the poverty cycle. Moreover, social discord and disintegration are fostered by insecurity, intensifying the disparities across diverse socioeconomic strata and undermining communal unity. In the end, this impedes society's overall development and advancement.

Humanitarian Crises and Internal Displacement: Internal displacement and refugee crises result from people being compelled to leave their homes in areas afflicted by war and violence. The difficulties faced by those who are relocated in obtaining basic needs like clean water, healthcare, and education increase their vulnerability and impoverishment. The burden that relocation puts on host communities and local infrastructure further impedes development efforts. As a result, both host communities and displaced persons continue to live in a cycle of poverty and vulnerability.

Agricultural Productivity: Insecurity has a deleterious effect on agriculture, which is the foundation of Nigeria's economy and the means of livelihood for millions of people. Farmers are discouraged from cultivating their fields due to fear of coming invasions or battles over land ownership, which diminishes agricultural production and increases food poverty. These kinds of disruptions seriously damage rural communities' social and economic stability, especially in areas where agriculture is the primary source of income.

Infrastructure Development: Insecurity discourages investments in vital industries like transportation, energy, and telecommunications, which poses serious obstacles to the development of infrastructure. In unstable times, infrastructure projects are viewed as dangerous ventures due to their massive, long-term financial requirements. Poor infrastructure thereby restricts trade and commercial prospects, obstructs economic progress, and restricts access to essential services.

Social Cohesion and the Development of Human Capital: Communities' social cohesiveness and trust are weakened by insecurity, which makes collaboration and well-coordinated development initiatives challenging. Pervasive violence and instability breed mistrust and dread, which leads to societal disintegration and fractures along ethnic, religious, or regional fault lines. Instability also disrupts educational institutions, depriving children of a top-notch education and impeding the formation of human capital, which is essential to sustained prosperity and economic expansion. In this sense, the effects of instability can have a long-term effect on a nation's future.

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

The goal of maintaining electoral integrity is to meet both international standards and the collective will of the electorate by adhering strictly to the electoral laws that regulate a nation's election process throughout the duration of its electoral cycle. These definitions are particularly significant since they include the whole election cycle and the nomination process, both of which are essential for promoting efficient governance. When voters are free to choose their candidates without external influence, there is electoral integrity. In elections with high electoral integrity, more is achieved than just choosing a leader. Democracies depend on elections because they give citizens a voice in politics and a way to hold elected leaders accountable. As Amao (2022) accurately noted, a successful electoral system may foster political party rivalry, public discourse, citizen engagement, increased government responsiveness, and the peaceful settlement of disputes. To preserve the integrity of the democratic process, transparency is a concept that should be applied to every facet of the election cycle, from candidate nominations and campaigning to voting, results announcements, and dispute settlement (Kerr, 2018). Election processes are regarded as legal and compliant with international democratic ideals when they are carried out fairly and transparently by Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) and other relevant parties (Kerr, 2018). This underscores the need of excellent governance in democracies, boosts voter trust, and affirms the legitimacy of the administration (Black, 2017).

General elections are significant occasions in a country's political history because they elicit high voter turnout and uphold the core democratic principle that "power belongs to the people." Nevertheless, there is no guarantee that the electoral process will accurately reflect the wishes of the voters. Thus, there is increased interest among academics and politicians in creating robust evaluation frameworks due to growing worries about preserving election integrity on a national and international level. To assess the legitimacy and transparency of election processes, the Perception of Election Index (PEI) was created (Amao, 2022). Elections are the primary method by which citizens choose representatives to hold office for certain terms in compliance with the electoral calendar in a democratic society. Particularly in liberal democracies, elections help choose leaders and keep them answerable to the people. Election laws that include recall clauses highlight how crucial it is for people to have the power to select and remove their representatives. The recall principle highlights the fundamental notion that people ought to have the authority to select and remove representatives (Kerr, 2018).

Fraud in elections taints Election integrity can be gravely jeopardized by the electoral process. Max Gromping and Ferran

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Martinez describe election fraud as any unapproved intervention in the electoral process with the intention of either boosting the vote share of a candidate who is preferred, reducing the vote share of an opponent, or doing both (Gromping & Martinez, 2014). The particular types of electoral fraud vary from nation to nation and are often outlined in election laws, which are occasionally found under the broader purview of criminal law. An exhaustive examination of the complete political cycle is necessary to assess the possibility of election fraud, which is a significant task. This includes the planning and organization of electoral activities, voter registration procedures, political party and candidate registration, electoral campaigns, polling activities, vote tabulation, result declaration, reporting mechanisms, results auditing procedures, and archival processes. It also includes the drafting and execution of electoral acts, the hiring and training of electoral staff, and the planning and organization of electoral activities (Gromping & Martinez, 2014).

DEVELOPMENT

Development in a society does not just happen; rather, it changes in response to certain events and circumstances. Ideologies, or core principles, serve as a compass in all civilizations. Therefore, development is an intricate and diverse process that encompasses growth, advancement, and constructive change in addition to the enhancement of the social, economic, environmental, physical, and demographic facets of existence. The main goals of development are to guarantee the sustainable use of natural resources, encourage the expansion or creation of job and income possibilities locally and regionally, and raise the general standard of living and general well-being of the population. Although the benefits of development may not be immediately obvious, they eventually show themselves and allow for qualitative advancements (Smith, 2017). Sen (1988) defined development as a process that allows individuals to act freely in social, familial, economic, and other domains so they can realize their full potential. Based on this idea, the Human Development Index (HDI) was created in 1990 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as a measure to assess development. Martha Nussbaum takes this concept a step further with her capacity approach, particularly in relation to gender, emphasizing the significance of women's empowerment as a catalyst for growth.

Jhingan (2011) defines development as an ongoing process marked by significant progress in the social, political, and economic domains. This viewpoint places a strong emphasis on the continuous progress meant to uphold and assist residents' overall welfare. According to Shittu, Kantamaneni, and Campos (2022), development is a complex phenomenon that entails not only faster economic growth, lower inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty, but also significant changes in national institutions, social structures, and prevailing attitudes. Thus, this point of view emphasizes how crucial it is for every nation to become self-sufficient and reduce its reliance on external influences as crucial components of its development route. Development policies are directly related to the national objectives of each given country. Effective comparison of the developmental statuses of other nations requires the establishment of suitable standards for measuring advancement. These benchmarks encompass a wide range of indicators, such as the expansion of the nation's wealth, enhanced well-being for a significant portion of the population, the exercise of civil rights, and heightened economic stability. Within this framework, the UN advocates for comprehensive assessment metrics that incorporate the idea of "human development," such as average income, life expectancy, adult literacy rates, and accessibility to education at all levels.

Furthermore, the capacity of the voters to freely and regularly select competing candidates individuals, parties, or groups for positions of authority inside the governmental apparatus is what defines democracy. Fundamental elements of democracy include the adult franchise being available to everyone, respect for human rights, the establishment of an impartial and independent judiciary, and mechanisms for accountability and transparency. However, since Nigeria became a democratic nation in 1999, there has been a marked rise in religious violence and sporadic intercommunal conflict, which has seriously harmed the political climate of the nation and resulted in several fatalities and destruction of property. Because of these events, which have prompted capital flight and created worry among potential investors, few individuals are willing to invest in an environment scarred by civil unrest and instability, despite the potential rewards. Government neglect has been brought to light by a lack of attention to important sectors like infrastructure development, healthcare, and education, in addition to the ongoing dread of violence.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE

Whatever its level of power, the government's primary responsibility is to improve people's lives by giving them the opportunity to actively engage in the processes that form their lives. This demand is further strengthened by the existence of democracy within a political system, which gives individuals the freedom and liberty to contribute to the growth of society. But achieving these goals will depend on leaders and citizens working together to create and maintain the institutions and frameworks that promote good governance practices. Progress and development cannot be pursued without these institutions and frameworks in place.

The phrase "local governance" will have varied meanings to different researchers. Local governance, according to Suleiman (1993), is the intentional participation in local democratic and governing processes, such as the delegation of personnel, authority, and power from central to local authorities. This decentralization makes communities more capable of addressing the particular requirements and objectives of their citizens. Nunkoo (2015) argues that political systems worldwide aim to provide local services in an effective and efficient manner because they recognize the significant impact that local government administration has on citizens' daily lives. Consequently, regardless of the form of government, local governance

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is universally acknowledged as being essential to national integration, growth, and administration. As a result, local governance describes the kind of government that functions under the national government's jurisdiction and is entrusted with handling issues and concerns that are relevant to a specific population inside a defined territory.

The legislative, executive, and administrative departments of government are vested in local government bodies, which are chosen by their constituents and assigned specific territories. The idea of subsidiarity is theoretically reflected in local government, which delegates authority over the management of regional issues to members of the community. This notion holds that local needs are best met by those closest to them than by a centralized authority. Suleiman (1993) asserts that legislative statutes recognize local government as an essential part of national administration, primarily charged with resolving locally specific issues and problems. This concept therefore, highlights two primary aspects of local governance: the presence of directly elected local authorities and the management of local finances. Each and every local government entity needs these characteristics.

However, Reddy (2016) defines local government as an organization that functions as a branch of the federal government and is tasked with developing and implementing public policies within a certain area. This explanation emphasizes how local government organizations are public entities, how they differ from private businesses, and how their main goal is to serve the interests of all people. Likewise, Leonardsson & Rudd (2018) emphasize local government as the domain in which local authorities possess the legal power to enact laws and carry out other essential functions for effective governance. This point of view highlights the legislative arm of local government, which endows authorities with the authority to alter policies in response to situations and demands specific to the community. Furthermore, local government is defined by Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim (2016) as a system of governance composed of specialized subunits with the legal authority to adopt laws pertaining to their purview. The legislative component of local government and its role in creating and carrying out regionally distinct regulatory frameworks are emphasized in Suleiman and Idrees (2002). The primary attributes of municipal governance

1. Due to its statutory character, local government is governed by state law and is thus recognized, defined, and administered accordingly.
2. In Nigeria, local government organizations are recognized under the constitution. Within the limits of their jurisdiction, these organizations have the power to impose and set their own local taxes.
3. They are characterized by the principle of local community participation, allowing citizens to engage in the decision-making processes and management of local affairs. They are distinguished by the participation of the local community, which permits citizens to take part in the management of local affairs and decision-making procedures.
4. Operating within the legal framework established through decentralization processes or the principle of local autonomy, local governments enjoy a certain degree of autonomy from central government bodies.
5. Their ability to operate independently within the bounds of the law emphasizes their importance in upholding the welfare and common good of society while also serving the interests of all residents.

A careful examination of the definitions provided makes it abundantly evident that local government is a composite organization composed of several fundamental components. Having a legally recognized local government with boundaries defining a certain population and territory is one of these components. Moreover, municipal government displays a certain degree of autonomy, albeit only with little oversight from the federal government. Moreover, there is a distinct separation of actions concerning local issues from those involving things outside local borders. Additionally, there is a distinct distinction between local operations and those that beyond local limits; the latter are frequently the purview of higher levels.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the case of Nigeria, Social Contract Theory provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring the relationships between election integrity, development, and insecurity. This political and philosophical theory provides insightful knowledge of the complex relationships that exist between people and the state. Fundamentally, this theory explores the idea that people voluntarily unite to form a society and a governing body that is entrusted with upholding law and order and protecting their rights and interests (Shaapera, 2015; Sasan, 2021). Individuals participate in the social contract freely, according to social contract theory, whether overtly through formal agreements or covertly by their behavior and assimilation into society (Shaapera, 2015; Sasan, 2021). But this structure means that the government and the people have reciprocal responsibilities. The government pledges to protect citizens' rights, maintain security, and advance the welfare of the people, stressing that the main duty of government is to protect people's inherent rights, which include life, liberty, and property (Shaapera, 2015; Sasan, 2021). The people agree to abide by the laws and regulations that the government establishes. In return for the guarantee of these rights, citizens surrender some liberties to the government in this transaction. According to this view, governments may only be considered legitimate if they uphold the social compact and act in the citizens' best interests (Fried, 2015, Reijers, O'Brolcháin, & Haynes, 2016).

Nigerians are exposed to a wide range of risks, such as insurgency, banditry, and communal violence, as a result of the country's pervasive insecurity, which threatens the fundamental principles of the social contract (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018; Adegbami, 2013). The government's failure to uphold its duty to protect its people feeds mistrust and keeps the cycle of violence and instability alive. Furthermore, by discouraging investments, interrupting economic activity, and rupturing social

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cohesiveness, this fear impedes developmental initiatives (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018). As a result, the government's incapacity to fulfill its obligations under the social compact is weakened by its inability to handle insecurity, which exacerbates socioeconomic inequality and prolongs underdevelopment (Adegbami, 2013). Furthermore, as free and fair elections are essential to democratic administration, electoral integrity is crucial to maintaining the social compact between the state and its people (Yusuf, 2011; Bekoe, 2011). The integrity of electoral processes is jeopardized by the prevailing political violence and instability in Nigeria, which also undermines the legitimacy of elected people and erodes public trust in the government (Udu, 2015). The social contract's tenets are broken by the government's inability to maintain electoral integrity, depriving citizens of their fundamental right to take part in fair and legitimate elections. Therefore, this theory emphasizes how the relationship between the government and its people is reciprocal, highlighting how crucial transparency, accountability, and mutual trust are to promoting peace, prosperity, and democratic governance (Surovtsev & Syrov, 2015; Rousseau, 2015).

Notwithstanding its criticisms, the social contract idea has had a substantial influence on political discourse and has been used to support a variety of political systems, including authoritarian and democratic ones. This theory clarifies the moral and ethical underpinnings of political power and governance institutions, providing an organized framework for understanding the dynamic interactions between individuals and the state. As such, it forms the basis of political philosophy, guiding conversations about rights, citizenship, and the responsibilities of rulers and ruled in a given community.

COLONIAL REVIEW ON SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The historical context of insecurity in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted, based on social, political, and cultural factors (Charles & Igechi, 2017). Consequently, understanding the historical background of the country is necessary to understand the causes and progression of insecurity there. Nigeria's colonial heritage is substantially to blame for its current security problems (Charles & Igechi, 2017). Specifically, the country's merger by the British colonial authority brought various ethnic groups and customs together under a single governing body in 1914. As a result, intergroup conflicts and tensions that continue to contribute to insecurity today were brought about by the arbitrary border drawing that disregarded pre-existing linguistic, religious, and ethnic differences (Charles & Igechi, 2017). Furthermore, as highlighted by Papaioannou & Dalrymple-Smith (2015), pre-existing fault lines became more acute throughout Nigeria's fight for independence from colonial rule, intensifying power struggles amongst political elites and heightening ethnic tensions within the country's population. They argue that Nigeria's deplorable political structures, rampant corruption, and climate of impunity, all of which fuel insecurity, are lingering effects of colonialism. According to Michalopoulos and Papaioannou (2020), there were also several military coups and countercoups after Nigeria gained independence in 1960. As a result of the Nigerian Civil War, also known as the Biafran War, which left a large amount of destruction and casualties in its wake, deeply ingrained resentment still exists, particularly among the Igbo ethnic group. Furthermore, Charles & Igechi (2017) emphasize that the war was fought in Nigeria's eastern area between the government and groups seeking independence.

Throughout the post-civil war era, Nigeria saw brief stints of military rule interspersed with periods of democratic governance. Furthermore, under military dictatorships, which were characterized by human rights abuses, political repression, and economic mismanagement, socioeconomic inequities were exacerbated. Public discontent was exacerbated by this (Charles & Igechi, 2017). More significantly, political exclusion and the suppression of dissent fueled dissatisfaction and fostered an atmosphere that supported the expansion of rebel organizations (Nwoko, 2012). Furthermore, with the discovery of oil in the Niger Delta region in the late 1950s, Nigeria was predicted to see immense wealth and prosperity. However, the mismanagement of oil profits, environmental damage, and the marginalization of local communities by foreign oil companies and the Nigerian government have all contributed to the region's general unhappiness and militancy (Etim, Okoi, & Nsebot 2020).The history of armed insurrection, pipeline damage, and kidnappings for ransom in the Niger Delta presents several challenges for the nation's security system (Okoi, 2021).

Ethnic and religious disputes have historically been the main source of insecurity in Nigeria (Charles & Igechi, 2017). The country is home to around 250 distinct ethnic groups, each with its own distinct language, traditions, and culture (Nwoko, 2012). As a result, competition for financial resources, political clout, and social status typically escalates into violence along racial and religious lines (Nwoko, 2012). Additionally, the proliferation of light and small arms has exacerbated intercommunal violence, particularly in the Middle Belt region where several lives have been lost in battles between farmers and herders (Okoi, 2021). Boko Haram is an Islamist terrorist organization that wants to create an Islamic state in the mostly Muslim northeast of Nigeria. It has been causing problems for Nigeria lately (Egbe & Okoi, 2017). The Boko Haram-led insurgency has caused widespread displacement, humanitarian problems, and a breakdown in social cohesion in the affected areas. By employing tactics like suicide bombings and kidnappings, Boko Haram poses a severe danger to the Nigerian government and its security forces (Egbe & Okoi, 2017).

The Nexus between Insecurity, Electoral Integrity, and Development in Nigeria

Nigeria has long struggled with insecurity, which has its origins in the pre-colonial era when the country was defined by intra- and inter-tribal warfare. The public's atmosphere of dread and uncertainty brought forth by these conflicts added to the feeling of instability. Furthermore, the pre-colonial era's high rate of fighting not only helped to maintain this instability but also made it easier for people to be captured and sold into slavery. Since these captive people were frequently exchanged for

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goods during the transatlantic slave trade, the historical context highlights the pervasiveness of insecurity and the tendency of tribal groups to seek safety in places they believed to be safer.

Colonialism further widened already-existing disparities by enforcing strict governance practices (MOU, 2018). Nigeria's British colonialism, especially in the northern areas, created new degrees of instability as local populations battled under foreign domination imposed upon them (MOU, 2018). The amalgamation of several ethnic groups under the colonial government exacerbated tensions, leading to a rise in social instability and violence (Obi, 2018). Gubak, Solomon, and Piwuna (2021) contend that colonialism served as a major catalyst for the current violence in Nigeria and that the implementation of election processes is a big contributor to insecurity. In their view, a culture of violence was established by the repressive and authoritarian methods of colonial rule, which were designed to compel submission to British authority (MOU, 2018). This point of view highlights the intricate relationships between historical developments and current challenges, ultimately highlighting the long-lasting consequences of colonial legacies on Nigeria's socio-political environment. The colonial administration's use of force to impose restrictions on diverse ethnic groups contributed to an atmosphere of instability and insecurity (Obi, 2018). Tensions caused by the colonial government's mingling of ethnically diverse populations led to power conflicts between dominant and minority ethnic groups (Obi, 2018). Consequently, rivalry between and within ethnic groups naturally breeds insecurity in a political system that impedes the conduct of lawful and inclusive political processes (Obi, 2018; MOU, 2018).

Nigeria has seen several types of instability throughout election cycles since gaining independence, such as gangsterism, political assassinations, hooliganism, and cultism. Winner-take-all politics and ethnicized politics typified the first republic's violent election scene, which ultimately resulted in electoral violence that aided in the young democracy's demise (Emegwa, 2023). The 1959 British-conducted elections, which included voter intimidation and other electoral malpractices, are indicative of the violence and anomalies that have plagued electoral processes throughout colonial administration throughout history (Emegwa, 2023). The 1964 general elections, which featured widespread voter intimidation, official harassment, and the employment of thugs to subvert the voting process, best exemplified this trend (Black, 2017). In addition, the declaration of a state of emergency that followed the Western regional election in December 1965 serves as a sobering reminder of the political turmoil that typified Nigeria at that period. According to Emegwa (2023), the ethnic mix of Nigerian politics and nationalist leaders' allegiance to ancestral interests constituted a severe security danger during the first republic's electoral violence. The widespread violence that preceded election campaigns contributed to a generalized sense of unpredictability and instability across the nation, which in turn heightened tensions inside the political arena (Black, 2017).

There have been comparisons of Nigeria's political system to an ongoing war, as noted by Black (2017), who also highlights the polarizing nature of election campaigns. Pre- and post-election tensions are further heightened by a number of common concerns that are characteristic of these campaigns, such as thuggery, confrontations, intimidation methods, political assassinations, and the propagation of hate speech. This tense atmosphere reminds me of the electoral violence that occurred in the Western regional elections in 1965, which clouded the 1983 federal elections and ultimately led to widespread anarchy. Voter fraud by Nigerian National Party supporters highlighted the breakdown of law and order during this period (Black, 2017). The June 12 presidential elections, however, were regrettably called off by Badamasi Babangida, the retired military chief of state, even though they were the most orderly, legitimate, and equitable in Nigeria's democratic history. The 1979 polls, by contrast, were rather quiet. In contrast to the chaotic elections conducted by the military in the past, the fourth republic's transition, headed by retired general Abdulsalam Abubakar, had calm elections. However, under the late General Sanni Abacha's reign of pervasive insecurity, Nigeria was reduced to a pariah state, which complicated the voting process (Obioha, 2016). Notably, the general atmosphere of insecurity in Nigeria made it extremely difficult for women to actively participate in the political process before, during, and after elections. This highlights the need for concerted action to address insecurity and create an environment that is conducive to broad political participation.

Election processes in Nigeria's fourth republic have been very similar to those in the country's first, marked by pervasive ethnocentrism, parochialism, acrimony, hostility, and violence after the transition from military to civilian governance (Obioha, 2016). This historical pattern of recurrence poses a major threat to the integrity of the nation since elections regularly result in the loss of life and property. Throughout Nigeria's history, many ethnic groups have contemplated secession, undermining the unity of the country. Significantly, there has been a noticeable rise in insecurity in the fourth republic, mostly due to high unemployment and the poverty that follows, particularly among young Nigerians. The turbulent 2003 general elections serve as a stark example; they were reminiscent of other violent political events that posed grave security risks to the nation's very existence. Moreover, political killings are a nationwide phenomena that occur everywhere in the country (Obi, 2018).

A generalized suspicion has seeped into the Nigerian political system as a result of the widespread lack of security during the election process, discouraging many honorable people especially women from entering the political sphere (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018). The 2011 election resulted in a horrific increase in violence that claimed the lives of over 800 people in the North, including National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) members serving as election officials, exacerbating this lack of faith (Adegbami, 2013). The violence peaked in 2009 when the Boko Haram insurgency broke out, wreaking havoc and exhausting the region's material and human resources in northeastern Nigeria (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018). From being centered on one area at first, the insurgency has gradually spread to other parts of the country. For example, the Boko Haram insurgency,

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which has spread throughout the Northeast and resulted in significant destruction and human fatalities, does not appear to have a long-term solution (Adegbami, 2013). The horrific conclusion of the terrorists' heinous deeds was the release of just 93 out of the 274 schoolgirls who had been abducted in Chibok in 2014 (Confortini, 2022). Regretfully, a great deal of girls and women have been abducted by rebels and subjected to cruel treatment, such as forced marriages, sexual slavery, and involuntary involvement in suicide bombings (Confortini, 2022).

The occurrence of abductions and insurgencies has led to significantly elevated levels of insecurity in the southeast region of Nigeria. Organized criminal groups have made lucrative businesses out of kidnapping, which entails detaining individuals against their will in order to demand a ransom. Oftentimes, these groups disregard the wellbeing of the victims they abduct. This problem gained greater attention during the 2007 general elections when politically dislocated goons sought up alternative means of income (Nwagboso, 2018). In addition, the herder insurgency has caused kidnappings and posed a major security threat in north-central Nigeria, with its effect gradually extending to other parts of the country (Nwagboso, 2018). Nigeria's security problems have also gotten worse due to the rise of militant and ethnic militias, such as the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), MOSOP (Mosop for the Survival of the Ogoni People), Oodua People's Congress, MEND (Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta), Niger Delta Vigilante Force (NDVF), and the Egbesu Boys (Nwagboso, 2018). The intricate landscape of insecurity emphasizes how urgently comprehensive policies that address the root causes and mitigate the effects of these many forms of violence and conflict are needed (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018; Adegbami, 2013). The rise in ethno-nationalistic activities has presented the Nigerian government with a growing number of security challenges. In a region where there is resource conflict in the North Central, terrorism in the North East, militancy in the South, separatist agitation in the South East, ethno-religious conflicts, kidnapping, and numerous other security threats, promoting civic engagement becomes a challenging endeavor (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018; Adegbami, 2013). Nigeria's porous borders, which let criminal groups and other violent non-state actors to openly acquire light weapons, exacerbate the issue (Adofu & Alhassan, 2018). It seems reasonable that people would be dissuaded from doing their civic obligations in light of the convoluted and uncertain political landscape. The 2011 Nigerian election was perceived as quite fair by both local and international observers, marking a substantial improvement over the 1999, 2003, and 2007 elections (Yusuf, 2011; Bekoe, 2011). However, a number of irregularities persisted in the election despite this progress, such as intimidation of voters, seizing ballot boxes, and vote-buying. Despite these shortcomings, the election was considered to be among the most credible in Nigerian history, according to the Center for Democracy and Development (PDFD) (Olaniyan, 2020). The increasing voter participation was another point of emphasis for the CDD.

However, there was an unprecedented uptick in violence following the election that resulted in several fatalities and significant property damage. The 2011 elections were particularly violent, with over 800 deaths reported in the three days that followed the presidential election. This made them the deadliest in Nigeria's modern history since the 1967–1970 civil war (Peace, 2020). This outbreak of violence was mostly attributed to the defeat of President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP), a Christian from the South, against Muhammadu Buhari, who ran on the platform of the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC). By opting to run for reelection, Jonathan was said to have violated the unwritten agreement between the North and South to alternate the president every two terms. Since they believed the North was entitled to another full term following President Yar'Adua's death during his first term, there were several objections made against Jonathan's candidacy in the North (Peace, 2020). This period of turmoil brought to light the fragility of the nation's democratic institutions and the challenge of balancing ethno-regional aspirations within a diverse and often polarized society. It also brought to light the nation's long-standing political tensions and regional disparities within Nigeria (Yusuf, 2011; Bekoe, 2011).

The 2015 general elections, which were held on March 28 and April 11, are regarded by many as the most successful in Nigerian history (Olaniyan, 2020). Both domestic and foreign election monitors commended the process, highlighting notable improvements in procedural efficiency and its general relative calm. This achievement was largely attributed to the Independent National Electoral Commission's (INEC) deployment of technical innovations. In particular, the integrity and effectiveness of the election process were significantly increased by the adoption of smart card readers and biometric voter registration (Olaniyan, 2020). The incorporation of high-security features and codes into crucial electoral materials such as ballot papers and result sheets enhances voter confidence in the election's transparency. However, there were still problems with the 2015 election despite these commendable improvements. Several anomalies were discovered, such as the election materials' delayed arrival, traffic mishaps, card reader issues, allegations of results manipulation, and allegations of underage voting in the nation's northern regions (Udu, 2015).

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN ADDRESSINGINSECURITY, DEVELOPMENT, AND ELECTORAL INTEGRITY IN NIGERIA

According to academic discourse, insecurity is a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development goals (Call, 2000; Ujah & Eboh, 2006; Igbuzor, 2011). The World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 publication of the Brundtland Commission report helped popularize the idea of sustainable development. According to the United Nations (2010), "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" is the definition of sustainable development given in this groundbreaking study. Since then, academics have developed a variety of conceptualizations for sustainable development, including ideas of moral advancement, societal

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change, value shifts, and the establishment of fair social institutions (Gladwin et al., 1995).

From this perspective, advancement is deemed unsustainable if it results in the exclusion of some people, encourages inequality, demonstrates imprudence, or exacerbates unstable conditions. One of the main objectives of responsible governance is development, which is closely linked to the level of economic activity in a nation. Conversely, as economic activities which are primarily made possible by businesses take place via friendly interactions between individuals, economic activity is heavily dependent on people living in peace with one another (Smith, 2003). Consequently, businesses serve as essential conduits for the economic activity that drives national development. But Nigeria's current state of insecurity may make this process more difficult. The primary objectives of sustainable development, according to Daly (1996), are to create a safe and healthy environment for all people as well as to optimize national, corporate, and individual goals that last beyond generations.

According to Akpobibibo (2003), the core principle of sustainability is to ensure that every individual has a meaningful life, underscoring the crucial role that security plays in achieving sustainable development objectives. Without security, economic growth and development are unsustainable because they jeopardize social, human, and financial capital (World Bank, 2011). However, in an environment of peace and security, individuals and governments may focus their efforts on enhancing the welfare of the populace. Moreover, security and development are closely related; security is a public good that has to compete for public funds with other social needs like infrastructure, healthcare, and education (Walter & Snyder, 2000). As a result, investing in security is crucial to the development process.

However, money meant to strengthen security measures is taken out of other crucial areas. Thus, via dwindling local and national resources, impeding development initiatives, and jeopardizing people's well-being, insecurity has a detrimental effect on economic growth and development (Nwagboso, 2012; Call, 2000). Thus, when there are no urgent security concerns, spending on security may be drastically cut. By releasing monies that local and national governments may use for other public goods, this improves people's lives. In addition, instability not only causes the collapse of existing infrastructure but also hinders the formation of an environment that is favorable for the construction of new infrastructure. By giving people financial power and enabling households to sustain their present and future generations, a safe environment promotes economic activity.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The intricate web that is produced by the interaction of insecurity, development, and election integrity has a substantial influence on Nigeria's political stability, socioeconomic advancement, and democratic government. Threats to national security include organized crime, ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism, insurgency, and general criminality. Different regions of the country are impacted by these problems, which increases their vulnerability and impedes growth. Insecurity has a variety of negative consequences on development, including lowering growth expectations, disrupting economic activity, and hurting investment. Elevated risks deter businesses, entice investors from riskier regions, and deteriorate the overall business climate, all of which contribute to job losses, rising rates of poverty, and uneven and elusive economic growth.

The current instability in Nigeria contributes to a problem called "brain drain," which is the departure of professionals, bright young people, and intellectuals from the country in pursuit of security, stability, and better chances elsewhere. This pervasive departure stifles socioeconomic advancement, inhibits innovation, and deprives the country of essential human resource. Moreover, instability hinders infrastructure development, causing delays, disruptions, and acts of sabotage in conflict-affected areas. As a result, essential infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, and other facilities is ignored, exacerbating socioeconomic disparity and maintaining the underdevelopment and marginalization of individuals.

Furthermore, polarizing fault lines along regional, religious, and ethnic lines are created by insecurity, which erodes social cohesion and community trust. Intercommunal conflicts, displacement, and ethno-religious tensions aggravate social cleavages and obstruct the collective activity, cohesion, and unity necessary for development programs to succeed. Therefore, the deterioration of social infrastructure hinders efforts towards development and maintains marginalization, obstructing Nigeria's progress towards inclusive governance and long-term socioeconomic growth.

To effectively address these problems, coordinated efforts are required to enhance election integrity, promote sustainable growth, and fortify security measures. In order to address security concerns, deliver essential services, and ensure transparent election processes, local government structures must be adequately resourced, with support for capacity building and mechanisms that promote participation. Electoral changes must be implemented in order to enhance voter education, strengthen electoral institutions, and hold those in authority responsible. for manipulating elections.

In addition, efficient coordination between government agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, and international partners is necessary to coordinate actions to address the nexus of insecurity, development, and election integrity. By adopting a thorough and collaborative strategy, Nigeria may progress toward more resilient, inclusive, and responsible local government institutions that promote peace, prosperity, and democratic governance at the local level.

[1] In this study, the words “app” and “platform” are used interchangeably.

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