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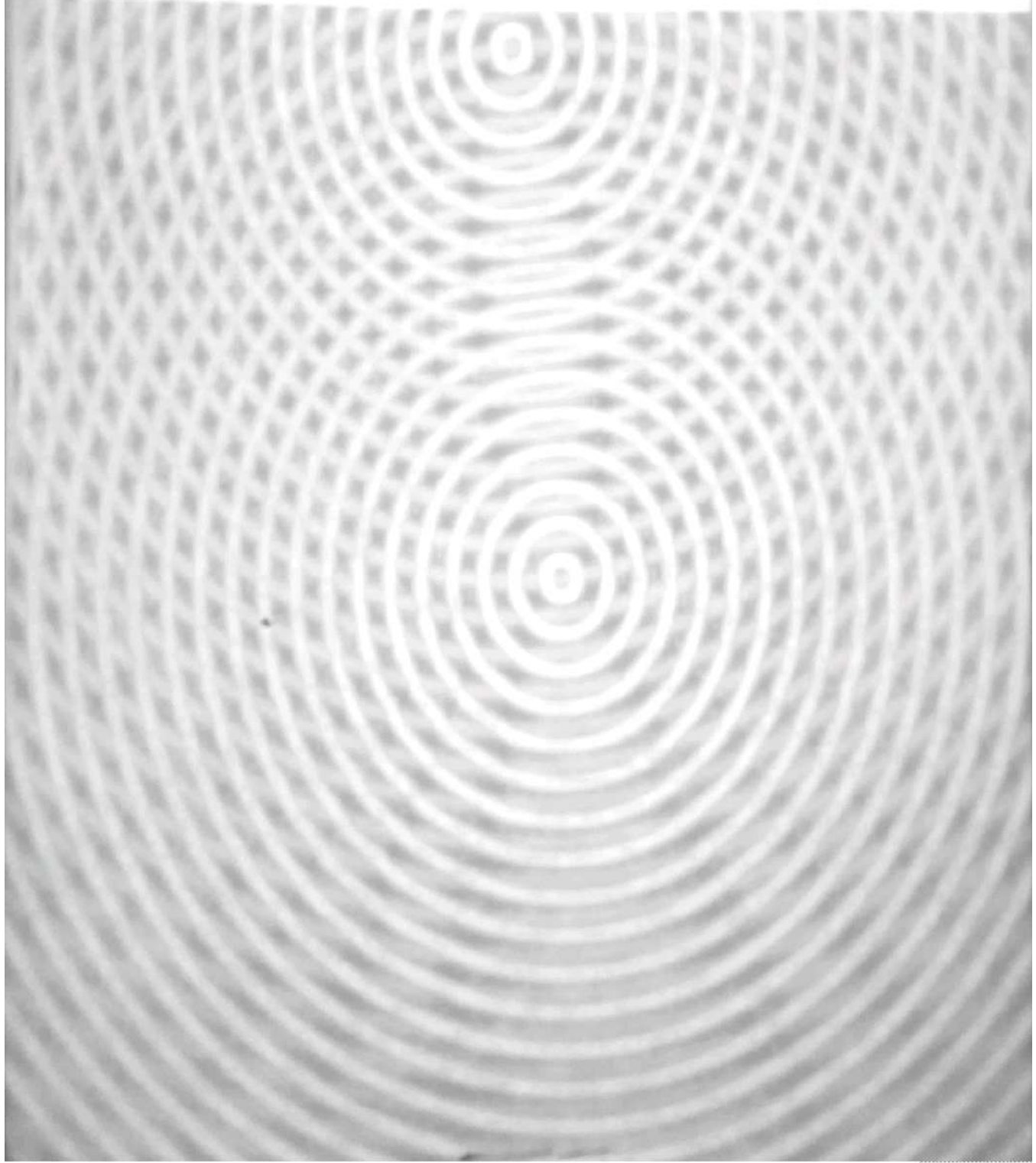


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THE POLITICS OF INSECURITY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE-BELT: PLATEAU AND BENUE STATES IN RETROSPECT

Elizabeth Aishatu Matankari Bature

And

John Tor Tsuwa

Abstract

The Middle Belt diverse and it emerged out of agitations to delink itself from the perceived domineering disposition of the northern oligarchy which it was linked to by the colonialist. This region became of its diversity and other intervening factors has witness alot of insecurity. This paper examines this and discovers that illiteracy, farmers/teachers relations alination, do or die politics agmonst others have been responsible for the high level of insecurity in the region. The paper therefore, recommends for the establishment of joint education scheme, funding of security agencies agmonst others as solution to the insecurity problem in the Middle Belt.

Keywords: Politics, Insecurity, Underdevelopment, Middle Belt.

Introduction

In order to understand the issue of insecurity and underdevelopment in its proper perspective it would be worthwhile to highlight the political history of Nigeria and to briefly illustrate the turmoil in the Central States of Nigeria otherwise called the "Middle Belt", a geo-political term with a

Elizabeth Aishatu Matankari Bature, PhD is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Defence Studies, Nigerian Defence Academy, Kaduna.

John Tor Tsuwa, PhD is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science, Benue State University Makurdi, Benue State.

lot of ethno-religious connotations. Current controversies in Nigeria's political discourse are about the political and ideological understanding of the difference between the North-Central zone and the Middle Belt region (Moti, 2014).

While the North Central zone is perceived as a political division, the Middle Belt region is more or less an ideological conception. It is 'an anti-feudal political tendency directed against what has been coined the Hausa-Fulani oligarchy'. More importantly, it is a 'vehicle for political mobilization and a rallying point in the struggle for identity and political participation' by the minorities of Lord Lugard's Northern Nigeria. It is therefore right to argue that 'the Middle Belt area comprises of people who were either non-Hausa speaking, non-Muslim or both' (NCSAN, 2015). The Middle Belt became a category, activating non-Muslim and non-Hausa-Fulani consciousness against northernization, while keeping ethnic minorities marginalized in the socio-political development of Nigeria.

Obviously, this definition of the Middle Belt region remains very contentious. For example, if viewed from the perspective of self-emancipation of non-Muslim and non-Hausa-Fulani ethnic minorities in the North, then the geographical definition negates the non-Muslim and non-Hausa-Fulani minorities in Northern states of Borno, Jigawa, Kano and Katsina. They are not captured by the geographical definition, yet they share in the religious quest of rejecting the Islamic hegemony over Northern Nigeria. Another point deserving attention is that the ideological/political definition of the Middle Belt excludes those who live in the region geographically, but whose political sympathy is with those from elsewhere. For instance, some emirates in Niger state such as Bida, Kontagora and Lapai emirates, although they belong to the Middle Belt territorially, they will identify with the religious aspirations of Islam symbolized in the Caliphate in Sokoto. This is because they act as 'traditional and religious' leaders of Muslims in their emirates. In the same way, the Yoruba in Kogi whose ambition will win the sympathy of the South-West is likely to identify with that region politically rather than with the Middle Belt. The Middle -

Belt has been awash with specific types of intractable conflicts which have encouraged insecurity and hindered effective and meaningful development in the area (International Crisis Group, 2012). This paper looks at the causes, types and negative effects of this security implications and the effect it has had on the Middle-Belt with specifications of the two states concerned.

1.2 The Middle - Belt

Whatever the contentions, one thing is obvious, the beginning of the Middle Belt region is seen as the mid-lands between the Southern and Northern part of the country, with indigenous ethnic groups that pre-date colonial experience in the sub region. However, the activities and legacies of both the colonial masters and the Hausa and Fulani imperialists brought the Middle Belt region to be what Ibrahim and Haruna (2014), describes as a 'grossly marginalized region with an endangered species on the brink of extinction and cultural annihilation'. Therefore, the legacies of both the colonial administration and the Hausa and Fulani imperialists, especially during the period of decolonization in the 1950s, marginalized the indigenous ethnic groups of the Middle Belt region.

The British first used the notion of "Middle Belt areas" in reference to the southern tip of the Northern region as a political identity distinct and separate from the North-west and North-east geopolitical zones. Because the region is predominantly Christian, the disparate groups also tend to use religion as a socio-cultural identity. The Middle Belt consists roughly of the following states and areas: Adamawa, Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Taraba and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Some Plateau public intellectuals and activists tend to include southern fringes of Kebbi, Kaduna, Borno, Bauchi and Gombe states because they are not dominated by the Hausa and Fulani people (Mohammed, Nd).

At independence in 1960, Nigeria emerged as a Federal System with three regions. Not long after independence the

country became a republic and the regions were increased to four. At that time Nigeria operated the Westminster parliamentary system copied from Britain. The economy was largely based on the agricultural resources of the country with each region excelling in an area of comparative advantage. This gave rise to rapid development in the areas of infrastructure, industry and social development. The majority of the citizens had a comfortable living standard compared to the current acute level of poverty. In a truly federal setting there was a Federal Constitution and each region had its own Constitution and diplomatic agents (Moti, 2014).

In 1966, the military seized power and interrupted the democratic system. The conflict among the military eventually led to a civil war which lasted from 1967-1970. The period after the civil war saw a vigorous exploitation of the petroleum resources of Nigeria which led to what came to be known as the "oil boom." A lot of revenue accrued to the Nigerian State which consequently led to the neglect and decline of agricultural development. Under the military, Nigeria saw a lot of political engineering. The four regions in the post independence period were overnight transformed into 12 States in 1967. With increased demands for self-determination by various parts of the country and with subsequent military coups, the States continued to be multiplied at intervals. At present Nigeria has a total of 36 States with a Federal Capital Territory and the States are broken into 776 Local Government Areas (Hulme, Moore and Shepherd 2001).

In 1979 a Constitution modelled on the American Presidential System was fashioned out by the military to return the country to democracy. On the basis of this, a general election was held whereby a President, Governors as well as Local Government Chairmen were elected for the country. This was short-lived because the military struck again in 1983 to terminate democracy. A long transition programme was developed by the military which saw the formulation of a new constitution in 1989 and another in 1999. In essence these did not depart fundamentally from the 1979 constitution.

Another general election was held which led to a return to democracy with the election of the Executive and Legislative arms of government at the Federal, State and Local Government levels (Hulme, Moore and Shepherd 2001).

It is pertinent to point out the current central paradigm of Nigerian politics. In view of the enormous resources at the disposal of the state accruing from the sale of petroleum resources, there is an intense competition for power leading to the widespread use of money and armed thugs in order to "win" elections. The state as the avenue for the control of decision-making, dispensation of political spoils and economic patronage raise the competition to the level of a vicious struggle. In this contest for power the regional, ethnic and religious pluralism of Nigeria are exploited by various sections of the elite to serve their selfish interests. This can be demonstrated with the rise of the "Ethnic Militia," which were hitherto unknown and the introduction of the Shari'ah Islamic Legal System in some Northern States. These developments have led to an increased polarization of the society and widespread use of violence both for political as well as criminal ends (King and Christopher, 2010).

1.3 The Politics of Insecurity

According to Omoyibo and Akpomera (2013), security is a concept that is prior to the state, and the state exists in order to provide that concept. Security is the prime responsibility of the state (Hobbes, 1996). The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically states that "The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government". Unfortunately, government on this constitutional responsibility has failed to provide a secured and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of business and economic activities. The alarming level of insecurity in Nigeria has fuelled the crime rate and terrorists attacks in different parts of the country, leaving unpalatable consequences for the nation's economy and its growth. To address the threat to national security and combat the

increasing waves of crime, the federal government in the 2013 budget made a huge allocation to security, and the national assembly passed the Anti Terrorism Act in 2011 (Ewetan, 2013). Despite these efforts, the level of insecurity in the country is still high, and a confirmation of this is the low ranking of Nigeria in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2012). Despite the plethora of security measures taken to address the daunting challenges of insecurity in Nigeria, government efforts have not produced the desired positive result. This has compelled the Nigerian government in recent time to request for foreign assistance from countries such as USA, Israel, and EU countries to combat the rising waves of terrorism and insecurity. Amidst the deteriorating security situation in the country, Nigeria is also confronted with daunting developmental challenges which pose serious threat to socio-economic development. These developmental challenges include endemic rural and urban poverty, high rate of unemployment, debilitating youth unemployment, low industrial output, unstable and deteriorating exchange rate, high inflation rate, inadequate physical and social infrastructure, very large domestic debt, and rising stock of external debt (Ewetan, 2013). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 23.9 percent in 2011 compared with 21.1 per cent in 2010 and 19.7 per cent in 2009. The country has a youth population of 80 million, representing about 60 per cent of the total population with a growth rate of 2.6 per cent per year, and the national demography suggests that the youth population remains vibrant with an average annual entrant to the labour force at 1.8 million between 2011 and 2006. In 2011, 37.7 per cent of Nigerians were aged 15-24 years and 22.4 per cent of those between ages 25 and 44 were willing to work but did not get jobs. The current level of insecurity, whether social, economic, physical or in whatever ramification is alarming and unacceptable.

1.4 Conceptualizing (In) Security and Development

Some scholars in conceptualizing security placed emphasis on the absence of threats to peace, stability, national cohesion, political and socio-economic objectives of a country (Odekunle, 2013; Okereke 2012). Thus there is a general consensus in the contemporary literature that security is vital for national cohesion, peace and sustainable development. It is therefore apparent that national security is a desideratum, sine qua non for economic growth and development of any country (Oladeji and Folorunso, 2007). In the intelligence community there is a consensus that security is not the absence of threats or security issues, but the existence of a robust mechanism to respond proactively to the challenges posed by these threats with expediency, expertise, and in real time. The concept of insecurity connotes different meanings such as: absence of safety; danger; hazard; uncertainty; lack of protection, and lack of safety.

According to Beland (2005) insecurity is a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. Achumba (2013) defines insecurity from two perspectives. Firstly, insecurity is the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Secondly insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. These definitions of insecurity underscore a major point that those affected by insecurity are not only uncertain or unaware of what would happen but they are also vulnerable to the threats and dangers when they occur. In the context of this paper insecurity is defined as a breach of peace and security, whether historical, religious, ethno-regional, civil, social, economic, and political that contributes to recurring conflicts, and leads to wanton destruction of lives and property.

The conceptualization of development has undergone metamorphosis since the Second World War ended in 1945. The meaning and the conceptualization of development was greatly influenced by the ideological contradiction between

the Socialist East and the Capitalist West. The issue of ideology of development posed a problem to conceptualizing development. Growth theorists argued that development is an outcome of economic growth while other scholars like Rostow (1952), Harrod-Domar (1957) posited that economic development and growth result from structural changes, savings and investments in an economy. Development like any other concept is a complex issue, with many different and sometimes contentious definitions. Until fairly recently, great reliance was placed on Gross National Product (GNP) per capital as convenient index of development. Yet, experience has shown that increases in national income do not necessarily lead to solution of social, economic and political problems. An alternative approach has been created by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with their Human Development Index (HDI) focusing on measures of health, life expectancy, education and access to resources. Human development is defined as:

the process of enlarging the range of people's choices – increasing their opportunities for education, health care, income and employment, and covering the full range of human choices from a sound physical environment to economic and political freedoms. Human development is concerned both with developing human capabilities and with using them productively.

The former requires investments in people, the latter that people contribute to GNP growth and employment, both sides of the equation are essential (UNDP, 1992:2).

1.5 A brief Historical background of Plateau and Benue States

1.5.1 Plateau State

Plateau State is located in the highlands of Central Nigeria. It has a lot of features, which attract a large population and support various economic activities. The discovery of tin and columbite

on the Plateau by the British led to the conscription of labourers from all the provinces of Northern Nigeria to work in the tin mines. The availability of fertile agricultural land attracted farmers from distant places to engage in the production of various crops. The climatic situation of the Plateau, which is near temperate along with the abundant water and pasture led to the flocking of livestock rearers to the area. The absence of diseases which are detrimental to livestock rearing led to a heavy concentration of livestock usually reared by the Fulani on the Plateau. The temperate climate of the Jos Plateau coupled with its natural tourist resources attracted Nigerians and foreigners alike to the Plateau for vacation, permanent settlement or retirement. The location of Jos as a transport node served by an airport, rail link to the North and South of the country as well as road transport network to different parts of the country facilitated commerce. The agricultural and industrial goods produced on the Plateau and those imported from other parts of the country as well as abroad led to the development of a vibrant commercial sector in the Plateau State (Mohammed; Nd).

Plateau State is one of the thirty-six constituent states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and according to the 2006 census has a population of 3.1 million people. It is a majority Christian state within Northern Nigeria. Northern Nigeria as a whole has a majority Muslim population but there are also large numbers of Christians living there, both in the far North (all of the main cities have Christian areas, mainly in "new" neighbourhoods - established during the colonial period - called Sabon Gari(s) and in the Middle Belt, which is mainly Christian but still considered part of the North. Plateau State is located in the North-central zone and forms part of the Middle-belt, a geopolitical idea which demographically consists mainly of national minorities within the old Northern Region (Mercy Corps, 2015). Plateau State takes its name from the high plateau which dominates the state's topography. The social development of plateau peoples and the historical position of the Plateau in relation to the rest of what is now Northern Nigeria are somewhat distinctive, partly due to the

terrain and the tremendous ethno-linguistic diversity of the area. There are dozens of languages spoken in Plateau State, marking it out from the predominantly Hausa-speaking areas further north – although, being the regional lingua franca of Northern Nigeria, Hausa is also widely spoken on the Plateau. There has been a reaction against this in some areas, with a cultural resurgence that is encouraging the replacement of Hausa names and ethnonyms with indigenous ones, and to a lesser extent the use of indigenous languages rather than Hausa. The sense of difference on the Plateau is also clear in social attitudes, politics, and patterns of life, and has affected trajectories of contemporary conflict in Plateau State, with mobilisation around ethnicity and ideas of indigeneity being of major importance (Mercy Corps, 2015).

The particularities of the Plateau and the minority status of its inhabitants after their incorporation into the system of British colonial rule as part of the North from the early twentieth century has fed into one aspect of Plateau politics: the assertion of autonomy from the Muslim North. Middle Belt writers have described the Hausa/Fulani presence in, and perceived domination of, the lower north as a form of internal colonialism (Logams, 2004). But although this is a prominent political theme in Plateau State, it is not the only one. Historically, there were regional connections between the Plateau and surrounding peoples of the savanna plains and there were also non-conflictual encounters with Muslims, such as in trade. In the regional system of colonial rule and in the First Republic (1960-66), there was both divergence and convergence in the social practices and political linkages between what was then Plateau Province and the rest of the North. It is only recently that religious violence has started in Jos.

The high plateau constitutes only part of Plateau State: a slightly larger portion of the states' territory is lowlands plains, beneath the plateau escarpment. Muslims established more settlements and had a more extensive presence in the lowlands than on the high plateau – at least going back to the nineteenth century in Wase, and perhaps earlier in Kanam,

the two emirates within Plateau State. The ethnic composition and social relations of Plateau State, in its totality, were further diversified by migration from throughout Nigeria from the early colonial period, stimulated by industrial-scale tin and columbite mining on the plateau. This led to the establishment of Jos and many smaller mining settlements, from the early twentieth century, inhabited mainly by people from other parts of Northern Nigeria and from Southern Nigeria. For some of the indigenous communities of the Plateau, such as sections of the Berom and Anaguta, mining and colonialism led to dispossession from large areas of their customary land. Rapid social and economic transformation also ensued, and the indigenous inhabitants of the Plateau were marginalised in the colonial economy and social order. In the lowlands, agricultural production was commercialised to supply the minefields. In some areas, non-Muslims were for the first time placed under the authority of Muslims as part of the "indirect rule" system (Ballard, 1972; Rotimi, 2010), sowing some of the seeds of later conflicts.

With the break-up of the regions into states in 1967 power has steadily shifted towards Christians, the majority in Plateau. Benue-Plateau State was created in 1967, Plateau State was formed after the division of Benue and Plateau into separate states in 1976, and the state boundary was again altered in 1996 when Nassarawa State was carved out of Plateau - which may have had some deleterious effects on Plateau as many educated Muslims moved to work in the new Nassarawa State government and civil service. The salience of communal identities is now more prominent and appears to have increased as a result of the violence over the past decade, which has generated greater spatial polarisation of people in Jos along religious lines and accentuated social and political divisions between Muslims and Christians. Consequently, more people are directly affected by and conscious of social divisions now and articulate their religious and ethnic allegiances more categorically than they did previously.

1.5.2 Benue State

Benue state is a state in the Middle Belt region of Nigeria with a population of about 4,253,641 by the 2006 census figures. It is inhabited predominantly by the Tiv and Idoma peoples, who speak the Tiv language and Idoma, respectively. There are other ethnic groups, including the Igede, Etulo, Abakwa, Jukun, Hausa, Akweya and Nyifon. With its capital at Makurdi, Benué is a rich agricultural region; some of the crops grown there are potatoes, cassava, soya bean, guinea corn, flax, yams, sesame, rice, and groundnuts (Nyagba, 1993).

Benué State is named after the Benué River and was formed from the former Benue-Plateau State in 1976, along with Igala and some part of Kwara State. In 1991 some areas of Benué state (mostly Igala area), along with areas in Kwara State, were carved out to become part of the new Kogi State. Igbo people are found in the boundary areas of Ebonyi State and Enugu State in local government areas like the Obi, Oju etc. Benue State as it exists today is a surviving legacy of an administrative entity which was carved out of the protectorate of Northern Nigeria at the beginning of the twentieth century. The territory was initially known as Munshi Province until 1918 when the name of its dominant geographical feature, the 'Benué River' was adopted (Tyubee, 2008).

The primary economy of the people is agriculture while others such as fishing, hunting, Black-smithing and wood carving are regarded as secondary economies. Arable farming is a major agricultural practice where crops such as yams, cassava, maize, beans, groundnut to mention but a few, are either mono or mixed cropped. On the other hand, livestock are also reared but in small and subsistence levels. The area is drained by two sets of rivers which include rivers Konshisha, Ambir and Aya of Cross River basin and rivers Katsina-Ala, Guma, Nago, Gwer and Mu of the river Benue basin (Tyubee, 2008:98). Nevertheless, the relief is generally low lying except around the south eastern part where mountainous ridges are found. The area falls within the tropical wet and dry climate. The climate is primarily caused

by the seasonal migration of the inter-tropical discontinuity which is also related to the annual movement of overhead sun. According to Nyagba (1993), the tropical ferruginous which is generally low in organic matter and bases exchange capacity is the dominant soil in this region. The study region falls within the Guinea savannah vegetation made up by varying proportion of trees and grasses. However, the natural vegetation is under threat due to activities and deforestation through farming, logging, road construction, settlement and fuel wood harvesting. It is amongst these reasons that Benue State is termed food basket of the nation.

No doubt, crop farming remains the major economy activities by the Tiv farmers while animals rearing remain the major activities by the Fulani pastoralists who live in this region as well. However, crop farming is still dominated by the use of rudimentary farming equipment such as hoes, axes and cutlasses while sedentary methods of grazing is practiced by the pastoralists. In essence, there is no identified or recognised grazing land for these pastoralists rather they migrate from one end to the other in search of grass for their animals (Anthony, 2015). All these activities in this region are climate depended and rain fed. Climate influences all farming and pasturing activities in this region. Crop production takes place within the rainy season that occurs between April and October. This is also the period whereby the grasses are available for the animals. During the dry season, farmers usually rest and prepare for the commencement of another farming season. On the other hand, pastoralists move with their animals during the dry season in search of grass and water for their animals. This migration often results to conflict between the pastoralists and farmers if not properly handled. This work is divided into different parts which include the historical antecedents of the Tiv and their economy, climate and conflict in the region, impacts of climate on the agricultural sector.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

1.6.1 Human Security Approach

The theoretical framework adopted for this work is the Human Security approach propounded by Scholars such as Mary Kaldor, Kofi Anan, Thomas and Roberts. The concept emerged after the Cold War and was first propounded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1994. Unlike the traditional goal of national security which emphasised the defence of the state from external threat, the central argument of this approach is that security should focus on the individual because a people-centred view of security is required for national, regional and global stability. This is premised on the fact that threats to human life emanate not only from situation of violent conflicts but other non-conflict sources of threats such as poverty, infectious diseases, terrorism, environmental degradation etc (Saliu, Luqman and Abdullahi 2007). Human Security is therefore concerned with the protection of people from critical and life threatening dangers. Accordingly, King and Murray (Nd) define human security as 'one's expectation of years of life without experiencing the state of generalised poverty.' Thomas (2000) views it as 'a condition of existence which entails basic material needs.' The Commission on Human Security (CHS) defines it as 'the protection of the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and fulfilment. It means protecting people from the concept of human security emerged at the end of the Cold War following the growth of globalisation, reduction in the threat of nuclear war, increase in the number of violent conflicts in Africa, Asia and Europe, emergence of new threats such as HIV and climate change and the need for a security package to reflect these. A United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Report identified seven categories of threats to human security which include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. In an effort to implement these

human security agenda, two schools of thought have emerged namely; 'Freedom from Fear' and 'Freedom from War' schools. The freedom from Fear school seeks to limit human security to protecting individuals from violent conflicts which are associated with poverty, lack of state capacity etc advocating emergency assistance, conflict prevention and resolution, peace building among others. The Freedom from War school on the other hand proposes a holistic approach to achieving human security and argues that the threat agenda should include hunger, poverty, disease and natural disasters because they kill far more people than war.

1.7 Insecurity in the Middle Belt

Insecurity as a result of criminal activities individually or corporately creates insecurity and breach of the peace that are likely to or indeed affect legitimate social and economic activities in the Middle Belt much more in the country (Akintokunbo, 2011). This problem has the damaging consequence of giving the signal to the rest of the international community that Nigeria is not a safe and secure place and as such not suitable for economic investment and activities. Similarly, it is needless to say that social cohesion amongst the various component units is a desideratum in the process of national political development. This feeling of alienation and mutual distrust as a result of rabid competition for power and positions among federating units in Nigeria has been eliciting widespread discontent and loss of confidence in governments' programmes and policies with a dire consequence on political stability and by extension democratic consolidation which is a sine qua non for good governance and development. This is almost practically unattainable under the present security challenge in Nigeria.

As earlier noted in this work, while other countries are showing commitment in tackling insecurity, Nigeria may be described as being lackadaisical in this regard for so many reasons. Firstly, poverty in the words of (Danbazau, 2012)

though is a global phenomenon; Africa is most hit because 40 of the 76 “chronically deprived countries” in the world are in sub-Saharan Africa, while in Nigeria, people living below poverty level increased from 687million to 112.5million between 2004 and 2010. He submits further that “the poverty-security nexus constitutes a ‘tangled web’ with overlapping threats of intervening variables and strands of reverse causality, as poverty and violence reinforce one another”. That “poverty breeds insecurity by undermining the capacity of state to deliver basic physical security, legitimate governance, economic growth and social welfare” (Danbazau, 2012). Moreover, unemployment as well as lack of record/database of criminals also in no small measure, contributes to instability and insecurity in the Middle Belt, but in other parts of the country as well. There is a large number of unemployed youths in the Middle Belt and jobs are not forthcoming. Some of these unemployed people inadvertently go into crimes to survive while others have penchant for criminality. Where we have youth unemployment, it is not unlikely that it will contribute significantly to security challenge confronting the country. A similar factor to the aforementioned is the unprecedented level of corruption that has permeated the fabrics of our national life. The figures these days are simply mind-boggling (Okereke, 2012). Corruption leads to the loss of revenue meant for infrastructural development, human capital development, enhancement of production capabilities and health care-all variables of development that should promote poverty reduction. The perception of Nigerians, particularly, the disadvantaged is that, in spite of the institutional mechanisms to curbing corruption, the system is being encouraged by lack of political will as evidenced in the handling of corruption related cases. This encourages rather than discourages corruption. This is now what is creating a war-like situation in a bid to survive. Not only that, (Odekunle, 2013) says it all when he captured it that “the electoral process itself has become usually tainted with observable manipulations and in some cases, heart-

rendering violence with able-bodied youths 'employed as armed thugs, the post-election violence of 2011 being a most calamitous instance". The 'do or die' syndrome and winner-take all phenomena serve as springboards for resistance and violence situations. On illiteracy, it is believed as one of the major causes of insecurity and a very strong factor leading people against their own country. Yuguda (2013) added a voice by saying that "the psyche of many young people has been destroyed through the collapse of government, we have created those criminals through the collapse of educational systems in the Northern part of the country. Equally listed as some of the factors that exacerbate poverty and consequently Insecurity are: the neglect of agriculture, population explosion; indigene-settler dichotomy; Incapability of government's security apparatus at guaranteeing safety and security, limited opportunities for women empowerment and lack of political will and strategically sound and articulated policies.

1.8 The Conflicts in the Middle Belt

To situate the conflicts in Plateau and Benue States properly it is necessary to appreciate the ferment in the central states of Nigeria comprising of the states of Bauchi, Kaduna, Nassarawa, and Taraba. These states have some unique characteristics which differentiate them from the rest of the country. It would be worthwhile to briefly illustrate these elements which when manipulated negatively prepare the grounds for the conflicts in the zone. The socio-economic characteristics of the zone were summarized as follows in a Special Report by the National Orientation Agency, (NOA: 2002).

- (i) Over 50% of the ethnic groups in Nigeria are found in the zone. It may be noted that no one ethnic group shares 100% of its culture and values with other ethnic groups.
- (ii) Christianity, Islam and Traditional African Religion all command considerable influence on the lives of the people. In other words, there is deep-seated religious and cultural diversity.

- (iii) Apart from rich mineral resources, the zone is also endowed with massive land and grazing activities. This explains the massive influx of people from other areas to this zone.
- (iv) In terms of development, the zone is one of the least developed inspite of the location of the Federal Capital (close to the zone.
- (v) The zone has a very large pool of ex-servicemen. It is important to note that majority of these ex-servicemen were disengaged from service at very young ages and have not really been gainfully employed since their retirement.
- (vi) The people of this zone are known to be hospitable, accommodating and peaceful. It is indeed worrisome that such a people could suddenly be engaged in frequent violent clashes. (NOA, 2002:2-3).

The same report also categorized the nature of the conflicts in the zone into two namely:

- (a) Religious/Ethnic and (b) Land/Boundary. However, it was observed that "it is important to note that the above categories sometimes have a tinge of politics" (NOA, 2002:3). In a survey of conflicts in Nigeria (JCPRCR,2003:17) with particular reference to the Middle Belt Zone it was asserted that:

A major factor of communal conflicts in the zone is land or boundary disputes. This shows that land is becoming a very scarce factor of production either due to population pressure, land alienation or concentration of land in a few hands. (Dunmoye, 2003:17).

More significantly in the conclusion of the survey in the Middle Belt zone a link was established between the "conflicts," "the economy" and "poverty" as follows:

Communal conflict in Nigeria has been exacerbated by the economic crisis and pauperization of citizens in recent times. Factors that account for these conflicts are numerous. These

include ethnicism, religious differences and their manipulation, land hunger and bourgeoning population, chieftaincy disputes and the native/settlers syndrome. (Dunmoye, 2003:27)

A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Nigeria (IPCR, 2003) with particular reference to the Middle Belt concluded that conflicts in the Middle Belt focus largely around ethnic plurality, access to political and traditional positions of authority, land ownership and the clash of herder/cultivator interests. It was stressed however that:

Underpinning these sources of antagonism and triggers are deeper systemic issues at the centre of which is the relationship between political power and access to economic resources and opportunities. Poverty, unemployment and limited alternative routes to economic gain; governance that is not open or responsive to the needs of the people; and inadequate provision of security and to basic services also contribute to this central relationship. In the Middle Belt region, this has brought about large numbers of casualties and displacement. (IPCR, 2003:160).

The conflict in the Middle Belt has seriously undermined development in the Middle Belt and is adversely affecting Nigeria as a whole. In research findings conducted by Mercy Corps (Nd), it found out that Nigeria stands to gain up to US \$13.7 billion annually in total macroeconomic progress in a scenario of peace between farmers and pastoralists in Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau and states affected by farmer-pastoralist conflicts, lost an average of 47% of taxes (Internally Generated Revenue, or IGR) due to these conflicts, in 2012. Specifically, Plateau lost an estimated 75% of potential state revenue. Kaduna lost an estimated 22% of potential state revenue. Nasarawa lost an estimated 45% of potential state revenue and Benue lost an estimated 44% of potential state revenue.

Benue, Kaduna, Nasarawa, and Plateau have lost up to NGN 347 million combined in IGR, or taxes, due to the conflicts - \$2.3 million in 2010 USD. Agriculture, including crop farming

livestock rearing and trade are the sectors hardest hit by farmer-pastoralist conflict and are also central to the Middle Belt and Nigeria's economy. Predicted IGR losses seem to occur during or just following a particularly violent year, particularly in Benue and Plateau, as expected.

1.9 Conclusion

The paper has attempted to discuss the relevance of the Middle Belt within the Nigerian structural reality. It has also shown the intrinsic relationship between security, insecurity and how it undermines development. The various factors causing conflicts in Plateau and Benue have been highlighted. The submission being made here is that there can be no development without security. This is because security connotes freedom from danger or anxiety. It is in this vein that security must be viewed as an inalienable right of human beings. The two are reinforcing. The causes of these conflicts without being checked have a cyclical effect as it breeds insecurity and disallows sustainable development within the region.

1.10 Recommendations

1. Few dispute resolution mechanisms or re-conciliation processes are considered effective or truly representative across conflicting communities. The State governments of Plateau and Benue states should establish or strengthen representative conflict management committees that include traditional, religious, youth, and women leaders; civil society and human rights representatives; security officials; and government leaders. Each with different mandates so as to bring a holistic approach and create a lasting solution to the incessant crises permeating these states and the national governments should support the establishment of community-sanctioned, formalized alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

2. Security agents often lack the resources to respond adequately to conflict, and deep mistrust caused by security agencies' impunity, inability to respond, or biases between communities and officials hampers an effective response. The States should strengthen existing joint task forces, including military, police, government, and judicial actors, responsible for passing recommendations to the national level, communicating key initiatives to the public, and liaising with community leaders.
3. It is quite evident that the clashes in these states apart from other factors of settler -indigene, religious, ethnic and communal conflicts: Pastoralists and farmers clashes are a constant recurring decimal. There should be enabling legislation from the different states' Houses of Assemblies to demarcate specific areas for grazing and other forms of livestock rearing. There should be intensive awareness creation through all forms of reliable media means that have a good reach to very rural areas to disseminate this information.

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