

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Ungoverned Spaces and Alternative Sovereignties in Nigeria: Terror Groups, National Security and Sustainable Development

 OPEN ACCESS

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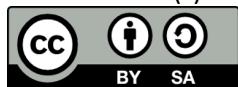
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Abstract

Nigeria is currently battling with threats that are potent enough to undermine its existence as a sovereign polity. These terrors are coming mostly from groups occupying and controlling diverse ungoverned spaces that littered the country's landscape. From Boko Haram insurgents, Bandits, herdsmen to ethnic militias; these groups are becoming laws unto themselves and creating spheres of influence and jurisdictions due to government and state apparatus absence. This article examines the conditions that created ungoverned spaces, the activities of diverse groups inhabiting them and the implications on national security and sustainable development. The article adopts qualitative method and relies on secondary data sourced from newspapers, government documents, internet resources and extant scholarly works. The article findings reveal that achievement of the sustainable development goals 1-No Poverty, 2- Zero Hunger, 3-Good Health and Well-being, 4-Quality Education, 6-Clean Water and Sanitation, 8- The interrelatedness of the Sustainable Development Goals and 16- Peace, Justice and Strong Institution are seriously hindered as far as the atmosphere and conditions for peaceful co-existence becomes elusive as various groups continue to contest sovereignty with the Nigerian state. Conclusively therefore, it is recommended that a sustainable national security strategy to ensure peace and reduce

conflicts through government presence in the various ungoverned spaces must be pursued.

Keywords: *Alternative Sovereignties, National Security, Sustainable Development, Ungoverned Spaces, Terror Groups*

1. INTRODUCTION

Several security threats are confronting Nigeria existence as sovereign polity, the enormity of these threats are having grave implications for the country's national security and sustainable development. These terrors are coming mostly from groups occupying and controlling diverse ungoverned spaces that littered the country's landscape. From Boko Haram insurgents, Bandits, herdsmen to ethnic militias; these groups are becoming laws unto themselves and creating spheres of influence and jurisdictions due to government and state apparatus absence.

This article examines the conditions that created ungoverned spaces, the activities of diverse groups inhabiting them and the implications on national security and sustainable development. The article adopts qualitative method and relies on secondary data sourced from newspapers, government documents, internet resources and extant scholarly works. The article findings reveal that achievement of sustainable development goals 1-No Poverty, 2- Zero Hunger, 3-Good Health and Well-being, 4- Quality Education, 6-Clean Water and Sanitation, 8- and 16- Peace, Justice and Strong Institution are seriously hindered as far as the atmosphere and conditions for peaceful co-existence becomes elusive as various groups continue to contest sovereignty with the Nigerian state. Conclusively therefore, it is recommended that a sustainable national security strategy to ensure peace and reduce conflicts

through government presence in the various ungoverned spaces must be pursued.

2. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

In a bid to understand the concept “Ungoverned Spaces or territories” there is need to first understand what “Ungovernability” imply. According to Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, and John (2007), Ungovernability connotes the inability, unwillingness and the ineffectiveness of the state to perform its functions within a particular territory. In contrast, Governability means the ability, willingness and effectiveness of the State to perform its function over a given territory.

Ungoverned spaces, therefore, connotes both the non-existence of effective state sovereignty and governmental control in both physical and non-physical geographical territory (Raleigh & Dowd, 2013). This implies that in such territories, the state is entirely non-physical; and such non-existence results to ineffective governance and can lead to the rise of conflict and other forms of insecurities. Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, and John (2007), in their own point of view sees ungoverned territory as places in which a state or government encounters prominent challenges in establishing control, in which the national government’s authority does not reach these areas thereby serving as a breeding ground for terrorism, insecurities and conflict. Risse (2011), further emphasised that ungoverned areas or restricted statehood are territories in a country in which the national authority (governments) have no ability to enforce laws and decisions or in which the legal power over the means of violence is absent.

Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) sees Ungoverned spaces as social, political, and economic arenas where states lacks “effective sovereignty,” or where state control is non-existence, weak, or contested by other entities. This is more paramount in many regions across the world, especially Arab and African territories like Yemen, Syria, Somalia,

Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, South Sudan, and Palestine among others where some parts of their territories are being controlled by terrorist groups and international forces. These countries are witnessing various forms of insecurities as a result of the inability or unwillingness of the governments to perform certain functions and the breakdown or the absence of state power. These forms of insecurities are numerous such as banditry, civil war, terrorist activities, humanitarian issues, arms and drug, smuggling, piracy, and refugee flows among others which threatens national security and regional stability of the affected country.

The term “Ungoverned Spaces” according to Clunan and Trinkunas (2010), originate from the state-centered operationalisation originated by many governments and international organisations after the cold war of politically disordered territories in which state supply of effective governance had collapse. Ungoverned territories take place not only on poorly controlled land territories but also maritime borders which can also extend to airspace that the countries affected are unable to control. Ungoverned territories can be failed or failing nations, or states that are not able to effectively exercise sovereignty and can be seen along a continuum of state control in which healthy States when they loose control of some geographic or functional areas within their territories become ungoverned territories. For instance, a state that otherwise functions effectively could be infected with a high level of illegal immigration across less controlled or porous borders which can lead to smuggling of small armed weapons and the presence of criminals. Inclusively, ungoverned territories can manifest as a result of weak states in which the organisations, most especially the security agencies of the national government are incapacitated that they cannot maintain authority or political law beyond the major cities.

National security is often associated with the military strength of a particular country. It has been seen overtime

that overwhelming military power does not always result in security for the state with such power (Barash & Webel, 2009 cited in Omitola, 2015: 60). The inadequacy of military factors alone to measure the strength of a country has resulted in seen national security as all-encompassing involving other factors. It is in light of the foregoing that Onuoha et al. (2010), observe that the narrow view of national security has paved way for a comprehensive and wide definition that showcases the multi-dimensional nature of security, and takes cognizance of economic, cultural, technological, political, environmental and military variables.

In other words, governmental security is seen as liberty from insecurity or absence of threats to multi-dimensional factors that may affect the nation's ability to safeguard and promote itself, promote its cherished values and national interests, as much as develop and foster the well-being of its people (Onuoha, 2008). It is the above context of national security that is relevant to this article as it promotes the achievement of the stated sustainable development goals.

Sustainable Development is seen as a call for the integration of economic growth, social development, security and environmental management as interdependent pillars for long-term growth and development (Bobadoye, 2015). The Brundtland Report of 1987 gave rise to the operationalization of Sustainable Development through the United Nations Development Committee headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland. The report defined Sustainable Development as growth that caters for the needs of the present without affecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. According to the report Sustainable development requires meeting the basic needs of everyone and elongating to all the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations for a better life. It buttresses the fact that development in any country must be sustainable to cater for future generations to come.

Goal 16 of the Sustainable development Goals Agenda 2030 emphasised on promoting a peaceful, just and inclusive societies through ending violence, internal strife, asymmetric warfare, fostering the rule of law, upholding institutions at all levels, and increasing access to justice. Conflict and other forms of violence, insurgency activities among others are an affront to sustainable development and they must therefore be eradicated (UN SDG Report, 2019). However, related to Goal 16 are other Goals that are easily achievable when Goal 16 is already in place, these Goals are 1-No Poverty, 2- Zero Hunger, 3-Good Health and Well-being, 4-Quality Education, 6-Clean Water and Sanitation, 8-The interrelatedness of the Sustainable Development Goals can be seen in the fact that when there are Peace, Justice and Strong Institution, then it will be possible to attain No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Good Health, Well-being, Quality Education and Clean Water and Sanitation, in a war-like or conflict situations, it will be near impossible to achieve all the aforementioned goals because of lack of access and/or reduced access to these basic facilities and the inability of service providers to access the people.

A country can be said to attain development when it achieves the basic needs of the citizenry. This is buttressed by Todaro and Smith, (2006); Burkey, (1993); Edwards, (1993); the United Nations since 1970s and the World Bank in the 1990s where each emphasised on the distinct aspects of human needs ranging from the social, economic, political and human development, and this development must be sustainable to cater for future generations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. State, Sovereignty, "Ungoverned Space" Insecurity, and Alternative Sovereignties

Sovereignty originated from the Peace of Westphalia of 1648 to the 17th Century in Western Europe. It achieved legal, moral and socio-economic status towards the 19th century with the growth of territorial states that were effectively sovereign and able to protect their own societies and repel

attack, as well as providing public goods and services beyond security to their population. The concept implies a world of independent territorial entities and internationally recognised governed states in the International System (Clunan & Trinkunas, 2010). This connotes the non-intervention of external forces in the internal affairs or territories of a state. In recent times, sovereign states have failed, become inadequate, incompetent in their duties and undermined the physical security of the citizenry. In recent times, due to incessant occurrences of armed conflict, terrorist activities among others have led to the collapse of state authority in some parts of the affected state thereby leading to the existence of alternative sovereignties (Krasner, 2004).

The existence of alternative sovereignties within a state due to ineffective governance has challenged the traditional notion of state sovereignty and state impermeability. Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) and Risse (2011), are of the view that state sovereignty in recent times has softened, the state is combined by various other actors, some benign and others malign, which provide different forms of alternative governance or sovereignties. Alternative sovereignties can be in the form of the intrusion or interference of other state actors or non-governmental actors in the affairs of the state. Examples of such actors include international governmental organisations, non-governmental organizations, Multi-national Organisations, Terrorist groups among others. The reality of alternative sovereignties within a state is further buttressed by Mingst (2013), where he stated that there exist multitude forms of governance arrangements within a state, of which though nations and governmental bureaucracies are major participants, they act in collaboration with other actors to provide alternative authority relationship. This therefore implies that, even when the state is not present, non-existent, or weak, governance without the state within a state occurs.

The existence of alternative sovereignties often bred large scale insecurities in states. There are diverse forms of armed challenges to a state's control of its territory, which are terrorism, insurgency, and banditry among others. The two major ones are terrorism and insurgency; and terrorism remains the most influential threat to peace and security across nations of the world. Terrorism means the use of terror-by-terror groups and other certain groups in attaining specific goals. Terrorism as a result of ungoverned spaces/territories has persisted in many African countries due to the collapse of state authority which are conducive for their growth and also to mount devastating attacks. Insurgency is defined by the Department of Defense as "an organized movement with the goal to overthrow a constituted government with the use of subversion and armed conflict." Insurgents do use terror as a method, but they generally conduct military operations against government formations and seek to seize and hold territory and create "liberated zones," where they establish a "counter-state." Unlike terrorists, who in most cases are isolated from the mass of the population, insurgents sometimes have substantial popular support and achievable aims. Therefore, political solutions in some cases can bring an end to insurgencies. Terrorists, on the other hand, operate in little clandestine cells, lack mass support, sometimes have millenarian, unachievable goals, and attack majorly non-combatants. Their methods, in many cases, alienate the population and result in the ultimate defeat of the terrorist movement. The occurrence and implications of their activities on African growth is intense (Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, & John, 2007).

***B. Indicators of Governability and Ungoverned Territory:
An overview***

Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, and John (2007) measured governability using four indicators. They are the rate of state penetration of society; the level to which the state has a monopoly on the use of

force which implies the extent to which the state controls its borders and whether the state is subject to international intervention by other states; Lack of physical amenities; and social and cultural resistance to state penetration. Absence of state penetration implies low compliance with former laws. When state penetration is little, residents may ignore local laws with little or no penalty. For example, they may not pay taxes or may involve in smuggling or illegitimate extraction of natural resources with little fear of arrest or prosecution.

The second indicator, lack of Physical Infrastructure which is seen as the physical dimension of the state's presence in an area, this implies the level of growth of that region. Most Ungoverned spaces are often found in uneasy terrain such as places filled with jungles or desert which are economically retarded and less populated areas which makes it incapable to develop the amenities important to maintain a robust state presence. Inclusively, corruption is endemic in most ungoverned territories and the corruption is structural and widespread corruption delegitimizes the state and may have detrimental security consequences.

Monopoly on the Use of Force is the third indicator, and it implies the strength and autonomy of a state against external aggression. Strong nations have a monopoly over the means of force within their own territories, while, in some remote territories, especially in areas with a little penetration of law enforcement into society, alternatives to this state monopoly arise such as banditry activities, smuggling, terrorist organisations among others.

These variables or indicators of un-governability imply that the national security apparatus may not be up to the task of securing the state territory and fulfilling the purpose of governance to the citizenry. Rotberg (2010: 2) in his book "When Nations fails: Causes and Consequences" opines that the purpose of the existence of Nation States is to make available a decentralized way of providing political (public) goods to persons habiting their territory. Political goods are

those intangible and unquantifiable claims that citizens make on nations to fulfil. The major prime political good a state provides is “Security”, and with this in place, the delivery of other desirable political goods becomes possible when there is the sustainability of a reasonable measure of security. Other political goods identified are the provision of basic infrastructures and freedom of political participation among many others. Osaghae (2007: 692) in his book “Fragile States” is of the view that a state is expected to function effectively in core aspects which include the establishment of strong and effective institutions, control and defend its territorial space, possess the resources necessary to ensure the well-being of its citizens, conflict management, poverty alleviation and economic development among many others.

C. Ungoverned Territories and Alternative Sovereignties and the Nigeria Experience

Rabasa, Steven, Peter, Kim, Theodore, Jennifer, Kevin, and John (2007) asserts that Ungoverned spaces mostly evolve through entropy and civil conflict, they are often seen by States as threats because of their potential to make available havens for organised crimes, terrorist movements and insurgencies, narcotics trafficking; illegal arms trafficking; and proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) materials and weapons, money laundering, illicit trafficking and proliferation networks.

In Clunan and Trinkunas (2010) viewpoint, they opine that the existence or appearance of ungoverned territories is a reflection of the decline in the effectiveness of the state as political and social constructs to the citizenry. In the existence of ungoverned spaces, insecurity thrive. There are two key dimensions that promotes the growth of various levels of insecurities in ungoverned territories, they lack governability and Conduciveness. Lack or the absence of governability means that, in these regions, the state is ineffective or unwilling to perform its functions.

In explaining the dimension of conduciveness, not all ungoverned spaces are favourable to the presence or growth of terrorist organisations and insurgent groups. Conduciveness is the extent to which these areas lend themselves to exploitation by terrorist or insurgent groups. Conduciveness is measured by the following four variables: (1) adequacy of infrastructural amenities and operational access, (2) availability of sources of income, (3) favorable demographics, and (4) invisibility.

Favourable demographics can be measured in the presence of extremist groups or communities vulnerable to co-option or violence; supportive social norms among the population; a pre-existing state of violence that could be engineered to fit with extremist agendas; informal social assistance programs or networks open to exploitation; and the presence of criminal syndicates available for hire. Conduciveness therefore means the extent to which these territories lend themselves to exploitation by terrorist or insurgent groups.

Another attribute that gives rise to terrorist presence is a favourable demographic and social condition. This condition comprises of extremist groups, supportive social norms among the population, a pre-existing state of conflict, the presence of informal social networks that can be exploited by terrorists, and the presence of criminal syndicates that can stand as contractors to terrorist groups. Another attribute is Social and cultural resistance which is closely related to demographic and social condition, which indicate the lack of state security penetration in these areas. Another attribute is an absence of border control or porous borders, this suggests that border control is a key indicator in explaining ungoverned territories and may be a strategic factor in managing them.

Robert (2009) asserts that factors which include large unemployed populations of youths who are likely to fall prey to terrorist recruiters, haphazard borders that are poorly manned, and the proliferation of arms due to

unending violence and poor governance, among others favour the growth and thriving of terrorist groups in Africa and other regions of the world.

Ungoverned territories fall under three main category, relying on the situation that prompted their present condition, they are: contested, incomplete, and abdicated governance. In terms of Contested Governance, these are regions in which local forces, actively disputing government control, seek to establish their own state-like entity, either to realize aspirations of independence and self-rule or to profit from illegal activities without the interference of state authorities, examples are Chechnya, Mindanao, and Colombia. Incomplete Governance are regions that lack the resources and the competence to project effective rule into the region. Local officials, where they exist, are inept or are co-opted by criminal organizations. Examples are, governments in the Afghan-Pakistani border region, parts of the North Caucasus, Central Sulawesi, and along the Mexican-Guatemalan frontier do not maintain a competent, qualified presence that is stronger than competing power centers. Abdicated Governance implies that instead of the central government to produce public goods such as safety, order, infrastructure, and services, it abdicates its duties for marginal provinces and regions because it believes that nothing cost-effective can be done or because ethnic minorities with whom it shares little affinity predominate. In some instances, Saudi Arabia, for example, the national government cedes border security to the local tribes. The North Caucasus also describes this type of abdicated governance and the nature of the ungoverned spaces that result, especially when security services collude with illegal armed bands in the region.

Terrorist sanctuaries are mostly found in unsecured geographical areas, infrastructure, and facilities where terrorists can conduct training and indoctrination; grow networks that may subsequently serve as a source of operational, financial, and other support; and plan and

launch operations. They may also include financial, cyber, and propaganda nodes that allow terrorists to advance their cause. Examples of the presence of organised armed groups and insurgency in ungoverned territories can be found in (the Pakistani Afghan border, Sulawesi-Mindanao, and the Colombian-Venezuelan border); two cases within the Arabian Peninsula (Saudi Arabia and Yemen); and two cases in East Africa (Somalia and Sudan) and West-Africa (Nigeria and the Lake Chad region).

The level of threats in various un-governed territories varies across countries of the world and not all ungoverned territories, pose a threat. Some territories may fall in the category of ungoverned territories that harbors terrorist affiliated global jihadists movement; some in the territories containing terrorists, insurgent forces, or criminal networks that, while not part of the global jihadist movement, nevertheless pose as a threat to states in that region; and others in areas that may not harbor terrorists but that can produce humanitarian crises such as refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, Asylum Seekers, epidemics, and famine among others.

Countries in Africa over the years has witnessed incessant occurrences of conflicts, high crime rate, corruption, and various levels of insecurities such as the instability caused by intra and interstate conflict, banditry, Al-Shabaab in East of Africa, Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda, Boko Haram and its breakaway faction, the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) in Nigeria, Niger, and Chad, Jama'at Nustratal-Islam wal-Muslimeen (JNIM) or the Group for the Support of Islam and Moslems (GSIM) in Mali and Burkina Faso and Ansarul Islam in Burkina Faso, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Algeria among others due to the lack of fully established system of governance, Africa's porous borders, weak law enforcement inadequately trained or ill-equipped security forces, historical grievances and lack of economic opportunities and judicial institutions (Apau & Banunle, 2019).

The dominant feature of un-governability noted to becloud the region of West African countries is the exceptionally little level of state penetration. Countries in this region over the years has repeatedly witnessed external intervention by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peace-making force, UN assistant peacekeeping missions, and countries of the world. The exception is Nigeria, the region's hegemon, which has relatively functional state institutions compared with other regional states Nigeria is also the leading economy in Africa. However, corruption and crime are pervasive; Islamic radicalism is rising; and currency, arms, drugs and people are trafficked in Nigeria through its poorly controlled borders and Unemployment and underemployment levels in the country are also high, mostly affecting the young individuals. The geography of the area where terror groups operate has also been a challenge to security forces. The majority states of Borno, Yobe, Gombe, and Bauchi where Boko Haram operates have part of their territories in Sambisa Forest at the border with Chad. This forest is a game reserve covering an area of 60,000 square kilometres northeast of Nigeria, and Boko Haram has been using it as safe haven where they train, recuperate, and spring to carry out attacks and then retreat back. Also, on the eastern border with Cameroon, there are the Mandara Mountains, which are also considered hard-to-reach areas. More broadly, the federal government of Nigeria is encountering structural problems including "lack of coordination and cooperation between security agencies; corruption; misallocation of resources; limited requisite databases; the slow pace of the judicial system; and lack of sufficient training for prosecutors and judges to implement anti-terrorism laws (Abasa, 2015). The Boko Haram insurgency is seen as a symptom of state fragility. There is no doubt that continuous struggle for the total eradication of this sect has sapped the Government capacity towards ensuring a better life for its citizen especially those in the

northeastern states of the country. The insurgency has tasked government ability to carry out its constitutional activities and this is gradually eroding government and state legitimacy.

Rural Banditry is commonly seen in unsecured rural and marginal communities, where there is little or no form of deterrence against criminal activities and insecurities. According to Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) rural banditry is associated with the inability of the state to provide security and basic services for the citizenry. Most rural communities in Nigeria are vulnerable to the activities of banditry due to their geographical conditions and their location in remote areas where there is little or the absence of government. This is worsened by the absence of effective community policing mechanism capable of addressing security challenges. Also, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons which flow from communities and regions affected by conflicts through porous borders into the hands of non-state actors also fuels organised crimes and rural banditry. The unsuccessful grazing reserves policy which is still yet to be fully implemented since Nigeria independence also fosters violence between herders and farmers which further triggers the activities of armed banditry (Ibrahim & Dabugat, 2016). In addition, poorly governed mining and small arms sector in the North especially in Zamfara state has drawn the presence of bandits, where they have been raiding mining sites for gold and cash which made the Federal Government to suspend all forms of mining in the state in early April, 2019 due to the linkage between banditry and illicit mining (Suleiman, 2019).

Thus, it can be stated that much of the un-governability and insecurity in most of the North-eastern states in Nigeria showcases recent problems stemming from poor leadership, rampant corruption, socioeconomic mismanagement, manipulation of ethno-religious differences and lack of an effective state presence which makes it conducive for the presence of terrorist and other forms of criminal activities.

D. From Ungoverned Space to Good Governance-Proffering some Solutions

This study recommends strengthening governance which is critical to emphasize security cooperation and military aid in dealing with the security issues of ungoverned territories in the North-eastern region. Inclusively, domestic and international interventions through bilateral, regional, and multilateral mechanisms providing development assistance to the Federal governments to invest in infrastructural amenities and institutions in regions where they have previously abdicated their governing responsibilities and to train security officials in securing ungoverned territories may offer some orderliness in ungoverned spaces. Addressing the root causes of the security in ungoverned spaces should be looked into by embracing democratic practices and economic empowerment and strengthening government institutions so that states are functional and spaces are governed.

Furthermore, upgrading the transportation infrastructure could improve total mobility within these territories. Improved mobility means that the police and judicial officials can extend their activities to remote territories such as health care, public education, and the rule of law. In Conclusion, the Federal Government needs to improve on achieving “effective sovereignty” in ungoverned areas in order to deny sanctuaries to terrorists, proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), traffickers, and criminals (Clunan, 2010). This action of ensuring that ungoverned spaces become governed will go a long way in creating an enabling environment of Peace, Justice and Strong Institution which the sustainable goals 16 envisage and also encourage the realisation of the associated goals of 1-No Poverty, 2- Zero Hunger, 3-Good Health and Well-being, 4-Quality Education, 6-Clean Water and Sanitation and 8-and 16-Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the impact of engagements of terror groups such as Boko Haram and other Islamist groups, bandits, herdsmen among others as alternate sovereign authorities in ungoverned territories on the security of the people and undermined the achievement of some sustainable development goals in the country. Considering various contributory factors to ungoverned spaces and subsequent emergence of alternative sovereignties, the article recommends improvement in leadership and governance, stepping up provision of infrastructural facilities and strengthening of institutions at both national and sub-regional level.

5. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The Author declares that there is no potential conflict of interest in the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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