Insecurity and Implications of State Response on Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Since 1999, Nigeria has been confronted with various security challenges, hence becoming one of the most concerned issues in the discourse of academics, state actors, security experts and the civil society organisations. This paper therefore investigates the dimensions of insecurity, state response and the implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Reciprocal Determinism Theory (RDT) provides the theoretical framework while information from secondary sources was employed in the analysis. Finding revealed that Nigeria's democracy is being threatened due to her protracted insecurity challenges. State responses to these challenges suggest negative (-) and insensitive responses by the successive civilian regimes in Nigeria. This has had implications of disrupting elections, encouraging electoral violence, tainting transparency and election integrity due to the growing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and weakening democratic institutions. The paper concludes that the state responses to myriad of security challenges have debilitating consequences on consolidating democracy in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended among others that there is need for prompt state response to these security challenges in order to consolidate democracy in Nigeria.

Keywords

Insecurity, State Response, Democracy, Democratic Consolidation, Institutions.

Introduction

Recently, one of the most concerned issues in the discourse of academics, state actors, security experts and the civil society organisations is national security. The discourse arises due to the security challenges across the world and Nigeria in particular. Although there is no state which is completely free from violence and other forms of crime, security must not be taken with levity especially in countries where the capacity of the security agencies is inadequate.

National security is *sine qua non* to a country's development. When there is security of lives and properties, the development and stability of a state is guaranteed. Besides, security seems to be the pillar upon which every meaningful development could be achieved and sustained. Al-Mashat (1985)

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corroborates that the development of any state needs strong security so as to give credibility to the regime in power. Furthermore, it is being substantiated by Moronfolu (2022: 23) thus:

> National security is a premise for national economic growth and development of nations. This is because peaceful nations attract foreign investors while the domestic investors freely operate the economy with little or no tension and apprehension.

The importance of security cannot be overemphasized because it is a determinant of a nation's existence. For instance, part of the government's responsibilities is to ensure that a nation is well governed by securing the lives and properties of her citizens.

 In view of this, Nigeria, like other countries of the world, has made security paramount. Since it is a basic function of any government, successive governments allocate a large amount of money to security in their national budgets (Awopeju, 2021). Now that Nigeria operates a democratic system of government which started in 1999, much is expected from the civilian administration as regards security. Nigeria in the Fourth Republic has experienced high level of insecurity. Igbinovia (2014: 83), while critically examining the serious state of insecurity in Nigeria in the last two decades stated thus:

> Indeed, the country (Nigeria) has been plagued or riddled with and by lawlessness, terrorism, violence, military, sectarianism and tears and bloodletting, unknown, perhaps, in the country's annals or history.

Against the background of the importance of security, studies by Chinwokwu (2011), Inyang & Abraham (2013), Igbinovia (2014), Awopeju (2021), etc., have examined security in relation to national or internal security of the Nigerian state. Their major discussions centre on national security, policing, police, security challenges vis-à-vis economic and socio-political developments. There is scarcity of studies examining security challenges as regards state response and democratic rule in Nigeria. In other words, little scholarly attention has been given to insecurity with a viewing to examining state response cum the age of democratic consolidation in Nigeria. This remains the gap this study intends to fill in the literature.

Thus, the study examines dimensions of insecurity and their implications vis-à-vis the growing democracy in Nigeria. This study is necessary because Nigeria is at a crossroads regarding security challenges. The state of insecurity together with poor governance, poverty, deep ethno-religious conflicts seems to have stifled democratic powers. International IDEA (2001: 218) states that "consolidating democracy in Nigeria remains an arduous task because of a number of structural, institutional and psycho-cultural factors that need to be addressed." Since insecurity is a major factor, it becomes necessary to make thorough investigation into its nature especially in the era that the delegative democracy in Nigeria needs to be consolidated. In making thorough analysis, this paper intends to answer the following questions: What are the dimensions of security challenges in the Fourth Republic? What has/have been the state response(s) to these security challenges? What are the implications of these security challenges in consolidating democracy in Nigeria?

In order to address these questions, gathered information from the secondary sources, such as textbooks, journals, internet, newspapers, government publications, human rights watch, etc., were analysed. The paper is therefore divided into six main parts. Apart from the introduction, the second part examines conceptual clarification. The third presents theoretical framework of the study, part four examines the

dimensions of insecurity and the state response, part five examines the implications of insecurity on the consolidating process of democracy in Nigeria while section six gives conclusion and recommendations for the study.

Conceptual Clarification

Insecurity

The term insecurity implies a situation that is not secured. It is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confidence or anxiety about something or someone. Similarly and comprehensively, Achumba et al (2013) posit that it implies the absence of safety or presence of danger, hazard, uncertainty, want of confidence, doubtfulness, inadequately guarded or protected, lack of stability, troubled, lack of protection and safety. Achumba et al (2013) definition is adopted in this paper.

Democratic consolidation

The works of Kolawole (2007), Yagboyaju (2013), Diamond (1996), etc., have offered definitions of democratic consolidation. According to Kolawole (2007), democratic consolidation is the making of the base of democracy more firm, more solid and more resilient as it develops. Also, in the words of Yagboyaju (2013), it is a consistent and sustained practice of democratic principles. It is a process and not an accomplishment. Diamond (1996: 33) defines it as "the process of achieving broad and deep legitimation, such that all significant political actors, at both the elite and mass levels, believe that the democratic regime is better for society than any other realistic alternative they can imagine."

Similarly, but comprehensively, Akubo & Yakubu (2014: 79) posit that:

> It involves the building of a consolidated democracy whose parts are affirmed and strengthened by certain institutions, such as the electoral system, revitalized or newly created parties, judicial independence and respect for human rights, created or recreated during the course of transition.

To Linz and Stepan (1996: 62), democratic consolidation is:

> The one in which none of the properties or organized interests, forces and institutions consider that there is any alternative to the democratic process in gaining power and in which no particular group can veto democratically taken decisions.

What Linz and Stepan (1996) meant is that democratic consolidation is one in which democracy is seen as the only game in town. In this context, democratic consolidation is a situation of ensuring that democracy is established and immuned from authoritarian military rule.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is anchored on Reciprocal Determinism Theory (RDT) as its framework of analysis. The proponents of RDT are Judith Rich Harris, Akoul Gregory M. and Larry J. Siegal. The basis of this theory is that individual's behaviour influences and is being influenced by both the personal characteristics and social world. The theory is built on three major characteristics that influence behaviour. These are the individual, the environment and the behaviour. The RDT states that the existing linkage among the three characteristics makes them to interdependently relate together to produce reflective responses.

Consequently, the environment influences individual's behaviour and individual's reactions influence the environment. Hence, RDT examines the role of behaviour in the environment.

Therefore, the premise of this theory is that the relationship existing between the environment and human behaviour compels or makes the environment to influence people's behaviour. These environmental factors are responsible for producing very poor conduct of terrorism, kidnapping, bombing, banditry, militancy, political assassinations, etc.

The theory is appropriate for this study because it highlights that the exhibited behaviours by individuals in society emanate from the environment (society), and they are the exact acts that cause insecurity. In other words, the behaviour such as kidnapping, terrorism, banditry, and Fulani herdsmen destruction of farms are the acts that shape the environment (society) and these acts make society unsecured and inhabitable for individuals. In addition, it states that the government's behaviour can make the environment insecure or secure. In other words, the action/response (behaviour) of the state largely depends on its security situation. The behaviour of the state/the leadership approach may lead society into insecurity, state fragility, intolerance and severe threat of democracy in Nigeria.

Nigeria Since 1999

In Nigeria, security remains a big challenge. There are a number of security challenges in Nigeria which have had adverse effects on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. The Nigeria's democracy in this post-independence state is still struggling to strengthen its democratic consolidation even decades after experiencing democratic governance. One begins to consider if there is any correlation between the age of Nigeria's democracy and the level of democratic consolidation.

Kolawole's (2007: 57) examination of the history of the Nigerian state since the inception of the Fourth Republic revealed this:

> The history of Nigeria is hardly edifying. It seems as if Nigeria since 1999 exposed the viruses of insecurity that were cosmetically papered upon during the struggle for democratic consolidation. The Nigerian state since 1999 remained a fragile state and therefore, it is experiencing a fragile democracy. Fragility here implies the inability to withstand, combat or repel centrifugal and centripetal forces.

However, it is no doubt that the Nigerian state appears very fragile and it is still under stress considering the number of years of her democratic governance. Hence, it is believed that Nigeria is still at the age of democratic experimentation. Parts of the determining factors are weak democratic institutions and a growing culture of impunity which allows for insecurity and other acts in the state.

Igbinovia's (2014) examination of the security challenges in Nigeria suggests that Nigeria security challenges are also similar to that of other countries in the world. The security challenges confronting Nigeria in this democratic era are Boko Haram insurgency, kidnapping, political violence, armed robbery, Niger Delta militancy, extremism, communal violence, pipe vandalism, oil theft, etc. All the aforementioned challenges are threat indicators to the survival of democracy in Nigeria and they are examined below.

First is the Boko Haram terrorist group. The attack that took place at Geidam and Kamamma in 24th of December, 2003 signalled the intention of Boko Haram as a terrorist group in Nigeria. Since that time, there has been one attack or the other in Nigeria. In order to substantiate their attacks, Centre for Preventive Action (CPA) (2022: 7) posits that "since 2011, Boko Haram has conducted terrorist attacks on religious and political groups, local police, and the military, as well as indiscriminately attacking civilians in busy markets and villages." The activities of the group are scary and have done so much damage to Nigeria. For instance, in 2009, the attack of the sect claimed 2000 lives and led to massive destruction of property (Igbinovia, 2014). Also, in 2011, the terrorist group killed 590 persons and carried out 136 attacks in the country (Igbinovia, 2014). The terrorist group in 2014 kidnapped over 200 Chibok girls on the verge of completing their secondary education in the northern Nigeria. The act drew attention to the activities of Boko Haram and the government's inability to contain it. Consequently, due to negotiations between Boko Haram and the Nigerian state, brokered by the International Committee for the Red Cross, 103 girls have since been released (CPA, 2022).

Two, militancy contributes to the internal security challenges which has been prevalent since 1999. The act is common in the Niger Delta region and it has had detrimental effects on the nation's economy and internal security. The emergence of the militant group is as a result of the long periods of political marginalization and economic exploitation experienced in the region over the years due to oil exploration since 1956. The insensitivity of the Nigerian government regarding their plights exacerbated the degree of militancy since 1999. A new militant group called 'the force of egbesu" (Isaac, 2023) has also emerged in the Niger Delta region threatening the government and the area. The demand of the people in the area is about controlling resources within the region by the involved states. Because the state could not meet the demands of the people, violent processes such as pineline vandalisation, bombing of oil facilities and kidnapping of oil expatriates so as to scare away the workers were embarked upon (Ikelegbe, 2005). In spite of the sent military task force to the region, militant groups continues to emerge and wax stronger by the day (Ikelegbe, 2005).The implication of this is that the incessant attacks on the oil facilities caused the country's oil production to drop drastically.

Third is kidnapping. The issue of kidnapping constitutes another security challenge in Nigeria. It is a spill-over of militancy which, since 1999, has gradually increased. The progression of this act is an indication of the weakness in the security architecture of Nigeria. The Freedom House Report indicated that Nigeria recorded high rate of kidnappings, which in turn heightened insecurity (Ogunbiyi, 2017). The evolving of insecurity has become so worse that Nigerians have called for the removal of the service chiefs by the government. Between 2020 and 2022, a total of 3,420 people were kidnapped across Nigeria, while 564 were killed in violence associated with kidnappings (SMB Intellegence Report, 2022). The menace of kidnapping in the country has put the entire citizens in fear that nobody seems to be safe from kidnapping which aftermath is always the demand for ransom.

Four is banditry. This has recently come to the fore with increased activities in the north-west region of Nigeria. It is common in states such as Kebbi, Sokoto, Kaduna, Kastina and Zamfara states. Banditry is a serious crime that threatens democratic governance and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. This act is prevalent in the South-West, South-East and North-West of Nigeria. The major causes of banditry include poverty, ineffective government control, country's porous border, illegal mining activities in the north-west area of Nigeria and complex relationship between the pastoralists and the farmers (Akinyetun, 2021). The effect of banditry is extensive. It complicates the security crisis in the country, increases the

incidence of forced migration, food insecurity, cattle rustling, destruction of properties, displacement, health challenges, humanitarian crises and death (Akinyetun, 2021).

Five is the herders-farmer conflict. This dimension of insecurity has been in existence for a long time but has manifested more in recent times. For over two decades, it has become incessant in Nigeria. Nwosu (2017) states that the politicisation of conflicts by some politicians to secure cheap political goals or to secure power through the use of the conflict to sell their ideas to the electorates is the reason for the relentless occurrence. The herder-farmer conflict has claimed lives of many Nigerian citizens. For instance, in Benue and Nassarawa states, the clashes have claimed 7,000 lives between 2014 and 2019 (Sanni, 2019). Also, a former Minister of Finance, Mansur Muhtar, observed that no fewer than 4,000 Nigerians had lost their lives and thousands of others maimed as a result of the perennial conflict between herders-farmers conflict since 2016 (Adebayo, 2023). Besides, the economic implication of this conflict is huge as it has made the nation to be   unattractive to foreign investors. In a study carried out in 2015, the federal government had lost $13.7 billion revenue due to herder-farmer conflicts in the North-Central (The Nation, 22 March, 2017).

Six, hired and political assassinations is another serious security challenge, which has overstretched the country beyond its limit. A look at Nigeria since 1999 suggests that many of the unresolved political killings were linked to high political profiles in the country. For instance, the former Attroney-General and Minister of Justice, Chief Bola Ige was murdered in December 23, 2001 and Iyiola Omisore, Deputy Governor was the prime suspect. The intention was that Bola Ige refused to endorse him to contest for Osun gubernatorial election (The News, January, 14, 2002). The Chairman of Anambra Nigerian Bar Association, Banarbas Igwe and his wife were killed and Governor Mbadinuju of Anambra State was the prime suspect (The News, January 27, 2003). In 2007, Funso Williams, of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and the most favoured candidate for Lagos State gubernatorial election was murdered (The Punch, August 12, 2006). Also in Ekiti State, Chief Ayo Daramola of the PDP, who was the main challenger of the past Governor, Ayo Fayose was murdered in 2006 and people were pointing accusing fingers at the Governor. Others who were murdered include Dipo Dina and Azeez Adegbile. These political killings have brought about high level of insecurity in the nation, thus leading to the reign of fear.

Seven, ethno-religious conflicts have also constituted insecurity in Nigeria since 1999. The upsurge of various violent conflicts that erupted in different parts of the country since 1999 is a result of ethno-religious conflicts. The conflict, which is observed to be a major source of insecurity, arises from distrust among various ethnic groups and the main religion in Nigeria (Aluta, 2021). The major issues that characterize ethno-religious conflict are lack of cordiality, mutual suspicion, domination, fear and violent confrontation. Many cases of violent religious crisis recorded in some parts of the country were from ethnic dimensions (Johnson, 2018). The crises mainly recorded in the northern part of Nigeria have been between the Muslims and the Christians, thereby intensifying ethno-religious crises in other areas of the country (Odoma, 2014). For example, there was religious violence in Shagamu in July 1999, clashes between Christians and Muslims in June 2004, at Numan town in Adamawa State, and clash between Sunni and Shia Muslims in Sokoto State in May 2005.

Eight, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and secessionist groups, such as Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), Movement of the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), Biafra Zonist Movement, Niger Delta Liberation Font and Oduduwa Republic agitators, have constituted part of insecurity in Nigeria. IPOB had killed over 287 in southeast between January and May 2022 (Human

Rights Watch, 2022). The ISWAP, which is a fraction of Boko Haram has contributed to insecurity in Nigeria through its attacks in the Northeast. It has also expanded its activities beyond the region. For instance, it has been linked to the train attacks from Kaduna to Abuja in which 8 people were killed and 72 people were kidnapped (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Furthermore, it has recently carried out a high profile attack on a prison in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and allowed hundreds of prisoners to escape (Human Rights Watch, 2023). Besides, these secessionist groups have staged violence against security forces, attacking citizens and embarking on hate speech to their secessionist agenda (Adamu et. al, 2022).

From the foregoing, it is obvious that the security challenges confronting Nigerian state are from differentiate dimensions. Among them are kidnapping, Boko Haram, farmer-herder conflict, hired and political assassination, banditry, ethno-religious conflict and militancy. These security challenges are in one way or the other ignited by the behaviour of people in their environments. These findings agree with the RDT which states that individual's behaviour ignites and is being influenced by both the personal characteristics and social world.

State Response to Insecurity in Nigeria

Having examined the dimensions of insecurity in Nigeria, it is imperative to examine the Nigeria's government response to the security challenges. The responses are examined in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Insecurity and State Response in Nigeria

Insecurity	Response	Assessment of Response	Source(s)
Boko Haram Insurgency	* Government has responded using traditional kill/capture counter-terrorism strategy. They responded by attempting a basic organisational interpretation approach in which it was assumed that capturing and killing the leaders will cause the group to disintegrate. * The state security's response to the rising insecurity in the northeast is compromised by the decaying war with Boko Haram. *Furthermore, terrorists and criminals seem to be emboldened because of the federal government's weak engagement.	***Negative** (-)	(Forest, 2012) (Ojewole, 2021) (Ojewole, 2021)
Militancy	*The government's response to militancy could not address underlying issues in the conflict especially socio-economic injustice and environmental degradation. The confrontational response to militancy triggered further conflict in the region. Involved persons through government's attempts at dialoguing with militants have all been victims of massive	***Negative** (-)	(Samuel & Awolere, 2017)

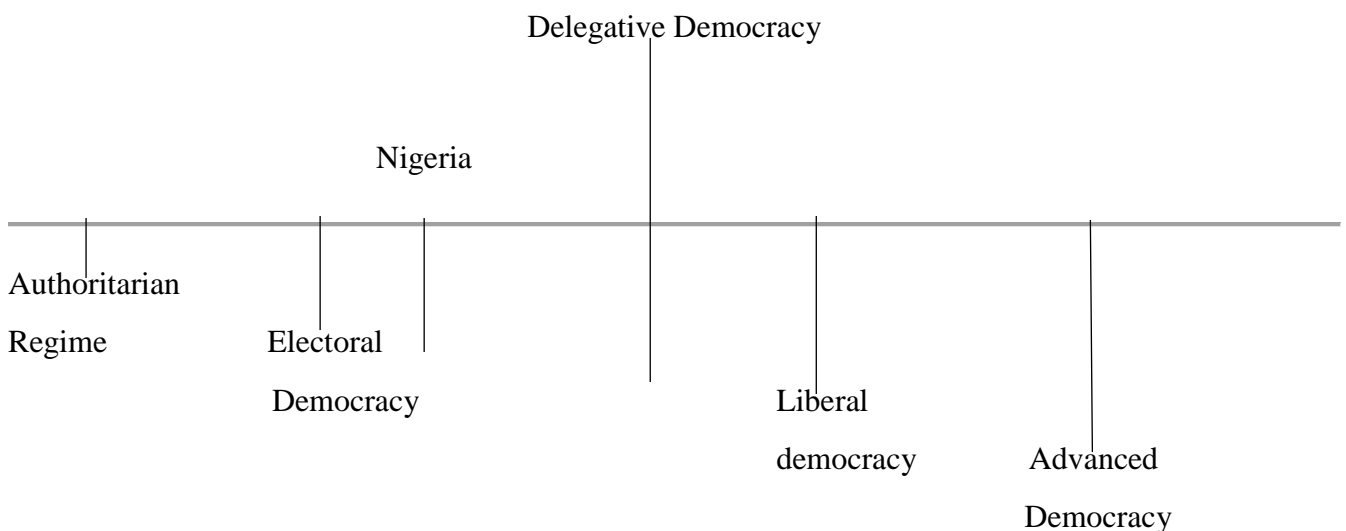|	corruption, insincerity and lack of genuine commitment on the part of the government.		
Kidnapping	* The unsuccessful efforts in combating kidnappings in Nigeria have not been revisited so as to improve on them. *Evidence suggests that government is simplifying the dynamics.	***Negative** (-)	(Olmstead, 2021) (Ojewole, 2021)
Banditry	*Nigerian government is uninterested in ending banditry because some of its officials benefit from it. …the government is only fooling people that they wanted to end banditry whereas in actual sense, they are fuelling the activities of the bandits and also benefitting from it. *Government's lack of political will is hampering the fight.	***Negative** (-)	(Sahara Reporters, 2022) (Independent Newspaper, December 3, 2022).
Herder-Farmers Conflict	*The Nigerian state has over the years demonstrated disappointing dispositions of the government as regards the tackling of Fulani herdsmen violence. …In spite of the huge number of deaths recorded, no herder has been convicted for crime committed. *The federal government sought to execute the RUGA policy, but it was met by serious push back across the country to the extent that it has to be abandoned in favour of a National Livestock Transformation Plan.	***Negative** (-)	(Odigbo, 2019) (Adamu et. al, 2022)
Hired and Political Assassination	The unforgettable included the murder of the then Justice Minister and Attorney General, Bola Ige on December 23, 2001; Aminasoari Dikibo on October 22, 2004; Harry Marshall on March 5, 2003; Ogbonaya Uche and Theodore Agwatu in February 2003; Abigail and Barnabas Igwe in September 2002, and Funso Williams in July 2006. There are others like Pa. Alfred Rewane, Ayodeji Daramola, Godwin	***Negative** (-)	(The Guardian Editorial, 2022).

	Agbroko, Odunayo Olagbaju; Dipo Dina; Bayo Ohu and most recently, Dr. Chike Akunyili and Ahmed Gulak. Before the aforementioned, Dele Giwa was killed by a parcel bomb in October 1986, and Dr. Shola Omoshola died via car bomb, to mention a few during the military era. *The killers in all the incidents were never apprehended.		
Ethno-religious Conflicts	*Not a year passes without three or four incidences of inter-religious conflict." From the above assertion, it shows that inter-religious conflict is rampant in Nigeria and that government has not responded to these conflicts appropriately. *…It is clear that the accusations and allegations of neglect by government, oppression and domination are the major causes of ethno-religious conflict. *The 'failure' of the Nigerian political elite to enact good governments, promote national integration and foster good economic progress via thoughtful and pronounced policies has resulted in massive unemployment. This has in turn led to the rise of communal, ethnic and religious conflicts that are characteristics of the Nigerian politics. *The lack of political will to prosecute those who participated in various killings and destructions is an indication of injustice, which serves as a latent spark for another conflict as grievances persist.	***Negative** (-)	(Canci & Odukoya, 2016) (Salawu, 2010), (Ikelegbe, 2001) (Kura, 2010) (Adamu et. al, 2022)
ISWAP and Secessionist groups	* Failure of the government to respond appropriately has led to an increase in attacks of the IPOB in the southeast. *The response of government security agencies has been largely poor, ineffective and reactive…Nigeria's government at various	* **Negative** (-)	(Ojewole & Onuoha, 2022) (Okoli, 2022)

	levels, seems ill-positioned to confront the situation.		

Source: **Compilation by the authors**

Insecurity and the Implications for Democratic Consolidation in Nigeria

From the foregoing, it can be deduced that Nigeria is bereaved with internal security challenges in the age of democratic consolidation. These security challenges have to be addressed for democracy to thrive. However, the responses of the state to these security challenges are more of frailty than firmness, thus making a scholar to submit that Nigeria's "democratic consolidation is quite unimpressive" (Ikpe, 2011: 22). In his assessment, Ikpe (2011) vividly examines nature of Nigeria by combining Andrea Schedler's theory of democratic consolidation with Guillermo O'Donnell's theory of delegative democracy using a diagram to illustrate his analysis.

Delegative Democracy

Nigeria

Authoritarian
Regime   Electoral

                          Democracy   Liberal

                                                             democracy   Advanced

                                                                                Democracy

According to Schedler (1998), authoritarian regime and the advanced democracy are the two ends of democratic attainment. The highest negative attainment is the authoritarian regime while the highest positive attainment is advanced democracy. After authoritarian regime is electoral democracy. The next is the liberal democracy which is the point where real consolidation of democracy begins thus making it far from authoritarianism. Delegative model of democracy is specie of democracy that meets the conditions of Robert Dahl's requirements for the definition of polyarchy. This type of democracy is new and does not seem to be on the path towards becoming representative (liberal) democracies.

Hence, delegative democracies are not consolidated democracies but they may have all the outward trappings of liberal democracy with little or no institutionalization, lack of horizontal accountability, swift policies, and hazardous implementation and of concentration on the president's outcomes. Countries such Argentina, Phillipine, Brazil, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, South Korea, India and some post-communist countries have operated delegative democracy for decades and have now progressed to liberal democracy. The Nigeria's democracy has the semblance of delegative model but has not been stabilized like the countries mentioned. Therefore, she falls between electoral democracy and delegative democracy, tending towards delegative model due to the conduct of elections, rule of law and constitutionalism, and authoritarianism tendencies of the president (Ikpe, 2011).

If Nigeria is on the scale between electoral democracy and delegative democracy, it implies that democracy is yet to be strengthened. Due to many security challenges which have bereaved the Nigeria's state, the country has conducted seven consecutive elections in the era of the Fourth Republic and she has experienced 24 years uninterrupted democratic governance. Yet her democracy has not been consolidated. The question one needs to ask now is this: what are the implications of these security challenges vis-à-vis democratic consolidation in Nigeria? The following are the implications of security challenges in an age of democracy vis-à-vis its consolidation in Nigeria

One, insecurity threatens democracy in Nigeria by disrupting elections in Nigeria. For instance, the Boko Haram, bandits and IPOB threatened the 2023 elections in diverse ways. Between 29 May 2015 and 29 May 2022, 55,430 people were killed by terrorists groups and criminal gangs operating across the country (www.cfr.org/nigeria). The perturbing activities of IPOB in the South-East included the systematic destruction of critical election infrastructure. In order to affirm this, Bukarti (2022: 15) posits that "between October 2020 and June 2021, there were 19 attacks on the INEC's facilities, resulting in the destruction of offices and arson attacks against 18 vehicles, election materials and electronic devices in five south-east states as well as Akwa Ibom and Cross Rivers in the South-South." Another IPOB intended threat was to disrupt the 2023 elections in the South-East if its leader, Nnamdi Kalu, was not released (www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines). The IPOB leader has been detained by the federal government because of treason charges levelled against him. All these developments triggered fear regarding 2023 general elections and has negative impact on democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Two, these dimensions of insecurity trigger election violence which has significant impact in consolidating Nigeria's democracy. When Nigeria was preparing for the 2023 elections, one of the major challenges to contend with was the epidemic of insecurity. There had been incidents of banditry, terrorists activities, herder-farmer conflicts and secessionist agitations. The activities of these incidents exerted large human and economic impacts. Therefore, having elections in an ungoverned environment and having credible polls that guarantees the security of voters and the INEC personnel were a major challenge. Bandits were in *de facto* in some local government areas in Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, and Zamfara states. Besides, the growth of active Islamic insurgent groups in the North-West was a significant and worrisome development which triggered violence. Hassan (2022), having examined these groups activities, submitted that the disruption of the elections would be high, with the two groups already collaborating when it is of mutual interest. The brutal *modus operandi* of these groups, along with bandits, has negative implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Three, insecurity taints transparency and election integrity due to the growing number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Nigeria. As at July 2022, it was confirmed that at least 2, 455, 190 were registered as IDPs (Burkarti, 2022). The implication of this is that the people might be displaced from their designated polling unit on the Election Day and they might not be able to cast their votes in polling units where they originally registered. For instance, there was an allegation from the Peoples Democracy Party (PDP) in 2019 presidential election that the ruling All Progressive Congress (APC) plotted to use the IDP voting system to establish "illegal polling centres in the North-West and North-Central for allocation of fictitious votes, massive ballot stuffing, voting by aliens, underage and unregistered persons to pull millions of fictitious votes for President Buhari" (Bukarti, 2022: 9). Therefore, establishing additional IDP voting centres in any part of the country will undermine the credibility of the elections cum the ability of the next government to unify and govern Nigeria effectively.

Four, insecurity encourages military take over and turns democracy to authoritarian rule. One of the reasons for the recurring coups in Africa and Nigeria in particular is due to the issue of insecurity or insurgents. Walubengo & Simwa (2022) observe that all these insecurities are dangerous to the Nigeria's democratic regime. Hence, one of the military's top priorities is to fight and stop rebel groups from destroying the country. In the 70ᵗʰ Annual General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) held in New York in September 2021, the UN Secretary General raised alarm on the return of coups across the world and in Africa in particular. Coups have resurfaced in some countries such as Seirra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Diamey, Guinea, Zimbabwe, Egypt and Burkina Faso, and the implication of this is that it makes coup contagious, facilitating its possibility in Nigeria. It further has implication on ensuring low standards of democracy. Kura (2010) substantiates this by emphasizing that there is correlation between insecurity and low standards of democracy because protracted military interference in politics may appear to legalise the application of coercion and violence as tools for social change and for the achievement of anticipated desires and objectives. The Human Rights Watch (2022) is of the opinion that ISWAP group kills and kidnaps people in their quest to topple the government (democratic) and establish an Islamic State which is always authoritarian in nature. Therefore, democracy must be immuned from military takeover so that Nigeria will not return to military rule due to security challenges.

Five, insecurity weakens democratic institutions and this has significant impact on democratic consolidation of the Nigerian state. Democratic consolidation requires strong and virile institutions in order for it to be immuned, but when these institutions are being weakened by insecurity, then, democratic consolidation cannot survive in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has examined the dimensions of insecurity and the state response via-a-vis the implications on democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It can be concluded that Nigeria has experienced protracted security challenges due to the nature of her state's responses, which has negative implications on consolidating democracy in Nigeria. Therefore, for democracy to be a "game in town" in Nigeria, the following recommendations are made.

First, there is need to tackle insecurity so that Nigeria state will not relapse into an authoritarian society. The quick response to address any security challenges is significant. It is when Nigeria is free from these insecurities that constitute threats that democracy can become "only a game in town" which can be consolidated in Nigeria.

Two, there is need to reclaim public institutions which constitute the institutional structures of a stable and enduring democratic order. For instance, institutions such as the Police Force, the Armed Forces, Nigeria Civil Defence, and other relevant agencies that constitute security architecture must have adequate capacities to defeat insurgencies and other security challenges to ensure democratic consolidation in Nigeria.

Three, the civil society groups require vitality and resilience of the civil society. The civil society groups should be responsive. Responsiveness here means the groups need the cooperation of the security institutions and the government in resisting or curbing violence or insecurity in the state. They should play the role of setting the agenda for government by being responsive to security challenges in the state. Besides, state should also respond to alarm raised as quickly as possible so that insecurity can be defeated or curbed in Nigeria.

Four, corruption should be addressed by the Nigerian government. Most of these security challenges are caused by corruption. This can be addressed by strong and independent anti-corruption institutions with requisite framework to combat corruption. Besides, the present anti-corruption institutions (ICPC and EFCC) should strengthen capacities to address the menace of corruption so that insecurity will be minimized so as to make Nigeria move towards the path of democratic consolidation.

Four, the culture of good governance should be instilled by the government. Government should be transparent and responsive so as to inculcate the habit of due process in its polices and dealings with the people. Once, government is being encouraged to strictly follow the standard patterns of good governance, insecurity will not rise and democracy will be consolidated in the Nigerian state.

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