

**EMERGING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC
AND SECURITY TRENDS IN THE SAHEL
REGION OF AFRICA: IMPLICATIONS
AND WAYS-FORWARD FOR NIGERIA**
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Abstract

The Sahel Region of Africa is the news for having abundant natural resources and notoriety for the attendant resource curse, governance failure and underdevelopment. Its countries are enmeshed in political and security challenges that have formed a trend. This review adopted the literature and desktop research method. It aimed to locate the Sahel Region of Africa geographically and attribute-wise and ascertain the problems facing its countries. It sought to identify the political, economic and security trends in the region and to these out the implications and ways-forward for Nigeria – part of the region, ironically the poverty capital of the world and second most unsafe nation. Nigeria battles with the effects of rapid population growth and climate change. It is mired in chronically fragile governance, corruption, internal tensions, violent extremism and radicalization, illicit trafficking, among others. A discussion of these challenges, their trends and implications enabled thesising out ways-forward for Nigeria.

Keywords: Resource curse; Governance failure and poverty; Violent armed conflict, insecurity, insurgency and terrorism; Effects of climate change and rapid population growth

Introduction

The Sahel Region of Africa is a 3,860-kilometre arc-like land mass lying to the immediate south of the Sahara Desert and stretching east-west across the breadth of the African continent. A largely semi-arid belt of barren, sandy and rock-strewn land, the Sahel marks the physical and cultural transition between the African continent's more fertile tropical regions to the south and its desert in the north (Ahmed, 2017).

Geographic definitions of the Sahel Region vary. Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mauritania form the core countries of the Sahel Region, also called the G5 Sahel. Other political definitions of Sahel Region include Senegal, Nigeria, Sudan, South Sudan and Eritrea (Ahmed, 2017).

Commonly, the Sahel stretches from Senegal on the Atlantic coast, through parts of Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad and Sudan to Eritrea on the Red Sea coast. The United Nations Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS) defines the political region of the Sahel as 10 countries – Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria (Ahmed, 2017).

Culturally and historically, the Sahel is a shoreline between the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. It is the North-Central African semi-arid region between the Sahara Desert and savanna regions. It is the site of interaction between Arabic, Islamic and nomadic cultures from the north, and indigenous and traditional cultures from the south (Ahmed, 2017).

The Sahel Region is potentially one of the richest regions in the world with abundant human, cultural and natural resources, including renewable energy resources. Agriculture is the main economic activity and actively engages about 80-90% of the population in the Sahel Region (Ahmed, 2017).

Figure 1 shows the Sahel Region, Africa.

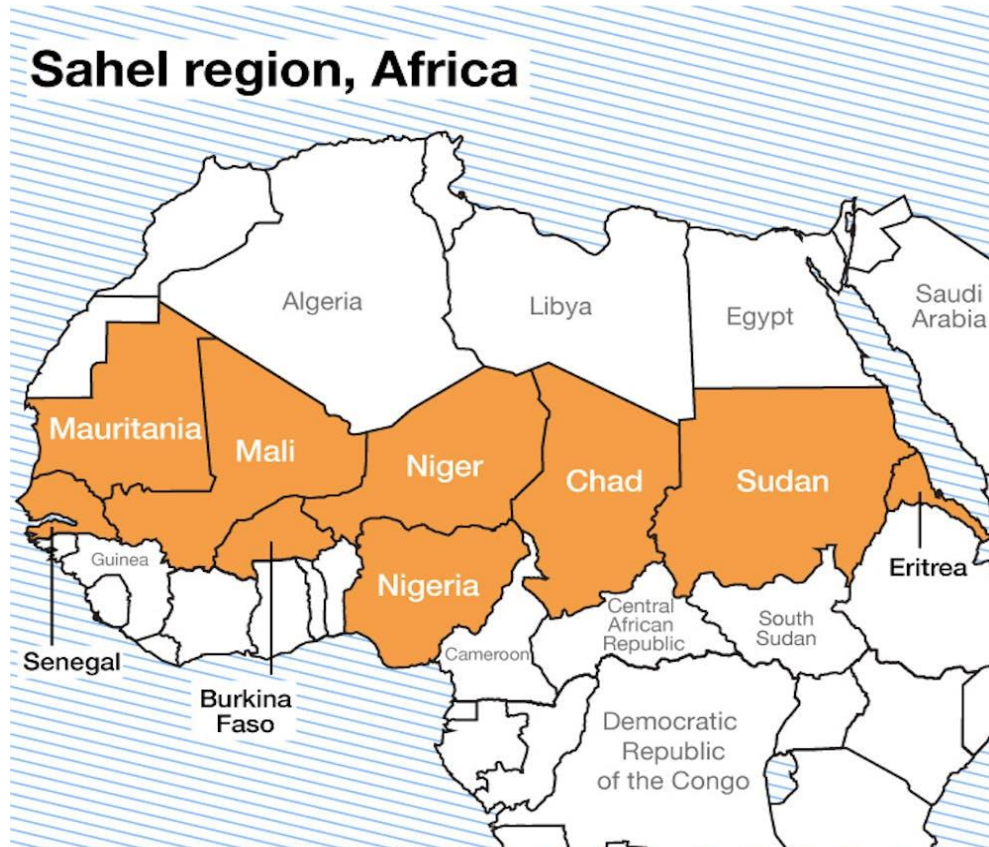


Fig. 1: Sahel Region, Africa
Source: Ahmed (2017)

Countries in the Sahel Region of Africa host abundant natural resources, but suffer the attendant resource curse. Daunting socio-political challenges trend in the countries for decades after the political independence of the

countries from their colonial masters. Governance failure and poverty, violent armed conflict and insecurity, insurgency and terrorism, effects of climate change and rapid population growth are common causes and results of gross underdevelopment in the region. There is the need to update and harmonize the literature on these submissions. This review used the literature and desktop research method. It aimed to locate the Sahel Region of Africa geographically and attribute-wise and ascertain the problems facing its countries. It sought to identify the political and security trends in the region and the implications for Nigeria with a view to thesising out ways-forward for Nigeria.

Methodology

The literature review and desktop research method was adopted. Davis, Drey & Gould (2009) notes that the method can apply quantitative or qualitative approach, including meta-analysis and meta-synthesis, narrative or traditional, systematic, scoping and annotated bibliography.

Results and discussion

The problems facing the Sahel Region of Africa

Essoungou (2013) notes that environmental insecurity, extreme poverty, rapid population growth, fragile governance, corruption, unresolved internal tensions, violent extremism and radicalization, illicit trafficking and terrorist-linked security threats are common features in the Sahel Region of Africa. Of all of these challenges and more, the three major issues confronting the region are environmental insecurity and climate change, armed violent conflict, and rapidly growing population. Each of them is briefly described below.

Environmental insecurity and climate change

Environmental security summarizes the interactions between the ecosystem and mankind, and the effects of global environmental change on environmental degradation that impinges socio-economic welfare and the

quest for resources, ecosystem services, and environmental goods. Sahel is characterized by strong climatic variations and irregular rainfalls (Eneh and Eneh, 2024).

Sahel and West Africa Club Secretariat (2010) submits that about 80% of the agricultural areas in the Sahel belt are already affected by climate change, which harms health through air pollution, disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, pressures on mental health, and increased hunger and poor nutrition. Historic floods and drought depress agricultural productivity, resulting in the loss of income and assets, while exacerbating food insecurity and reinforcing a vicious circle of fragility and conflict. Drought result in crop failures and the attendant low food security index, increasing food prices, job loss and unemployment, mass famine, and death of livestock. Other consequences of draught are low groundwater levels that leads to dry wells requiring deeper and deeper digging to obtain water for drinking, drying of lakes and dams, desertification, and loss or depletion of biodiversity. Desertification reduces crop yields, causes food shortages, and increases poverty in impacted populations by destroying fertile land and water supplies. People displaced as a result of desertification face increased competition for scarce resources and the attendant conflicts and worsening economic issues. Already, Niger loses 100,000 to 120,000 hectares of arable land to soil erosion and desertification each year. Climate shocks displace people and destroy their livelihoods. Since the late 1960s, the Sahel has endured an extensive and severe drought caused mainly by sea surface temperature changes, vegetation and land degradation, dust feedbacks and human-induced climate change.

Armed violent conflict

Center for Preventive Action (2023) reports that violent attacks by armed groups and militias, insecurity, widespread human right violations, including gender-based violence and violence against children, confront the Sahel Region of Africa. Essoungou (2013) regrets that indiscriminate attacks against civilians and public infrastructure, including schools and

health facilities, take and threaten the lives of millions of people and their livelihoods. A lack of economic opportunities, poverty, and climate change are some of the real underlying causes of escalating conflict in the region that is often attributed to religious bigotry and ethnic loyalty. Since gaining independence in the 1960s, many countries in the Sahel have experienced violent extremism due to the confluence of weak and illegitimate governance, economic decline, and the worsening effects of climate change.

Rapidly growing population

Africa's youth population is rapidly growing and expected to double to over 830 million by 2050 (African Development Bank Group, 2016). Countries in the Sahel have some of the fastest growing populations in the world. Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Chad and Mali are among the top twenty countries with the fastest projected population growth. The consequences of rapid population growth in the Sahel are an increase in food needs, a reduction of fallow periods for farmlands, an expansion of agricultural zones, and an increase in domestic energy needs causing deforestation (Essoungou, 2013; Thiaw, 1994).

Emerging political and security trends in the Sahel Region of Africa

Center for Preventive Action (2023) observes that the Sahel Region of Africa faces many converging and complex socio-economic, political and security challenges, including the "resource curse", bad governance, armed violence, and rapid population growth. The United Nations Economic Cooperation for Africa (UNECA, 2017a; b) submits that the Sahel faces environmental challenges often linked to drought, famine and desertification. The resultant environmental change has impoverished the region. The scale and scope of security issues and the challenges linked to ethno-national irredentism is increasing, as is the spread of small arms and light weapons, organized crimes, the activities of criminal networks and radical armed groups.

Crawford (2015) notes that the Sahel Region of Africa is a key hotspot for global climate change and has low adaptive capacities. Climate change combines with political and economic instability, poverty, inequality and historical grievance to exacerbate tensions and trigger conflicts. Poor governance, weak institution, capacity constraints, and corruption restrict the ability of the Sahelian states to address climate change.

Sakor (2020) submits that peace and development remain threatened in the Sahel by increasing internal and cross-border challenges, including armed conflict, extreme terrorist attack and organized crime. The situation is further exacerbated by environmental degradation, poor governance, and massive influx of migrants from other sub-Saharan African states. Bøås (2019) reports that Sahel is home to the poorest and weakest countries of the world with fragility associated with instability, chronic violence, humanitarian crises, and large-scale migration or displacement.

A brief discussion of “resource curse”, bad governance, armed violence, and rapid population growth in the Sahel Region of Africa will help paint the reality of political and security trends in the Sahel Region of Africa.

Resource curse

The Sahel is rich with natural resources, such that the Sahelian countries are potentially among the world’s richest nations with vast energy and mineral resources, such as petroleum, gold and uranium. But, its people remain mired in extreme poverty, hunger and conflicts (Ahmed, 2017).

Mali, Burkina Faso and Mauritania have gold. Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria are rich in petroleum. Mali is Africa’s third-largest gold producer, with over 800 tons of gold deposits, 2 million tons of iron ore, 5,000 tons of uranium, 20 million tons of manganese, 4 million tons of lithium and 10 million tons of limestone. Niger, which began operating its first commercial uranium mine in 1971, is the world’s largest supplier of uranium, and has other resources such as coal, gold, gypsum and oil. Yet, the country ranked 189 out of 191 countries in the 2022 UN Human Development Index (UN HDI) (Ahmed, 2017).

Guinea is the second-largest uranium producer in the world and has several other natural resources, including bauxite, iron ore, gold and diamond. With over 7.4 billion metric tons of bauxite, Guinea accounts for over 25% of global reserves. Guinea is also a main source for aluminum. Yet, Guinean people remain among the poorest on the continent (Ahmed, 2017).

Burkina Faso has vast mineral wealth ranging from gold, diamonds and zinc to copper, manganese, phosphate and limestone. Chad has the 10th largest reserves of oil in Africa. It has 1.5 billion barrels of proven reserves and produces over 140,000 barrels per day, but remains one of the poorest countries of the continent. Niger, Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso and Chad have all had military takeovers in the past few years, making the Sahel notorious for coups rather than popular for its natural wealth (Ahmed, 2017).

Nigeria is endowed with over forty (40) types of minerals, namely, marble, coal, iron ore, gold, silica, lead, zinc, tin ore, manganese, granite, laterite, limestone, etc. (Nigerian Embassy The Hague, 2023). Aggregate production in 2020 was 64,286,308.01 tons, an increase by 17.95% compared to 54,505,048.23 tons for 2019 (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2021).

Nigeria Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) reported that Nigeria earned N193.59 billion from the solid minerals sector in 2021, bringing the sector's contribution to N814.59 billion in 15 years (2007-2021). There was an increase of N60.32 billion (51.89%) when compared to N116.82 of 2020. Companies operating in the sector are 1,214 in number (NEITI, 2023).

Nigeria's Minister for Mineral Resources, Dele Alake, told the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York that Nigeria's solid mineral was valued at over \$700 billion and the country was well placed to meet the global demand for critical solid minerals (Udi, 2023). Yet, Nigeria

has been described and declared as a failed state, poverty capital of the world and second most unsafe nation (Adebajo, 2022; Mailafi, 2021).

The explanation for the deplorable contradiction is provided by the “Resource Curse Theory” or “Paradox of Plenty” – the phenomenon whereby countries and regions with an abundance of natural resources have less economic growth and worse development outcomes than countries with fewer natural resources. Richard Auty was the first to use the term “resource curse thesis” to describe how natural resources-rich countries were unable to use that wealth to boost their economies, but had lower economic growth than countries without an abundance of natural resources. This lent credence to an earlier idea of the 1980s that natural resources might be more of an economic curse than a blessing (Auty, 1993). In agreement with the theory, a Venezuelan politician, Juan Pablo Perez Alfonzo, submitted that, “Ten years from now, twenty years from now, you will see: oil will bring us ruin...Oil is the Devil’s excrement.”

Case studies among petroleum-producing countries have proved the disconnect between natural resource wealth and economic growth. From 1965-1998, OPEC countries experienced GNP per capita average decrease by 1.3%, as against GNP per capita average growth by 2.2% in the rest of the developing world (Djankov *et al.*, 2008; Gylfason, 2001; Sachs and Warner, 1995). Besides, resource-rich countries experience a decline in the competitiveness of other economic sectors, volatility of the revenues from the natural resource sector due to exposure to global commodity market swings, and government mismanagement of resources through weak, ineffectual, unstable or corrupt institutions.

According to Eneh (2011a), the negative effects and curses of these resources are:

Conflicts provoked by the presence of natural resources, as different groups fight for their share of the “national cake”.

Taxation (rentier state) – a guaranteed source of income from natural resources makes taxation and concomitant accountability unnecessary.

State-sponsored military and police forces resist protest by the people against a lack of accountability.

Dutch Disease – an economic phenomenon in which the revenues from natural resource exports damage a nation’s productive economic sectors, while tradable sectors become less competitive in world markets.

Revenue volatility – prices for some natural resources are subject to wide fluctuation and volatility and external shocks, wrecking havoc on government planning and leading to breaking of contracts and attendant erosion of rule of law.

Excessive borrowing – government keeps borrowing and accumulating debts in anticipation of natural resource revenues which act as collateral.

Corruption fuelled by a huge flow of money from natural resources.

Neglect of economic diversification – diversification of economic productive sectors is not prioritized, since revenue flows from abundant natural resources exploration.

Internal brain-drain and neglect of human resource development – natural resource industries pay far higher salaries than other sectors, thereby attracting the best talents and damaging private and government sectors by depriving them of their best skilled personnel (internal brain-drain), while education for human resource development is neglected.

Human rights violations – rises and falls in the price of petroleum correlate with rises and falls in human rights abuse in major oil-producing countries.

All these scenarios play out in Nigeria (Eneh, 2011a) and other Sahelian resource-rich countries. Eneh and Uchegbu (2023) regret that the people of the Sahel continue to suffer and live in abject poverty because their bad leaders engage in corrupt activities. They form economic allies with the West and their former colonial powers and the compradors whose priority is to protect their personal economic interests, while perpetuating underdevelopment and poverty in the host country/community. The recurring wave of coups in the Sahel Region of Africa may be far from being arrested, as some extremists remain bent on imposing anti-democratic

extremist ideologies to perpetuate neo-colonization agenda. The people respond by orthodox and unorthodox means to these man-made mishaps externally imposed on them.

Bad governance

The bane of underdevelopment of Nigeria – and indeed other countries in the Sahel Region of Africa – has been copiously described as bad leadership (Achebe, 1983). Leadership’s inability to provide effective security has made the region increasingly more violent, with death tolls rising ten times between 2007 and 2021.

Similarly, the governments are overwhelmed by climate change and its effects, and have done little to control rapid population growth. Adoption of science, technology and innovation (STI) as well as integrated pest management (IPM) to address environmental and food insecurity in Nigeria is not considered. There is instability of government in most Sahelian countries, where coup d’états are commonplace. In stable country governments, failed development vision, poor political leadership and policy inconsistency and summersault conspire to deliver underdevelopment (Eneh, 2011 b, c).

Armed violence

According to Global Terrorism Index (2022), the Sahel Region of Africa harbours the world’s fastest growing and most-deadly terrorist groups, such as Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA), accounting for 35% in the Sahel of global total terrorism deaths in 2021, compared with just 1% in 2007. International and regional responses to the violence have failed to prevent rising levels of terrorism. Every country in the Sahel, other than Mauritania and Chad, recorded at least 40 deaths from terrorism in 2021. Total deaths recorded in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger in 2021 were 732, 574 and 588, respectively.

Niger recorded the largest increase in deaths from terrorism, with deaths more than doubling over the past year. This is the highest terrorism death toll in the country since 2007. The majority of deaths could be the work of

either ISWA or Boko Haram who were active in the country in 2021. The rise in terrorist activity in Niger had a similar surges in Mali and Burkina Faso over the past few years (Global Terrorism Index, 2022).

Jihadist activity in Cote d'Ivoire aimed to foment religious and ethnic tensions. The attacks led many Fulanis to leave the area, as they feared reprisals (adding to the already large displacement). Secondly, it brought a large military presence which discourages villagers from going to farms, for fear of being attacked (Global Terrorism Index, 2022).

Although Burkina Faso's recorded 732 deaths from terrorism in 2021 was its second highest number of deaths, majority of the deaths were attributed to either unknown groups or unspecified Muslim extremists. On the contrary, it is suspected that these attacks could be the work of either ISWA or Boko Haram who were active in the country in 2021. There were 17 deaths attributed to Boko Haram and 349 attributed to ISWA in 2021. It is, therefore, unsurprising that Burkina Faso recorded the largest deterioration in peacefulness on the 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI), falling 13 places (Global Terrorism Index, 2022).

In 2021, Mali recorded its highest number of terrorist attacks and deaths since 2011. Attacks and deaths from terrorism increased by 56% and 46% respectively, when compared with the previous year (Global Terrorism Index, 2022).

World Bank (2021) compiled the battle-related deaths (BRDs) (number of people) in Nigeria from 2004 to 2020 (Table 1). Total deaths were 22,015 for the period.

Table 1: Battle-related deaths (number of people) – Nigeria

Year	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
BRDs	151	350	50	100	88	405	992	325	811	1629	3811	4637	2491	1879	1173	1326	1997

Source: World Bank (2021)

Deaths fell by 51% in 2021 in Nigeria, following three years of successive increases. This decline was due to a fall in deaths attributed to Boko Haram and ISWA, particularly in the Borno region where deaths fell by 71%. ISWA overtook Boko Haram as the deadliest terror group in Nigeria in 2021 and, with an increased presence in neighbouring countries, such as Mali, Cameroon, and Niger, presents a substantial threat to the Sahel region.

Terrorism activities are spreading westward, with some terrorist activities in Benin Republic and Togo. The spread can be attributed to groups seeking to exploit internal political instabilities brought about by coups or attempted coups.

The United Nations Economic Cooperation for Africa (UNECA, 2017a; b) observes that the realities of the Sahel call for radical rethinking of the African State and the construction of regional dynamics and international response frameworks in Africa. Conflict and large-scale insecurities in the Sahel and their development consequences must be understood within two divergent forces – a State-based regional security complex and a people-based transnational security complex. Policy decision-makers need to note that the factors that underpin the two security complexes shape the way in which Sahel is defined, how conflict and security as well as their development consequences are understood and how various interested parties respond to the challenges of the region. The root cause of the widespread insecurity in the Sahel and a sustaining factor of the conflict and insecurity is that people in general, and state actors (including the governing elite) construct different interpretations of a variety of security challenges and invariably accord different priorities to these security concerns. The amalgamation of these two complexes offers a chance for security and stability and by extension human development in the Sahel (International Crisis Group, 2019).

The factors that cumulatively produce these two divergent complexes in the Sahel are found in structural, proximate and conflict-sustaining causes of conflict and insecurity in the Sahel. The structural causes are the

environmental stress, historical grievances, fractured state-making processes, and youth bulge. The proximate and conflict-sustaining causes are migration, food insecurity, politicized military, rise of Jihad and criminal networks, regional and cross-border conflict and insecurity, corruption and general socio-economic deprivation, global dynamics and role of external actors. The convergence of these factors sustains the region's insecurity, creating a complex environment that challenges both governance and economic stability (O'Neill, 2020; Le-Sage, 2013).

The impact of armed conflicts and insecurities is greater on governance than economic growth in the Sahel region. A range of cross-cutting economic and governance impacts reinforce the divergent security complexes. The economic impacts are common but variable macro-economic impacts, displacement and refugees, increased security-related expenditure, and worsening poverty and socio-economic vulnerability. The governance impacts are displaced public administration and disrupted democratic governance, stifling of civil liberties and human rights, complex humanitarian emergencies, and securitized foreign relations. The proliferation of strategies on the Sahel lack synergy, co-operation and co-ordination. Policies on Sahel lack understanding of the interconnections and linkages between its people and the absence of reliable statistics and other indicators. Responses to regional and transnational crises ought to be national in scope. Humanitarian approach provides a potential alternative, exemplary framework for responding to Sahel. Overwhelming focus on terrorism, crime and militarized responses by powerful external actors for which these pose major threats relegates the long standing human security threats in the Sahel to the background. African States and regional institutions must respond to these challenges posed by the situation in the Sahel and their institutional frameworks and programmes to the realities of their peoples (De Waal, 2015; Kamara, 2021).

The effectiveness of adopted regional and international frameworks in addressing the challenges in the Sahel depends largely on the extent to

which crucial leadership gaps can be filled. UNECA (2017a; b) then recommends that African Union (AU) and regional institutions as well as the United Nations (UN) should adopt an authentically region-based approach with transnational application, in order to bring about a convergence of the two security complexes in the Sahel. National governments along the affected Sahelian corridors should draw regional lessons from their experiences and use them for programmes that work nationally, by scaling up successful national programmes to regional and transnational spaces. All AU and UN agencies responding to conflict and insecurity in the Sahel should view engagement with the sub-national and sub-formal stakeholders as a necessary part of dealing with the transnational character of the Sahel. The UN, AU and regional organizations should refocus their Sahel strategy by organizing and implementing policies for the Sahel region and its peoples. Operational agencies working on the Sahel should reposition their presence toward patterns of population movement in the region. Crawford (2015) recommends that peace-building interventions should be climate-resilient and climate change responses must be climate sensitive. Barry and Vivekananda (2023) submit that arms are not enough to tackle armed violent conflict in Sahel; solutions must consider climate.

Implications for Nigeria

Environmental insecurity and climate change

Flooding, drought, food insecurity, poverty, unemployment, and violent armed conflict are consequences of climate change that overwhelm the government of Nigeria. Flood is responsible for wanton destruction of lives and property and also degradation and pollution of the environment with attendant environmental insecurity, hazards, risks and health challenges. Between 2012 and 2022, deaths from flood disasters correlated inversely with health (life expectancy) and economic health in Nigeria (Eneh and Eneh, 2024).

Drought results in mass poverty and starvation due to crop failures in Nigeria, since agriculture is the mainstream of the country's rural economy. Desertification pushes nomadic pastoralism southwards, leading to herder-farmer clashes which have claimed thousands of lives in Nigeria. Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Yobe and Zamfara states are the most desertification-prone or frontline areas. Flooding claims lives, destroys valuable property and impacts negatively on productivity and economic health. Nigeria's environmental protection policies, which were formulated between 1915 and 1992 and are obsolete and fragmented (Eneh and Eneh, 2024; Eneh and Agbazue, 2011).

Violent armed conflict

In Nigeria, violent armed conflict takes the forms of ISWA/Boko Haram terrorism, banditry, kidnapping for ransom, herder-farmer clash and unknown gunmen attack. Their related deaths associated with environmental shocks, the economy, and human health. Lives and property are lost, people are displaced, school days and labour are lost, hospital beds are saturated, pains and inconveniences and healthcare expenses are burdens in the face of extreme poverty. There is reduction in agricultural (and other) productivity and the attendant health impacts, such as decrease of prevalence of undernourishment (Eneh, Eneh and Emenuga, 2024).

Musa (2021) submits that Nigeria faces terrorism and extremism, armed banditry and militia group activities, farmer-pastoralist clashes, transnational organized crimes, border insecurity, cyber and technology challenges, socio-political development challenges, environmental challenges and threats, and regional and global challenges. Their causes are unemployment and poverty, ineffective policing, weak criminal justice system, and drug/chemical abuse. The consequences are educational, economic, environmental, and displacement. Solutions are job creation, improvement of border security, effective control of small arms and light weapons, strengthening the criminal justice system, improving policing, provision of affordable education, and effective chemical security culture.

Abubakar (2022) reports that Nigeria has recorded monumental internal security challenges occasioned by non-state actors such as Boko Haram and bandits associated with transhumance and irregular migration into the country. Pastoralist-perpetrated violence account for 16%. Eneh (2011 d, e) maintain that science, technology and innovation (STI) need to be mainstreamed in the war strategy in digital age; analogue technology leads nowhere.

Rapid population growth, increasing anthropogenic activities, increasing waste generation and poor waste management

Rapid population growth is a daunting issue in Nigeria. It leads to increased anthropogenic activities and rapid waste generation and improper waste disposal, which leads to climate change, environmental degradation and pollution. Waste generation and management situation in Nigeria is unhealthy with poor sanitation practices. Environmental management infrastructure are either lacking or in poor shape. Loopholes abound in the management of Nigeria's environment, which create rooms for foreigners to dump toxic waste in the country (Eneh, 2021, 2020; Eneh and Akah, 2012; Eneh, 2011f).

Poor governance, religion, ethnicity and lack of patriotism

Poor governance characterized by institutional failures through widespread corruption relegates meritocracy and attendant patriotism to the background, and is itself a product of same. Religion and ethnicity further nail patriotism in Nigeria, where high-profile political leaders confess their preference and defense for their religion and tribe over the country. They prefer to die for their faith and ethnic interest to dying for Nigeria, which is yet to be defined as a nation.

Despite numerous public agricultural policies, strategies, programmes and projects aimed at boosting agricultural production for the attainment of food security in the past consecutive five decades in Nigeria, seven out of ten Nigerians are food insecure. Key issues that need to be fixed are predominance of smallholder subsistence farming, use of rudimentary tools,

unimproved varieties of seeds and other inputs, traditional storage and preservation practices, deficit of marketing infrastructure, and dependence on rain-fed agriculture. The key issues were related more to science technology and innovation (STI) than to other selected development sub-sectors. Fixing them through STI adoption can address the four dimensions of food security (Eneh, 2021).

Musa (2021) recommends job creation, improvement of border security, effective control of small arms and light weapons, strengthening the criminal justice system, improving policing, provision of affordable education, and effective chemical security culture. Abubakar (2022) recommends a review for domestication and full operationalization of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Regulation of Transhumance 1998 by member states.

Summary, conclusion and recommendations for ways-forward for Nigeria

Nigeria, as a part of the Sahel Region of Africa, has daunting political and security challenges. These challenges are majorly man-made and externally imposed. They stretch beyond the time of political independence from colonial masters through the current period of neo-colonialism and Western interest in the natural resources in Africa as well as the religious and ethnic interests at play. The community and national compradors are handy to conspire with the external national and Western forces to sustain and perpetuate their own self-interests, rather than the legal, moral and expedient patriotic interests of the host community and country.

Wars with gun have not helped, and need to be de-emphasized before they consume the country. Attacking the symptoms, rather than the causes, has been Nigeria's style and strategy, which amounts to neglecting cheap and workable prevention to pursue expensive illusory cure.

The following ways-forward are recommended for the various issues covered:

Environmental insecurity and climate change

(a) Genuine proactive ecological conservation actions to prevent further losses to ecosystems ought to be designed and implemented.

(b) Sincere ecological restoration and succession responses to repair natural sites whose biological communities and ecosystems have been degraded, polluted or destroyed need to be formulated and actioned as part of the responses to ecological damages.

(c) Disturbance ecology plan to deal with the causes and consequences of both natural and anthropogenic disturbances has become more imperative in the era of climate change and its ugly effects. Nigeria needs to come up with the plan for serious actions.

(d) Addressing the loopholes in managing Nigeria's environment, which create rooms for foreigners to dump toxic waste in the country, needs patriotic zeal and attention.

Violent armed conflict

(a) The best way to win a war is not to fight it. But, for a war externally hoisted on Nigeria by the West and their allies, stooges and compradors, both gun and political solutions need to move hand-in-hand.

(b) The quality of the training for soldiers and their arms and morale need to be improved for better outputs.

(c) Science, technology and innovation (STI) must be mainstreamed in the war strategy in digital age; analogue technology leads nowhere.

(d) Terrorism sponsors ought to be fished out and dealt with for the much-needed deterrence.

Rapid population growth, increasing anthropogenic activities, increasing waste generation and poor waste management

(a) Improvement of governance to address the emerging political and security challenges in Nigeria should no longer be politicized but tackled head-on because it has become a life-and-death issue.

(b) Updating the Nigeria's environmental protection policies, which were formulated between 1915 and 1992 and are not only dated but fragmented, needs urgent attention and action.

Poor governance, religion, ethnicity and lack of patriotism

(a) Imperative and urgent redefinition of Nigeria as a country through constitutional reforms is long overdue and now is the time to bravely embark on it.

(b) Adoption of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) needs to be explored for Nigeria for obvious ecological reasons and its advantages.

(c) Adoption of STI for agricultural production has become imperative in Nigeria. Agricultural production ought to employ 95% STI and 5% manual processes.

(d) An eccentric and contingent leadership style to confront head-on the lingering and worsening governance characterized by institutional failures through widespread corruption is the way to go because drastic conditions require drastic actions, not orthodoxy.

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