



## Harnessing Nigeria Population Strength for Sustainable National Economic Development, Peace and Security

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**Abstract:** Nigeria is the country that housed over 250 ethnic groups with approximately 500 languages and variety of cultures, customs, religions, traditions; each of these struggle for supremacy which make the country great cultural diversity. Opinion revealed that these armed conflicts are recorded because Nigeria is ethnically heterogeneous and over populated. The thrust of this article is on harnessing Nigeria population strength for sustainable economic development, peace and security. These topics are always treated unconnectedly to political leaders and the public but addressing wisely necessitate considering interconnections therein. Scientists and researchers have warn that increasing population and consumption are undermining carrying capacity of the Earth though their advice has not been heeded as it is perceived as being contrary to some prevailing economic and social interests. This study draw some of the leading thought on population/economic related issues and how their will prosper development of sustainable economy, peace and security.

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### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is said to the giant of Africa and the center peace for African international interaction with the human population of over 200 million and 250 ethnic groups. With this unique figure in mind, one may think that Nigeria is blessed in terms of security and economic development but at present, Nigeria is erratically unsettled by sporadic ethnic and religious conflict leading to loss of human lives and valuable property. These armed conflicts are recorded because Nigeria is ethnically heterogeneous and the three ethnic groups with different religion such as Christianity, Islam and African Traditional Religion (ATR) are constantly struggling for supremacy. All these

have cast a spell of mutual suspicious and fear on Nigerians leading to accusation of marginalization against one another, a situation that has bred tension and insecurity that are threatening the continuity existence of the country.

The issue of peace and security of life and property has been the central theme in the world development plan. World peace cannot be achieved in the absence of sustainable security which led a question of what does man required to live in peace and without fear of intimidation or any other form of actions that may limit his happiness? The suppose answer to the question should be the man's desire to live in group interdependently and to provide for himself man's basic economic needs since

it is only those that have the basic needs of livelihoods know the important of being alive and proffer strategies to protect their live and property. It is only when man felt insecure in an environment; he began to build shelter and started to live in band which otherwise result to peaceful co-existence.

Nigeria as a nation has continued to have her development goals define and redefined in order to participate fully in the international interaction (world politics). With time, these goals of development have continued to de-emphasize man himself and promote man's creativity and economic live in the society with the believe that such are the cornerstone national development be it political, cultural, social and economic which are considered to, one way or the other lead to peaceful living and security. Oyibe and Nnamani<sup>[1]</sup> are of the view that no meaningful development will ever occur without peace and security. This therefore implies that man who is the architect of peace and security should be the central theme of the discourse with special emphasis on their population and its influence on achieving sustainable peace, national security and development. This is because the role of man in achieving peace, security and development is very significant considering the fact that man is the entrepreneur that organizes other factors of production to create utilities. The number of human beings in any area gives the broad idea of the nature and extent of economic activities in that area<sup>[2]</sup>. Integrating man in game plan development is the gateway to achieving sustainable peace, national security and development in Nigeria, especially at this period when the country is experiencing extensive devastation in infrastructure and other socio-economic activities as a result of unnecessary rebellious activities and insurgency.

Oyibe and Nnamani<sup>[1]</sup> state that conventional theories have supported that the size of a nation's population, scientific labour force and training system therein has a positive effect on economic development which if well managed improves peace and security. Indeed, expanded scientific activity in any country is thought to benefit national economic development and security through improved labour force capacities and the creation of new knowledge and technologies that lead to sustained capacities in science of production, politics, military and related social interaction. It is pertinent to note that scientific knowledge and technologies cannot themselves promote sustainable peace, security and economic development if the nation's population is not in consideration and their attitudes are not directed towards sustainable social change. Ogoh<sup>[2]</sup> maintains that nations are not secured with emphasis on military might or powers alone that security is the function of the nation's population. Human security is an attack on the chief evil affecting the development of the common man.

Oyibe and Eluu<sup>[4]</sup> are of the view that to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war, hunger and to reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women, to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations; matters arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained with the view to promote social progress and better standard of life. The thrust of this study is on harnessing Nigeria population strength for sustainable peace, security and development.

### **Conceptual clarification**

**Concept of population:** Population of a place connotes the number of people in that place. Population refers to the total number of people living at a particular place at a particular period of time. Population is neither evenly distributed nor uniformly skilled. Some places are densely populated and the others are sparely populated. A proportion of the population might be made up of skilled labour force while another would have unskilled labour. Nigeria as a nation is one endowed with dense but mostly unskilled population. Furthermore, there is a very high rate of population growth which is not commensurate with the rate of food production and the availability of social services. As rightly observe by Bozimo and Ikwumelu<sup>[5]</sup> that an overview of the Nigerian political experience, since, independence in 1960 shows clearly that among the many issues that have created great anxiety and brought the country to the blink of collapse has been the attempt at obtaining an accurate count of the country's population.

**Concept of economic development:** Economic development' is a term that economists, politicians and others have used frequently in the 20th century. The concept, however has been in existence in the western countries. Modernization, Westernization and especially, industrialization are other terms authors have used while discussing economic development. Singh<sup>[6]</sup> maintains that economic development has a direct relationship with the environment. Although, nobody is certain when the concept originated, some group agree that development is closely bound up with the evolution of capitalism and the demise of feudalism.

Ikwumelu<sup>[7]</sup> states that economic development has been understood, since, the World War II to involve economic growth, namely the increases in per capital income and (if currently absent) the attainment of a standard of living equivalent to that of industrialized countries. Economic development can also be considered as a static theory that documents the state of an economy at a certain time. According to Hall and Jones<sup>[8]</sup> the changes in this equilibrium state to document in economic theory can only be caused by intervening factors coming

from the outside. Many times the economic development goals of specific country cannot be reached because they lack the state's capabilities to do so. For example, if a nation has little capacity to carry out basic functions like security and policing or core service delivery it is unlikely that a program that wants to foster a free-trade zone (special economic zones) or distribute vaccinations to vulnerable populations can accomplish their goals.

**Sustainable economic development:** To be sustainable means to be in continuance in strength. It shows the continuous existence of issue and being available in strength. For Economic development, it is the process by which a country provides for its citizens all the basic needs of life such as health, education, housing, nutrition among others. It also involves providing the citizens with opportunities to contribute to the very process through gainful employment as well as scientific technological innovations<sup>[9]</sup>. Sustainability in economic development has to do with economic competency, skills, creativity, practical knowledge, diverse opinions and productivity. No wonder Fadeeva *et al.*<sup>[10]</sup> pointed out the three key sustainability competencies as; the strategic knowledge cluster, clusters of past developments, creates future scenarios and sustainable visions which deal with the competency of linking knowledge with action and the collaborative duster which involves the competency to work in teams. Wals<sup>[11]</sup> is of the view that "economic sustainability has to cope with uncertainty economic spaces should build a culture of enterprising awash with uncertainty and in which uncertainty provokes transformative yet, precautionary commitment rather than paralysis". Sustainable economic development has to be sought through Social Studies education where learners go and specialize in dealing with different specific features of man and his environment. Agreeing with the above view, Aina maintains that social studies education contributes to the formation and development of human capital, the culture and social construction of values and meaning and the capacity for individual and collective emancipation from ignorance to domination. In same line of thought, Rhodes University<sup>[12]</sup> observes "that level of learning generates social studies graduates who have a sense of civic responsibility and promote learning which benefits the community as well as provides learners with the opportunity to apply theory to local, regional and national development issues".

**Concept of security:** Despite widespread use of 'security' by scholars and politicians in recent time, not much attention has been devoted to explicating the concept. Although, the concept of power has generated a veritable mountain of explicative literature, the comparable literature on security is more of a molehill. Although, some scholars contend that this is due to the

essential contestability of security, it is probably more accurate to describe the concept of security as insufficiently explicated as essentially contested. Anyways, the issue of security is as old as man himself. When man felt insecure in an environment, he began to build shelter and started to live in bands. When nations felt insecure, they began to form armies. To secure the future, man began to invest and save against the rainy day. Because of security, man began to search for the maker of the universe (God), the supernatural being that controls the universe. Ogoh<sup>[3]</sup>, thus, maintained that all forms of security be it for human safety, national safety, economic safety, environment safety and so on, have been and will continue to be the concerns of man. But the question of national security in contemporary world assumes a kind of dimension that one may ask: whose security, State or Person? This question directs our mind to a quest for meaning and importance of security to state and her citizenry.

Gleditch while viewing the changing interpretation of security from the traditional doctrine of realism to new thinking, opines that realism which emphasizes the struggle for territory and resources with patterns of conflict and cooperation forming mainly on the basis of struggle for power-military, economic and political has been dominant in security thought. Therefore, a country can strengthen its position through conquest or alliance building and will do so, unless checked by countervailing powers. Ikwumelu *et al.*<sup>[13]</sup> are of the view that security can be viewed as freedom or safety from danger or absence of threat and danger. The concept of security is of great concern to all human societies as it concerns survival of man and resources. And Dasuki maintains that security means absence of insecurity as a result of actions of law enforcement agencies. This therefore, entails that security is the job of the defense force of a national frontiers and of the police inside the country. Indeed one of the reasons why men live in groups is the need for security. Security is so, essential that individuals and states cannot make meaningful progress and development without it.

**Sustainable national security:** The complexity of Nigeria as sovereign nation is not limited to its multi-ethno-religious groups, rudderless polity and unfathomable economic policies; rather it extent to its unenviable high record of violent crimes and plethora of agencies for crime prevention without effective any control. These ugly trends have placed a question mark on dignity and pride Nigeria nation in terms of national security. National security has to do with securing a nation to the extent that it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, is able and if challenged to maintain them by victory in such a war. This may be why; Mohammed<sup>[14]</sup> describes national

security as a condition whereby a country is free from any form of fear or threat to its peace, stability and progress. And in the event of any threat or actual attack, the ability of the country to absorb the shock, get over it and respond effectively to restore public confidence in the state and its institutions. Thus, there are several nations of the world are expending, so much of their national resources on amassing weapons of war. In essence, the realists conceive security in narrow military terms as a zero-sum game in which the gains of one state are a loss for another.

Sustainability of national security is achieved when a country is the ability of a country to build up military apparatus and map out strategies to secure public confidence by maintaining law and order a long period of time. It involves the establishment of proactive and defensive measures to safeguard all persons, property and materials. Ikpe and Ujah<sup>[15]</sup> define sustainable national security as lay-down procedures and methods adopted by state in order to eliminate distractions and abuses of safety so as to create an environment free, safe and convenient enough to attract investments, development and growth political, economic, social, cultural, technological and otherwise. Generally, the security interest of any nation should include but not limited to safety of life and property, economic, psychological, social, mental and emotional well-being and even the mere freedom to pursue the attainment of legitimate objectives without hindrance.

#### **HARNESSING NIGERIA POPULATION STRENGTH FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Today, population trends are moving in different directions around the world, creating an unprecedented demographic partition. More than one billion people, including most of the population of sub-Saharan Africa, live in countries (like ours 'Nigeria') where the average woman has more than four children. The major causes of ongoing high fertility rates are poverty and the low use of family planning. Nigeria as a country has its peculiar social characteristics and problems. The country consists of over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own identity and value systems. The Nigerian society itself is blessed with high density of human population with inadequate production of food and supply of social services which results to indiscipline attitudes and social vices found among Nigeria citizens. This lackadaisical attitudes of Nigeria to national issues and general social life has made the realization of the goal of 'a united, great and self-reliant nation' unattainable.

Again, Nigeria citizens are not prepared for their roles in the global economy, since, they are not provided with knowledge; skills, work discipline and economic

friendly environment that enable them perform their duties and tasks, hence, their positive contribution in economic development of their society. Nigeria citizens that have been well informed through efficient entrepreneurial education have a right to systematize for the promotion and defense of economic policies that will ultimately guarantee development and secure their welfare and happiness. Johnson and Johnson<sup>[16]</sup> asserts that all individuals in a society need to know the factors that contribute to who they are; to what they think, feel and believe; to what they decide and do; to why they are likely to make certain decisions and act in particular ways and to how they perceive themselves, their abilities, their personality and the world. Therefore, there is a need to harness the country's population and provide them with enabling education geared towards producing critical and responsible citizens, able to think for themselves and make judgment on all issues affecting them and be able to understand and interpret critical government activities and such type of education is seen as a feasible tool for economic development Nigeria.

Abdi<sup>[17]</sup> observes that in the process of development as we know that no modern society is self contained and self sufficient, hence, the need to understand the relationship between our society and the rest of the world community. Experience has shown that the fact that, we want, so many things means that we do not have them and that, it is the lack which has created problems in our society. Modern development comes through science and technology and these can only be acquired through dedication, hard work, high sense of cooperation, discipline and responsibility, all of which center on correct attitudes to life generally. The correct attitudes to life and work is said to be transformative in nature, empowering, therapeutic and helping citizens to understand their society in order to change and focus on unfolding, testing and providing them with skills to enable them contribute their quota in improving their country's economy. The role of man in production and consumption of resources is very significant. This is because the number of human being in any area gives us a broad idea of the nature and extent of economic activities in that area.

Nigeria has favourable climate and soil for agricultural activity which if the youths are effectively motivated to participate the production of agricultural products like providing enabling credit facility and functional market for agricultural products will go a long way in boosting Nigeria economy. In general, population is dense in all low-lying plains which have a fertile soil and favourable climate throughout the year. Huge population of China which is over 600 million people live in about 1 million square miles of area in the coastal and lower river valleys on account of favourable climate and fertile soil. In South-East Asia, the farmers are able to

grow two or even three crops in a year on account of favourable climate and fertile soil with population dense. In the case of Nigeria, all these economic variables are lying wasted, since, no effective effort has been made either by government or private bodies to harness them for economic growth and development. The thrust of this paper focused on the importance of Nigeria's large growing population and how it will be utilized to boost the country's economy. Research has shown that a large population means:

- A greater domestic market
- Attracting investors and multinational companies
- Stimulating investment in knowledge
- Generating more new ideas which improve productivity
- Market size stimulates innovative activity
- Increasing learning-by-doing due to pressures of increased production volume
- More workers
- More young people energizing the economy
- Increased consumption driving manufacturing and services
- Increased national savings
- A big home market that is an attractive prize for successful new products
- Greater economies of scale (less cost in production per unit with increase of volume)
- An absolutely larger number of outstanding, highly effective people<sup>[18]</sup>

#### **HARNESSING NIGERIA POPULATION STRENGTH FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY**

Demographic trends influence political stability and security. Over the past several decades, countries in which at least 60% of the population is younger than 30 years of age have been more likely to experience outbreaks of insecurity than countries with a more even age distribution. Nigeria is one of the countries with very young age structures in which at least two-thirds of the population is younger than 30 have a consistently growing group of young people entering the labor market and seeking opportunities. With sound policies, this can be a benefit. But it can also challenge a government's capacity to provide sufficient jobs, education and resources for its population and can increase the likelihood of insecurity. Lending support to the above, Oyibe and Nnamani<sup>[1]</sup> maintain that, no meaningful development will ever occur without peace and security. This therefore, implies that man who is the architect of peace and security should be the central theme of the discourse with special emphasis on their population and its influence on achieving sustainable peace, national security and development.

Of all forms of political hostility, the greatest toll comes from national conflicts. In recent years, Beebe and Kaldor<sup>[19]</sup> are of the view that many scholars and policymakers have adopted a broader structure of human security which includes four elements: survival and physical safety; conditions for health and economic well-being; legitimate, trustworthy and capable governance and individual dignity. In 2004, the United Nations established a Human Security Unit promoting the protection and empowerment of people to achieve "survival, livelihood and dignity" and US military and civilian defense agencies are also looking to move toward a 'prevent-and-deter' approach, focused on 'supporting and stabilizing fragile states' and 'preventing human suffering'. This is possible to United States because of their ability to mobilize greater number of military personnel with well equip warfare equipment. Security can be uneven across a population with those who are poor and/or marginalized including women facing both higher risks of physical violence and greater difficulties in access to education, housing and jobs as it is in almost every part of Nigeria. When human security does not political and environmental context matters and there is no single formula to guarantee successful conflict prevention. Large numbers of young people in a population when coupled with socioeconomic problems, can leave individuals more susceptible for recruitment into insurgencies.

Few chances to find employment or otherwise improve lives can both generate grievances and make taking part in violent action seem less risky. Nigeria is a country where jobs are lacking or only available to the well-connected, a youthful age structure increases the number of job seekers and decreases the odds of employment. As US Foreign policy has focused more on threats posed by states (like ours, Nigeria) that cannot meet the needs of their people, policymakers in our nation should learn the importance of demographic factors in evaluating risk. The United States National Intelligence Council<sup>[20]</sup>, in its Global Trends 2025 assessment, characterized a demographic "arc of instability" that crosses much of sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and South Asia as a risk factor for public insecurity. In a 2010 speech, the commander of the US Africa command notes the challenges that population growth poses to other aspects of development, including food security, health and environment. In Nigeria per se where the high population is not harness to the advent age of the nation's economic and security benefits like China, demographic trends can hinder the achievement of human security and thus, affect the security of a nation if poorly managed.

The issue of national security in Nigeria is not all about dishing out military strength and strategies to the affected areas but having the requisite knowledge of the immediate and remote causes of the phenomena and come

out with practical knowledge that is rooted in the history and mind of every citizen of the nation. Getting to the root causes of conflict and provides solutions the identified problem paves way for sustainability. To be sustainable means to be in continual in strength. It shows the continuous existence of issue and being available in strength and knowledge. Sustainability in national security has to do with gathering momentum with regard to competency, skills, creativity, practical knowledge, diverse opinions and result-oriented in dealing with any form threat to life, property and continual existence of the society. Ikwumelu *et al.*<sup>[13]</sup> maintain that sustainability of national security portrays the ability of the nation to cope with uncertainty.

Many country governments have expressed concern about meeting the needs of their growing youthful populations. In Uganda which had the youngest age structure in the world in the 2000s, a Member of Parliament has noted that “We are growing at a very fast pace and looking at the projections, it can’t be sustained. We have a bank of young people who are dependent, unemployed or can’t make a living”<sup>[21]</sup>. In Yemen where water supplies are already running short and the population is on track to nearly double in 20 years, an official has warned that “population growth is putting pressure on the country’s resources. If the situation remains as it is, the state would not be able to meet the demands of its people”<sup>[22]</sup>. Population is an underlying variable for insecurity if mismanaged. Demographic changes alone are unlikely to spark political violence but can influence other trigger of conflict. Countries like China and India used changes in their population to boost their economic and military situations. Nigerians need functional programme aimed at developing intellectual capacity and values for the survival of individuals, providing enabling and conducive environment for the acquisition of both physical and intellectual skills that will enable individuals to be self-reliant and contributive members of their society. This programme will build a culture of learning awash with uncertainty and in which uncertainty provokes transformative yet, precautionary commitment rather than paralysis. The continue deployment of military troop as the strategy for handling security threat in Nigeria has open channel for new and sophisticate frontier to emerge. This makes nonsense of Nigeria as giant of Africa.

### CONCLUSION

The pursuit of national economic development and security requires a collaboration of the state and its inhabitants in detecting, preventing, controlling and eliminating sources and perceived sources of danger, whether latent or manifest, internal or external, natural or man-made which threaten the collective interest of the

nation. Development cannot manifest without peace and security. Large population provides high rate of workforce and security outfit, since, the population of a place determines the extent of economic activities in that area. The role of high population providing security and in production and consumption of goods and services is vast.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing discourse, the following recommendations arc made:

- All efforts should be made by the government at all levels and privates bodies to provide enabling environment for individuals to excel economically
- There is need for an improvement in the infrastructural facilities such as the existing industries and factories, roads, power supply and potable water to encourage Foreign investors to have confidence in investing into the nation’s economy

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