

POLITICAL STABILITY, SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA. A DISCOURSE IN COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS.

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Abstract

Political stability is crucial for creating a secure environment which is indispensable for achieving and maintaining sustainable development in any clime. It ensures a predictable and conducive environment for economic activities and the protection of citizens and resources to enhance uninterrupted progress. The present research work delved into this complex interplay between political stability, security, and sustainable development in Nigeria from a comparative point of view. It adopted specific case study analysis. As such, the study is grounded on a detailed analysis of multiple case studies that provided the basis for comparing Nigeria with other climes. While Political stability ensures a predictable and conducive environment for economic activities, security protects citizens and resources and make them available for uninterrupted progress. Anchored on the theory of sustainable development, popularized by the Brundtland Commission of 1987 which emphasized the balance between economic growth, environmental protection and social equity, and secondary method of data collection, the study asserts that sustainable development is not merely the outcome of economic or environmental efforts but, that which is deeply rooted in the political and security landscape of a region or country. Thus, the need for a comprehensive and integrated policy approach that simultaneously address political stability, security concerns and developmental objectives. By highlighting these interconnections, the study recommended a holistic understanding of and approach to policymaking that aims to ensure that development is not only achieved but also sustained on a long-term basis amidst evolving political and security dynamics in 21st century.

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Introduction

Political stability and security are foundational to the socio-economic development of any nation. Historically, regions experiencing political turmoil and insecurity have faced significant challenges in achieving sustainable development (Campos and Nugent, 2002, Paris, 2001). Political stability ensures a predictable and conducive environment for economic activities, while security protects citizens and resources, facilitating uninterrupted progress. Sustainable development, defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, requires a stable and secure backdrop. How these variables have interacted in recent past leave less to be desired especially in developing states like Nigeria. This study is therefore an attempt to interrogate the interrelationship between political stability, security, and sustainable development. It aims to identify the key factors that contribute to political stability and security and to evaluate the impact of political instability and insecurity on sustainable development efforts made in Nigeria since 2015.

Understanding the nexus between political stability, security, and sustainable development is crucial for policymakers, development agencies, and stakeholders involved in nation-building. Thus, an intellectual and perhaps comparative investigation that provides valuable insights into how political and security environments influence development outcomes becomes rife. Such investigation would specifically interrogate any integrated approach that simultaneously address political stability, security, and developmental goals as it would by its character inform the design and implementation of strategies aimed at achieving sustainable development in various geopolitical zones in Nigeria and other climes challenged by these interrelated issues.

Literature, Theoretic and Methodological Propositions

Broadly, this study examines political stability, security and sustainable development. It pays particular attention on the pattern of issues associated with political stability, security and development in Nigeria. Expectedly, the aim of this review is to interrogate the views of scholars on the nature and character of the key variables under investigation as an integral part of the broad liberal democratic system. Hence, emphasis shall be made to assess the views of scholars in Nigeria and other advanced democracies that share common characteristics. The aim here is to locate a gap in extant literature which shall constitute the point of departure and force for the present study. In view of the focus and goal of this work, our literature review shall be done under the conceptualization of political stability, security and sustainable development; its identifiable principles and contours laid by earliest scholars and theoreticians that shape their operation in Nigeria.

Political stability refers to the durability and integrity of a political system. It is characterized by the absence of significant civil unrest, consistent governance, and predictable policy-making processes. Thus, Rodrik (1999), believes that political stability enables a government to effectively administer and implement policies, maintain public order, and provide public services. It is often measured by indicators such as government longevity, the absence of violence, and the rule of law. Its known dimension include but not limited to: The resilience and effectiveness of political institutions, such as the judiciary, legislature, and executive branches, which ensure the consistent application of laws and policies; The degree of societal cohesion and the absence of widespread civil conflict or social unrest; The predictability and reliability of government policies, which influence economic planning and investment decisions as well as the extent to which the government is perceived as legitimate and enjoys the support and trust of its citizens (Campos and Nugent, 2002, Collier *et al.*, 2003).

Several key factors influence political stability, each interacting in complex ways to either bolster or undermine it: good governance as it were is fundamental to political stability (Aisen, and Veiga, 2011, Radu, 2015). This includes transparent and accountable institutions, rule of law, and efficient public administration. Effective governance ensures that public resources are managed judiciously and that the government is responsive to the

needs of its citizens as it necessarily connects with the economic performance of the state. Economic stability and growth contribute significantly to political stability. When the economy performs well, it can reduce poverty, unemployment, and inequality, which are often sources of discontent and instability. Conversely, economic downturns, high inflation, and unemployment can lead to social unrest that weakens political stability and social cohesion. Accordingly, Alesina *et al.* (1996), Campos and Nugent (2002) claimed that a cohesive society, where diverse groups coexist harmoniously, is crucial for political stability. For them, social cohesion can be fostered through inclusive policies that promote equality, social justice, and the integration of minority groups. Thus, a legitimate government is needed to drive this objective (Radu, 2015). This implies that a fair and free elections, adherence to democratic principles, and respect for human rights are essential for political stability. When citizens believe that their government represents their interests and operates fairly, they are more likely to support it, even during difficult times. Thus, a stable security environment is critical for political stability. This includes internal security (protection from crime and violence) and external security (protection from external threats). Effective security forces, a reliable justice system, and comprehensive strategies to combat terrorism and organized crime in order to maintain order and stability. From the outset, it suffices to state that, security concerns, such as territorial disputes and military conflicts, have traditionally, been recognized as impediments to development. Thus, the concept of security has expanded to include human security, which focuses on protecting individuals from threats such as poverty, disease, inhuman treatment and environmental degradation. Brundtland Commission (1987), Paris (2001) and Stewart (2004) emphasized that insecurity, whether from armed conflict, crime, or natural disasters, undermines development efforts by causing displacement, destroying infrastructure, and diverting resources away from productive uses. Thus, by its nature, security encompasses the protection of a nation, its institutions, and its citizens from threats that could disrupt societal order and harm individuals. It traditionally includes national security (defense against external threats), internal security (addressing crime, violence, and internal conflicts) and human security, which prioritizes the safety and well-being of individuals, encompassing economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (Holmes, 2015).

To this end, a state's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and political independence need to be protected from external threats. This, according to Holmes (2015) would include military defense, diplomatic strategies, intelligence operations aimed at preventing external aggression and maintaining international peace. While a state focuses on maintaining law and order within, issues of crime, terrorism, civil unrest, and political violence ought not to be overlooked (Nigeria National Security Strategy, 2019). Success at this will invariably shift attention to other concerns as protection of her members from hunger, disease, and repression and disruptions in daily life, whether from natural disasters, economic crises, or violent conflicts. This would create environments where people can pursue dignified lives free from fear and want (Holmes, 2015, Radu, 2015, NNSS, 2019). Scholars have attempted to link security to development and what proceeds from the review of extant works is the proposition that security and development are deeply intertwined. Holmes, (2015) and NNSS, (2019) for instance, argued that security is both a precondition for and a product of sustainable development.

Accordingly, Holmes (2015) averred that security is foundational for economic activities. For him, a secure environment attracts investment, promotes tourism, and facilitates trade. Conversely, insecurity deters investors, disrupts markets, and increases costs due to the need for enhanced protective measures. Countries experiencing high levels of crime or conflict often see reduced economic growth and increased poverty levels (Campos and Nugent, 2002, Collier *et al.*, 2003). Security ensures the protection and maintenance of vital infrastructure such as roads, bridges, schools, and hospital while insecure environments often lead to the destruction of infrastructure,

either directly through conflict or indirectly through neglect and lack of maintenance and rebuilding infrastructure in post-conflict settings diverts resources from other developmental priorities. Going further, security significantly affects education and health, which are critical components of human capital formation. This is because, insecure environments disrupt schooling and reduce access to healthcare, leading to lower educational attainment and poorer health outcomes. This hampers the development of a skilled and healthy workforce, essential for long-term economic development. Radu (2015) posits that security fosters social cohesion as it reduces fear and uncertainty, enabling communities to build trust and cooperate effectively. Accordingly, insecure environments breed mistrust and social fragmentation which also undermine any collective efforts toward development. At the political realms, insecure environments often lead to weak governance, corruption, and a lack of institutional capacity and makes governments unable to implement policies, enforce laws, provide public services efficiently so as to create a stable environment conducive to development.

Campos and Nugent (2002), Collier *et al* (2003) and NNSS (2019) argue that insecure environments necessitate significant resource allocation to defense and security measures, often at the expense of development programs. According to them, high military expenditures can crowd out investments in health, education, and infrastructure, slowing down overall development. This can also lead to forced migration and displacement, creating humanitarian crises and burdening neighboring regions or countries. The phenomenon can also break social ties, and strains resources in host areas, complicating development efforts. Further to this, conflict and insecurity often lead to environmental degradation as control over natural resources becomes contested, and law enforcement mechanisms subjected to inevitable break down (NNSS, 2019). Thus, Campos and Nugent, 2002, Collier *et al.*, 2003, Aisen, and Veiga 2011, Holmes, 2015, Radu, 2015 and Perlikowski, 2021) agree that security is a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. Ensuring security not only protects lives and property but also creates the conditions necessary for economic growth, social stability, and effective governance. For example, Collier *et al.* (2003) estimated that civil wars reduced GDP growth by an average of 2.3% per year. Campos and Nugent (2002) found that political stability is crucial for economic performance, particularly in developing countries. Studies by Rodrik (1999), Kaufmann *et al.* (2009, Aisen, and Veiga (2011) and Radu (2015), highlighted that countries with stable political environments tend to attract more foreign direct investment (FDI), which is essential for development.

Conversely, countries affected by fragility, conflict, and violence (FCV) are significantly less likely to achieve development targets (World Bank, 2011). These countries often experience a cycle of violence and poverty because, insecurity hampers development, and lack of development fuels further insecurity. Thus, there appears to be a connection between political stability, insecurity and the character of development in a state. This relationship requires adequate systematic treatment to provide the basis for proposing an integrated strategy that addresses political, security, and developmental challenges. This is because, external influences, civil society, media and conflict resolution mechanisms adopted by the state provides a form of dynamism that defines the interplay between political stability, security and sustainable development in a state like Nigeria. Take for instance, international relations and external pressures can significantly impact political stability. Foreign aid, trade relations, and diplomatic support can bolster stability, while external conflicts, sanctions, or interventions can destabilize a country (Radu, 2015) Perlikowski, 2021). Furthermore, a vibrant civil society and free media play crucial roles in promoting political stability. It holds the government accountable and provides channels for citizen participation and dialogue. It also helps in addressing grievances before they escalate into larger conflicts. When these conflict eventually escalate, effective conflict resolution mechanisms such as independent judicial

systems, arbitration bodies, and community mediation processes, disputes and grievance structures become essential for maintaining sustainable political stability (Perlikowski, 2021).

As it were, sustainable development is holistic. It is an approach to growth that seeks to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This concept, popularized by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, integrates economic growth, environmental stewardship, and social inclusion. It emphasizes a balanced approach that considers long-term impacts and interdependencies among economic, environmental, and social systems. Accordingly, the Brundtland Commission (1987) emphasized that economic activities are viable option to sustainable development as it generates income and foster economic growth without depleting resources or causing ecological harm to natural resources which supports life now and in the future. This implies that resources will be efficiently managed to reduce pollution while maintaining biodiversity. Sustainable development also touches the promotion of social equity, inclusion, and justice which ensures that all individuals have access to basic needs such as education, healthcare, and opportunities for participation in societal development (United Nations Development Goals, 2015). From the foregoing, scholars have attempted to draws a connection between political stability and security and how the interaction between them enhance sustainable development in Nigeria. What proceeds from the argument is the fact that security, political stability and sustainable development cannot be separated one from another. As they are interconnected, so are they mutually reinforcing ((NNSS, 2019, Campos and Nugent, 2002, Collier *et al.*, 2003, Aisen, and Veiga 2011, Holmes, 2015, Radu, 2015 and Perlikowski, 2021).

Accordingly, the National Security Strategy (2019) posits that political stability ensures effective governance and the consistent implementation of development policies. It points to the fact that, a stable government can plan and execute long-term development strategies, attract investment, and build infrastructure, all of which are essential for sustainable development in Nigeria. When a political system is stable, the confidence of investors can be garnered. This would encourage domestic and foreign investments and reduce the environmental risks associated with establishing businesses in such climes. The overall effect of this will be sustained economic growth, reduction in poverty and general improvement in the living standards which will also improve the social relationship between the component units of the Nigerian state. Specifically, security ensures the protection of lives and property, which is fundamental for any developmental activity. A secure environment allows markets to function smoothly, facilitates trade, and reduces transaction costs. Conversely, insecurity disrupts economic activities, deters investment, and leads to economic decline. Security fosters social stability, enabling communities to thrive. In secure environments, individuals can pursue education, work, and other activities without fear, contributing to human capital development and overall societal well-being. Security allows for more efficient allocation of resources. In secure settings, governments can focus spending on development initiatives rather than defense and emergency responses. This enables better investment in health, education, and infrastructure that drive sustainable development. In achieving sustainable development that Nigeria earnestly desires, security can help identify the root causes of conflict especially those that touch on human capital development deficiencies.

For Radu (2015) and Perlikowski, (2021), sustainable development builds resilience to economic, social, and environmental shocks. For them, strong institutions, diversified economies, and well-managed resources help societies to withstand and recover from crises. This also contributes to long-term stability and security while insecurity, does the direct opposite. A case in point is the experience of states within the Sahel region like Niger, Nigeria, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Senegal, South Sudan, Mali, Chad and Eritrea. These states clearly demonstrate how insecurity and political instability hinder development efforts. Persistent conflict and instability

in these states have led to chronic underdevelopment since they deny these states the necessary conditions for economic growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection (Radu, 2015). This has been shaped by the dynamics of social action and various shades of civil disorder arising from the purposive action of individuals and groups within the state. This insecurity resulting from structural disorders resulting caused by the nature and character of the mixture of its social forces and groups put these states in bad light in the comity of nations (Nnabugwu and Ukaegbu, 2024).

Accordingly, two theoretics need to be appreciated. The first is the Sustainable Development theory while the second is the Human Security theory. We shall attempt a brief presentation of the key contentions of these theories. The theory of sustainable development was developed and popularized by the Brundtland Commission in 1987. The theory emphasizes a balance between economic growth, environmental protection, and social equity. The major proposition of this theory is that Political stability, characterized by the absence of political turmoil, effective governance, and the rule of law creates an environment conducive to sustainable development. Security, encompassing both national security and human security, ensures that individuals and communities are protected from threats that could disrupt development activities. As such, political stability is a prerequisite for economic development. The Human security theory emphasizes the protection of individuals by transparent, accountable, and effective institutions of the state as a fundamental aspect of development.

From the foregoing, it is clear that scholars have made efforts to extensively explore the impact of political stability on development. This efforts however, have failed to clearly show the nexus between political stability and human security and how this is related to sustainable development in Nigeria within the period under study. This constitutes a lacuna for the present study. For instance, Alesina *et al.* (1996) demonstrated that political instability negatively affects economic growth by creating uncertainty and reducing investment. Thus, political instability, characterized by frequent changes in government, political violence, and civil unrest, has been shown to deter investment, disrupt economic activities, and deteriorate infrastructure and public services. These disruptions exacerbate poverty and inequality and hinder progress toward sustainable development goals (SDGs).

Results and Discussions from Case Studies

The results of the study are drawn from selected study cases. These cases amplify the trend of the key concerns of the present study: political stability, security and sustainable development. The countries under brief interrogation are Rwanda, Botswana, Afghanistan and Sweden. By comparing the trend in these countries, the study shall keep an eye on the key issues that informed the study questions and use same as the basis of our conclusions. The first country under review is Rwanda. Rwanda presents a compelling example of how political stability and security can drive sustainable development (Beloff, 2017). After the 1994 genocide, Rwanda was in ruins, with devastated infrastructure, a collapsed economy, and deep social divisions. However, through strong governance, effective security measures, and inclusive policies, Rwanda has made remarkable strides in development. According to Cooke (2011) and Beloff, (2017), the government implemented rigorous anti-corruption measures, invested heavily in healthcare and education, and promoted economic reforms that spurred growth. Today, Rwanda is one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, with significant improvements in human development indicators such as life expectancy, literacy rates, and poverty reduction. The country's stability has been pivotal in attracting foreign investment and fostering a conducive environment for sustainable development. Botswana presents a similar trend.

Botswana stands out as a model of political stability in Africa. Since gaining independence in 1966, Botswana has maintained a stable democratic government, characterized by good governance, respect for the rule of law, and effective anti-corruption measures. (Cooke, 2011 and Nehrbass, 2020). The discovery of diamonds in the

1960s could have led to the resource curse effect seen in many other countries, but Botswana's prudent management of its diamond revenue has significantly contributed to its development (Nehrbass, 2020). The government invested diamond revenues in infrastructure, healthcare, and education, leading to substantial economic growth and improvements in living standards. Botswana's experience highlights how political stability, coupled with sound economic policies, can facilitate sustainable development

By the same token, we compare the insecurity challenges of the Nigerian state with states like Syria, Mali and Afghanistan. Afghanistan for instance, illustrates the profound challenges that insecurity poses to sustainable development. As reported in Ukaegbu, (2023) and as argued much more in Nnabugwu and Ukaegbu (2024), decades of conflicts have severely hindered Afghanistan's development prospects. Not just Afghanistan but most countries within the Middle East axis especially in areas where persistent civil disorder is widespread. Persistent violence and political instability have led to the destruction of infrastructure, displacement of populations, and disruption of economic activities. Despite significant international aid, the lack of security has made it difficult to implement development projects and build strong institutions. The ongoing conflict has exacerbated poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and hampered economic growth. Afghanistan's case underscores the critical need for security and political stability as well as the need for an integrated approach to addressing security challenges as prerequisites for sustainable development. A case in point is the example laid for us by Sweden. Cetrez, DeMarinis, Pettersson & Shakra (2020) reported that; Sweden exemplifies how integrated approaches to security and development can create a robust and sustainable society. Sweden's comprehensive welfare state, strong institutions, and inclusive social policies have fostered a high level of human development. The country's commitment to social security, public health, and education has ensured broad-based development and social cohesion. Additionally, Sweden's proactive environmental policies and emphasis on renewable energy have positioned it as a leader in sustainable development. The synergy between political stability, security, and comprehensive development policies has made Sweden one of the most developed and sustainable countries globally. Thus, Sweden's example highlights the importance of social cohesion and inclusive policies in sustainable development. The country's integrated approach to social security, education, and environmental sustainability showcases how inclusive development policies can create a resilient and prosperous society (Cetrez *et al*, 2020).

A review of political stability, security and sustainable development in selected states provides a working compass for understanding the phenomenon under investigation. In this wise, the case study of Rwanda, Botswana, Afghanistan, and Sweden illustrate diverse pathways and challenges in achieving sustainable development, highlighting the critical roles of political stability and security. In both Rwanda and Botswana, effective governance and strong institutions have been crucial for development. Rwanda's post-genocide recovery and Botswana's prudent management of diamond revenues demonstrate how stable and transparent governance can drive sustainable development. In contrast, Afghanistan's weak institutions and persistent conflict have impeded development efforts, showing the detrimental impact of insecurity and poor governance. There are also evidences that economic stability and growth are evident in Botswana and Rwanda, where sound economic policies have led to substantial development gains. Botswana's strategic use of diamond revenues and Rwanda's economic reforms underscore the importance of economic management in sustainable development. Conversely, Afghanistan's ongoing conflict has disrupted economic activities, leading to widespread poverty and underdevelopment. This shows that security is a foundational element in all case studies. Botswana's internal stability, Rwanda's post-conflict security measures, and Sweden's comprehensive welfare state have all facilitated sustainable development and goes to show the gap between these countries and Nigeria and

Afghanistan where insecurity has severely hindered its development prospects. Thus, the present study exposes and reinforces the intertwined nature of political stability, security, and sustainable development. It shows that effective governance, sound economic policies, social cohesion, and security are pivotal in achieving sustainable development and at the same time emphasizing the need for integrated approaches to address political, security, and developmental challenges faced by Nigeria. The result shows that countries that maintain stable political environments and robust security measures are better positioned to achieve sustainable development goals (Nehrbass, 2020, Cooke, 2011). This is because, political stability fosters effective governance and policy implementation, while security ensures the protection of lives and property-both of which are essential for sustainable development. The logic therefore is that, sustainable development is not unconnected to effective governance as demonstrated in Rwanda and Botswana. The case in these countries show that effective governance strives to strengthen existing political institutions and governance is in turn strengthened by these institutions. The case studies of Rwanda and Botswana illustrate how strong institutions, transparency, and accountability can drive development. Governance that prioritizes anti-corruption measures, efficient public administration, and responsive policies is fundamental in creating an environment conducive for sustainable growth. This is also driven by economic stability and social cohesion that exist in such state. Sweden's comprehensive welfare state and Rwanda's efforts in promoting social inclusion post-genocide highlight the importance of integrating economic stability, social equity and justice into development strategies. This is because, inclusive policies that address social disparities help prevent conflict and promote societal stability while discriminatory policies that ignore contending interests breed insecurity in a state. It follows the logic that insecure environments disrupt economic activities; destroy infrastructure and erode social trust thereby hindering development efforts severely. Conversely, secure environments enable economic growth, social stability, and effective governance to become part of the political system. Thus, the critical role of political stability and security in achieving sustainable development cannot be underestimated as the role of effective governance, economic stability, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability cannot also be ignored in any meaningful attempt to drive development.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The discourse above concentrated on the investigation of political stability, security and sustainable development in Nigeria. From the analysis so far, it is clear that there exist complex relationships between political stability, security, and sustainable development, demonstrated in the study cases (Rwanda, Botswana, Afghanistan, and Sweden). Political stability and security are essential for development, as shown by Afghanistan's struggles and Sweden's successes. Effective governance and strong institutions, seen in Rwanda and Botswana, are crucial for managing resources efficiently and driving development. Economic performance, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability are also vital, with stable environments attracting investment and inclusive policies fostering societal stability. The study reveals that political stability and security are essential for sustainable development, supported by effective governance and strong institutions, as seen in Rwanda and Botswana. Economic stability, social cohesion, inclusive policies, and environmental sustainability also play vital roles, exemplified by Sweden's proactive policies. Conversely, Afghanistan's ongoing conflict underscores the adverse effects of insecurity and political instability. In view of the foregoing, the study recommends that policymakers should prioritize political stability by consciously strengthening political institutions. They should promote inclusive economic and social policies that integrate environmental sustainability. They should also adopt holistic strategies that build the capacity of local communities while leveraging international support for sustainable development.

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