SOUTHEAST INSECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Insecurity is a national challenge and a major implicative factor of varied worrisome issues in Nigeria. It has become daily reality of most parts of the nation, particularly the southeast region where incessant conflicts and social disorder create severe psychological, political and socio-economic dysfunctions. Southeast inhabitants face terrorization due to the chaos and violence associated with the activities of Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the sit-at-home order and its related issues including kidnappings, farmers/herders clashes and other forms of criminality that cripple daily life and interactions in the area; culminating to a state of uncertainty, fear and low morale occasioned by the fierce gun battles and reprisal attacks between government forces, agitators and unknown clandestine groups. This precarious situation significantly paralyzes socio-economic endeavours in this domain of a people characteristic of renowned economic enterprise, and valued contributor, to Nigeria’s economic growth. The paper employs library research as methodology to explicate the state of insecurity in the southeast and how it undermines national economy of the country. It analyses the prevailing anarchic environment as strangulator of socio-economic life and activities with untold adverse effects on the productivity of the region and the nation, in an era of competitive global march towards sustainable development. The paper recommends effective reformation of the law enforcement agencies, good governance that addresses concerns of IPOB agitators and the zone; and other strategies for southeast stability and sustainable national economic advancement.

Keywords: Insecurity, Sustainable, Economic, Development.
INTRODUCTION
The state of security in Nigeria has significantly deteriorated over more than a decade to the extent that insecurity now takes peculiar regional forms that have left almost the entire country in terrible shape in different ramifications. The state of alarming conflicts, armed banditry, kidnappings, farmers and herders clashes and other forms of dangerous criminal acts amidst bad governance and economic hardship complicate normal life and peaceful coexistence of Nigerians. While insurgency, terrorism and banditry seem to be thriving in the northern part of Nigeria, the southern part, particularly the southeast, has its peculiar forms of social disorder and criminalities that have continued to undermine everyday life, business and socio-political affairs. The region has not known what can be referred to as relative security or average state of peace and normal life for many years due to the unceasing armed conflicts, killings and arsons, and other issues that create social tension and fear on the minds of the people of the region. Insecurity is a state of fear of the unknown; a feeling of trepidation and unsafe. Also, it is the state of being unable to protect lives and property. In other words, people are vulnerable to attacks, damage, injury or loss from both internal and external causes. Thus, one can deduce from the definition that a nation’s sovereignty cannot safeguard the citizen and her resources both within and outside the country (Udeh, Okoroafor and Ihezie, 2013). Insecurity is a state of minimal or near absence of relative peace, social order and tranquility in a given society over a period of time. It hampers virtually all aspects of the society’s status and social organization, but more importantly its efforts towards development. The absence of relative peace in the southeast seems to have made the region to be less productive and enterprising as it used to be, and therefore undermining its economy and social life significantly.

The southeast region is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria, and a region with so much economic potentials that have contributed, and still contributes to the national economy, to the level that anything that affects its economy affects Nigerian society and its economic growth (Asuqui, 2009). Since the past decade or more, the southeast region has witnessed unprecedented security challenges occasioned by the activities of the Indigenous People of Biafra’s (IPOB), the unknown gunmen attacks, clandestine criminal groups that have engaged the law enforcement agencies, including the Nigeria Army, Nigeria Police and others in constant gun battles that have turned some parts of the region into war zones (The Leader, 2022). This situation is further worsened by everyday cases of kidnappings, violent armed robbery, political assassinations, ritual killings, farmers and herdsmen clashes and other criminal activities that have not only created enormous fear and anxiety on the minds of inhabitants of the area, but also affects socio-economic and political aspects of the people's life to the extent of having untold influence and implications on the productivity of the region and that of the nation.

The sit-at-home order given by IPOB seems to keep people worried and afraid to travel freely for business interactions and commercial activities, limits movements of big trucks and haulage, and affects intra-city and interstate mobility that seem to weaken economic transactions and productivity. The mindless kidnappings, clashes between farmers and herders, community-based unrests, and many other issues that drive social tension and conflicts have all continued to generate high level of instability and acts of under-development in the southeast. This is in combination with perceived feeling or belief by the southeasterners and some Nigerians that the region suffers marginalization, domination and political obscurity within the Nigerian nation. The complexity of security challenges of the southeast seems to be overwhelming for not only the people but also the national and sub-national governments; such that over the years successive governments have failed or performed below average in dealing with the problems of insecurity in the southeast. This situation has left the southeast a shadow of its former self, and now seemingly a weakened economy in dire need of urgent attention and resuscitation in order to avoid huge damages and losses that may put its economy in a state of difficult recovery and sustained poor contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of Nigeria. Fundamentally, this paper explores the state of insecurity in the southeast and its impacts and implications on the sustainability of national economic development in Nigeria. With the methodology of library research, the paper attempts to uncover the level of security challenges in the southeast in relation to its consequences on national efforts at sustainable economic growth and development. It raises and deals with the following questions:

(1) How is the state of insecurity in the southeast region of Nigeria?
(2) What is the status of southeast economy prior to this present level of insecurity?
(3) To what extent does southeast insecurity affects its economy and national economic development?
(4) What strategies and measures can lead to improved security in the southeast and engender sustainable economic development in Nigeria?

BRIEF REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT STATE OF SOUTHEAST INSECURITY
The state of insecurity in the southeastern part of Nigeria can be perceived from the angle of different types of insecurity that exist in human society. Insecurity that prevails in society ranges from food insecurity, job insecurity, social insecurity, health insecurity, religious insecurity to financial/economic insecurity, and political insecurity that often results in conflicts, armed clashes and violence that endanger life, property and social order (Asuquo, 2009). From whichever perspective insecurity is observed it is a state of unsafe life, losses and difficult challenges that even though benefit some unscrupulous individuals on one hand but on the other destroys social values and socioeconomic life of the people tremendously. The southeast region has no doubt been a region of ceaseless criminalities and violence for more than a decade. As a nation, Nigeria has witnessed serious security challenges in all its regions but from the socio-political and economic points of view the southeast may be the worst hit in terms of the negative effects and implications of insecurity in the country, while the northern part of Nigeria is dealing with mainly the inhuman act of
terrorism perpetuated by Boko Haram and ISWAP, armed banditry, religious conflicts and intolerance, kidnapping for ransoms leading to huge infrastructural damages, loss of human life and property; the southeast on the other side suffers a wider range of criminalities and calamities suspected to be partly self-inflicted and poorly managed by both state and federal governments (The Leader, 2022). In the southeast, kidnapping is a daily practice that has continued to overwhelm security forces who seem to lack the required capacity to effectively deal with the rate of occurrence of this insecurity challenge or even to put up significant efforts to curtail its rise to a reasonable level. This is why the southeast insecurity situation is not just a regional challenge but a national issue.

From 2010 to 2022, is more than a decade of non-stop insecurity challenges and problems in the southeast. A cursory look at the security situation in the region gives a picture of an area experiencing daily incidences of armed conflicts and violence, deadly robberies, mindless kidnappings, ritual killings, farmers and herdsmen clashes, political assassinations, inter-communities disputes and other numerous acts of criminality. Each of these security challenges are witnessed in almost all parts of the southeast such that no given area can be said to be relatively peaceful and stable. This situation is further felt more closely because of the smaller size of the region in terms of landscape when compared with the other geopolitical regions in Nigeria (Okoye, 2019). The relatively dense population of most of the cities and towns in the southeast make this insecurity situation more intensive and effective in affecting and influencing socio-economic and political life and activities of the people of southeast. In real terms, what constitutes major insecurity challenges in southeast in the past decade include mainly the disturbing sit-at-home order of IPOB that has totally challenged the life of the southeast inhabitants in different unpalatable ways. The order has created fear, if not phobia, on the minds of people, and anxiety that have impaired the mindset to a level near psychological disorder (Anyanwu, 2021). This fear of violent attacks and damage of life and property is the major insecurity challenge of the people of southeast because it heightens social tension and sets up panic moods and emotional pain arising from the thoughts and feelings of uncertainty and lack of protection required for normal living.

Also closely related to this is the rampant incidence of ruthless kidnappings and abductions that are carried out for random but sometimes end up deadly and uncovered. One of the greatest intangible human asset and fundamental rights is freedom and personal space. This is often out-rightly violated once kidnapping occurs. Ene (2018) observes “kidnapping as a criminal behaviour that is not entirely a new social problem in the world. However, its current dimension has become a serious menace especially in the Nigerian society. This is particularly disheartening given that kidnapping now assumes a renewed criminal dimension that is enabled by socio-economic, political and religious discontents”. It has even been perceived by some economic analysts as now having its own economy because of its alleged rate of occurrence and the huge untaxed amount of money that exchange hands in the course of kidnapping. Kidnapping has become endemic in Nigeria and particularly in the southeast with far reaching negative effects on individual wellbeing, family income and health, social values and our collective conscience. For instance, in the year 2018, Nigeria was placed sixth on the global kidnap index by an online tourism site (Anya, 2019). The menace of kidnapping is undermining individual and group mobility, social and economic activities and adversely affecting economic growth in the southeast, and by extension Nigeria.

The other issues of insecurity that have continued to cause havoc and instability in the region include armed robbery, farmers/herdsmen conflicts inter-community disputes, violence between governments forces and unknown gunmen and other clandestine groups as well as pockets of ritual killings and the general state of fear, are palpable reflections of the level of the difficult situation in southeast Nigeria. From the attacks on commuters, killing of people for political reasons to burning of individual and government properties and facilities and regular news/reports of robbery, rape, suicide, ritual killings, etc., it is clearly a situation in dire need of salvage if any meaningful developmental strides can take place for security and peace to be restored in the southeast (The Leader, 2022). The most damaging effect and long term implication of the dangerous state of insecurity in the southeast is the fact that it is a major source of loss of human resources both in terms of human life, human capacity and development in the southeast, and Nigeria as an economy. There is existing correlation between human capacity building, human development and economic growth in society. The three concepts are linked, and are fundamental variables for any economy seeking for sustainable economic growth and development. These issues of insecurity have over a decade lead to loss of thousands of life and destruction of infrastructures that would have aided speedy economic growth and human development in Nigeria but their persistence remain a regional and national challenge in Nigeria.

**STATUS OF SOUTHEAST ECONOMY PRIOR TO HIGH INSECURITY SITUATION**

Before this current state of insecurity and uncertainty in the southeast, the economic atmosphere can be described as relatively friendly, calm and conducive for human and social interactions, businesses and commercial ventures. The region was open for every Nigerian and international traders, businessmen and organizations to pursue their individual and corporate legitimate interests without fear, anxiety and sense of uncertainty (The Leader, 2021). A cursory look at southeast pre-sit-at-home situation in terms of socio-economic development cannot be comprehensive without dating back to the ugly experience of the Nigerian civil war of 1967 – 1970. The Nigeria civil war devastated the Igbo (Southeast) economy and diminished its growth significantly. The civil war, which the Igbos prosecuted and lost, came on the heels of an end to the colonial experiences with the double blow on the psyche of a people who were still battling to recover from the dislocation of values attendant to war situations. At the end of the civil war, the Igbo people lost
cohesion, there was virtually no need to retain an identity which had been eroded by the war and which had become a barrier rather than a tool for survival (Toni-Duraku and Chukwu, 2012).

From the time after the war, and the losses of their homes and landed properties in Rivers State, the Igbos began to confront the issue of reintegration into the national economic sphere; and this they did with utmost ingenuity, dexterity, and uncanny hard work to the envy of many other ethnic groups in Nigeria (Udensi, 2019). Despite the devastating losses in terms of human lives, properties and assets, the southeast inhabitants forged ahead with determination and God-given enterprising nature to resuscitate a regional economy that was battered beyond measure by the effects of the civil war.

The southeast region is an area inhabited by more than 25 million people and about 10-12% of total Nigeria population, and therefore a significant population with immense capacities in the Nigeria economy (Ekeopara, 2016). As one of major regions in the country, the southeast is made up of Igbo who are known to be highly industrious and business oriented; and is a region that has continued to play significant roles in the economic development of Nigeria. Southeastern Nigerian people regard every part of the federation as home and invest heavily in all parts of Nigeria, whether rural or urban (Onyenechere and Osuji, 2012). Despite the perceived marginalization, subjugation and domination, particularly in the political sphere, the Igbos have continued to persevere and pursue their economic growth extensively; and continued to contribute immensely to national economic growth and development.

From the end of the civil war up to early 2000, the southeast economy remained strong with booming palm oil business, trade and commerce, mercantile endeavours, entrepreneurship capacities and industrial appeal that added value to national economic productivity and expansion (Okoroafor, 2018). The southeast economy was relatively stable given the Igbo age long industry that is widely recognized and respected in Nigeria and even beyond West Africa. However, this economic scenario of the region took an ugly turn in terms of its business and social life due to insecurity situations that have become heightened and life-threatening in recent years. Anaba (2010) observes that “by 2010, a number of entrepreneurs have been gruesomely murdered, and Imo and Anambra are among the states of southeastern Nigeria that top the list of violent crimes in the entire Nigeria according to statistics from Police Headquarters at Abuja.” The years between 2010 and 2022 has been a period of tough security issues in the southeast arising from the armed attacks, kidnapping, farmers/herders clashes and other criminalities that pervade all parts and corners of the southeast, and jeopardizing its economy and capacity to contribute to the nation’s drive for economic growth.

**SOUTHEAST INSECURITY AND NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH IN NIGERIA**

The security situation in the southeast holds major implications for the state of the national economy in Nigeria. The absence of relative peace, law and order and general sense of reasonable level of certainty can influence human productivity and economic activities negatively. Given the challenges of insecurity in the southeast region, the people of this area face numerous obstacles that undermine their efforts towards increased socio-economic activities that can engender high productivity. Firstly, the issue of the sit-at-home order stands out as one major issue creating so much fear and anxiety that affects people’s psyche, mental stability and general attitude as well as dispositions towards free engagement and movement from one place to another for business and commercial activities. People in the region are increasingly afraid of moving about as they used to do in the past. There is extreme fear of being attacked, killed and properties destroyed by the enforcers of the sit-at-home order, or even running into crossfires or gun battles between law enforcement agencies and some criminal elements or the so-called unknown gunmen. Onyema (2021) states that “the situation in the southeast region has so deteriorated to the extent that people fear for their lives and are skeptical about where to go and when to go out because of violent attacks and harassments”.

Also, Nwigwe (2022) concurs to this view and posits that “businesses and economic ventures in Aba, Onitsha and Nnewi have been badly affected by the sit-at-home order and the general state of poor security in the parts of the southeast”. There is enough issues of insecurity in the southeast to demobilize human mobility and interactions given the incessant bloody attacks and destruction that pervade most parts of Igbo land (Southeast). Economic activities are driven by human engagements and interactions between one another, and requires that people in different businesses and enterprises relate with limited stress and obstacles for businesses to flourish in any given area. It also entails that these individuals move freely to various points of business interactions in order to effectively deal with one another in more trustworthy, tangible and conclusive way and manner that will engender some degree of stability and sustainability in their businesses, and eventually add value to economic enterprise of the region. This is the practical inconvenience and obstacle that the lack of free and limited mobility of both people in business and commodities bring to bear on the capacity of the southeast economy to grow and be able to continue to contribute to the national economy. Intra-city and inter-city movements of business men and women, traders, transporters, artisans, commuters and the general people of the southeast have grossly reduced to the extent that some businesses have either shut down or operate peripherally due to the sit-at-home order and its related ugly incidences. Attacks on shops that open on Mondays, markets burnt, private and government buildings and facilities burnt cause palpable fear and trauma that keep some people indoors and the many others minimally mobile thereby reducing socio-economic interactions and interdependence necessary for propelling economic productivity and growth.
Secondly, the issue of kidnappings, political assassinations, ritual killings, armed robbery and other related criminal activities have been on the rise for over a decade in the southeast (The Leader, 2022). All these acts of criminality lead to wanton killings of individuals who are breadwinners, entrepreneurs, businessmen, employers, community leaders and industrialists whose contributions to the region’s economy are lost due to their death. This is one major way through which the insecurity situation in the area continues to undermine its economy and that of the nation as a whole. Obinna (2022) avers that “most individuals that are kidnapped or killed in robbery attacks in the southeast are wealthy businessmen and politicians who also have private businesses that employ many people in the area”. Kidnapping often ends with the kidnapped individual paying huge sums of money as ransom and in some cases the victims are killed or die as a result of the stress and rough treatments they encounter. Whichever way, kidnap turns out, it is basically a criminal practice that results in the take away of someone’s hard earned money or loss of life; and the two scenarios constitute issues that kill businesses because the death of a businessman or loss of huge sums of money can put an end to many businesses and undermine economic growth.

Thirdly, the incessant clashes and disputes that occur between farmers and herdsmen in many rural communities in the southeast have continued to lower agricultural output, and has led to loss of life of many rural farmers and herdsmen as well as the destruction of many farms, homes and communities. It has also caused displacement of many communities in Enugu, Ebonyi, Abia and other states (Obinna, 2021). This condition of many rural communities hamper the free movement of goods from these areas to the urban centres, apart from the fact that it has reduced agricultural and other socio-economic activities in these area. It has also increased the rural to urban migration and negatively affected other demographics in the rural areas. All these added to the issues of sit-at-home order and kidnappings worsen the state of southeast economy to the detriment of not only the southeasterners but also Nigerians at large.

It is noteworthy that some towns and cities in the southeast particularly Aba, Onitsha, Nnewi, Enugu and Abakaliki are industrial hubs and major agricultural products outlets that feed the nation’s need for some industrial goods and farm products while Nnewi, Onitsha and Aba are known for their business and trading outreach in not only Nigeria but even beyond West Africa; farm products such as Abakaliki rice and yam are exported beyond the southeast region and Nigeria. The southeast remains one of the highest producer of palm oil in West Africa (Udensi, 2019). The insecurity situation in the southeast, no doubt, affects all forms of human activities in the area including all dimensions of socio-economic activities such as transportation, banking, trading, haulage, meetings, farming, markets, exchange of goods and services, industrial activities, etc. In this kind of economic atmosphere, businesses and commercial activities operate partially and with difficult challenges that lower productivity thereby adversely affecting national economic growth in Nigeria because one of its major productive regions (the southeast) is insecure and under productive.

SOUTHEAST SECURITY AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The state of a national economy is partly a product of the efforts and contributions of its constituent units towards the economic sector. A nation’s capacity to produce or its productive capacity is influenced greatly by her resources both human and material. The natural resources and potentials of any economy helps to determine her capacity to make significant strides in economic growth, productivity and by extension development (Adegboyega, 2009). Nigeria’s economic growth, like in other economies, is influenced by the participation and contribution of the various parts or regions of Nigeria. With each regions unique features and national resources, they are able to contribute to national productivity and aid the growth of the economy. On this premise, sustainable economic growth in the regions that constitute Nigeria amounts to sustainable economic growth in the entire country. This is why regional economic situation affects national economy and development. The situation in the southeast region is un conducive and hostile for businesses, industries and productivity to thrive in the past few years as a result of the heightened level of insecurity in the region.

The southeast is a major region of Nigeria with fertile land for many cash crops and contains numerous minerals that are largely untapped or underutilized due to government’s failure to explore extractions of minerals for economic growth over many years (Udensi, 2019). This indifference towards the extractive industry has left the region unable to effectively tap its mineral resources for national development; also limited her capacity to contribute more to Nigeria’s economic growth. However, in the other sectors of the national economy, the regions has over many years since after independence shown its potentials as a contributory stakeholder in the economic sphere of Nigeria. The southeast exports many agricultural products, particularly cash crops such as yam, cassava, cashew, cocoyam, palm oil, etc., to other parts of the country, and the Igbo are known to be very industrious and enterprising. They engage in various other productive ventures that are critically contributing to the national economy. It is stated that they are the most travelled Nigerians and are found in all the interior communities and towns in Nigeria doing all sorts of business and human pursuits (Agbodike, 2000). A region that has people with these attributes suffers when the region is unsafe and terrorized. The Leader (2022) captures with these words the southeast insecurity situation:

terror looms large around us and we cannot deny it. Terrorists are lurking in our bushes, forests, highways and byways, killing and kidnapping, without being arrested let alone being prosecuted. Traveling locally is now a challenge – not with bad road-but the possibility of being killed or kidnapped.
Again, insecurity in the southeast takes many different dimensions, ranging from attacks on commuters, travellers, traders and businesses to burning of markets, homes, vehicles, private and public buildings and facilities, etc. It has taken a dangerous outlook and profound effects that are obviously undermining southeast economy significantly. For instance, people from Orlu, Orsu and Njaba council areas of Imo State have been terrorized for more than two years with high level of harassment and intimidation as a result of the activities and clashes between the Eastern Security Network (ESN), also known as Ebubeagu, the unknown gunmen and the law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigerian Army and Nigeria Police. The issue of insecurity in Orlu has claimed many lives and properties worth millions of Naira (The Leader, 2022). Despite random kidnappings in major towns and cities across the southeast, kidnappers have gone further to exclusively operate in some areas unchallenged for many months; the Ihube-Okitgwe – Lokpa axis of the Enugu to Port Harcourt Express Way, the Oriaug Market Axis of Mbande, Enugu-Nsukka Highway, etc., have been fields of operation for kidnappers and armed robbers (The Ambassador Newspaper, 2012). This is the picture of the security challenge in most parts of the southeast region that makes it increasingly in-conducive and unfriendly for businesses and other socio-economic activities to thrive in recent times. The damage of markets and assets of people, the fear of people to travel and the loss of human lives plus the general state of uncertainty are all issues that are antithetical to meaningful and productive economic life of any society.

The insecurity situation in the southeast does not only weaken its economy but also lowers the region’s economic outreach and expansion. As an area with high human mobility and trade, insecurity hampers its capacity for growth, and as a player in the national economic sphere. This situation does not aid Nigeria’s quest for sustainable economic growth and development. Attaining development itself is not practically feasible in a state of insecurity, let alone sustainable development. In essence, there can be no sustainability of an economic transformation in the absence of relative peace, law and order. By the definitions of both development and sustainable development, they are not parameters that are achievable in an unstable and insecure environment such as the southeast. Development is a human phenomenon, which must begin with human beings and ensure for their sake. It is the process of creating the conditions for the realization of human personality (Arye, 2006). Development implies increased skills and capacity, greater freedom, creativity, self-discipline, responsibility and material wellbeing (Rodney, 1990). On the other hand, sustainable development is an integral approach that embodies the notion and ideal of a development process that is equitable and socially responsive to human experiences. It recognizes the extensive nature of poverty, deprivation and inequality between and within nations, classes and communities (Aina and Akim, 1992). A more elaborate enunciation of what sustainable economic development entails can be seen from the Annual Report of 2008 given by the Teachers in Development Education (TIDE), which stipulates the following:

- Understanding why equity and justice are essential to sustainability and that basic needs are vital everywhere in the world (Quality of life)
- Appreciating the fact that the quality of life future generations is endangered or enhanced by actions we take now (Needs and rights of future generation)
- Appreciating why equity and justice are essential to sustainability and that basic needs are vital everywhere in the world (Quality of life)
- Understanding that the finite nature of resources has implications for people’s lifestyles and economic and political priorities (sustainable change)
- Appreciating that there are a range of possible approaches to sustainability and that situations are constantly changing indicating a need for critical thinking and lifelong learning (Uncertainty and precaution in action).


The above outlined indicators of what sustainable economic development stands for is quite all-encompassing with a number of life-changing strategies and targets for a sustainable society.

The southeast region as at today is not a sustainable society primarily because of the level of insecurity in the area. The issues that generated or led to the insecurity situation in the southeast are opposites of what sustainable economic development aims at in any society or economy. From the TIDE 2008 Report, the fundamental elements of sustainable economic development include, interdependence, citizenship and stewardship, needs and rights of future generation, diversity, quality of life, sustainable change, and uncertainty and precaution in action. All these elements seem to have been violated or eroded in the southeast before and during this present insecurity predicament in the region.

The perceived marginalization, domination, social injustice, inequity and lack of fairness that south easterners feel towards the Nigerian nation; which is partly the cause of the insecurity has link with national intolerance and lack of respect for diversity, citizenship and stewardship (elements of sustainable economic development). The way and manner successive governments have handled the issue of the separationist groups in the country have been largely against the needs and rights of future generation, quality of life, and sustainable change (elements of sustainable economic development). By deploying the Nigerian Army and other law enforcement agencies and militarizing the southeast creates the atmosphere of fear, anarchy, and social tension that undermines sustainable development. Sustainable change cannot take place in uncertainty, insecurity, and bad governance; and therefore requires precaution in action by all
stakeholders in the southeast crisis. In other words, the causal issues of southeast insecurity and its present effects and implications on the Nigerian economy shows the extent the region’s development is being undermined and negatively affecting its development, let alone sustainable economic growth. Both the causes and effects of insecurity go against the basic elements of sustainable economic development at the regional level (southeast) and also at the national level. In more practical sense, sustainable society is when a society can manage its economic and population size without exceeding all or parts of the planets ability to absorb environmental insults, replenish its resources and sustain human life over a specified period, usually hundreds to thousands of years (Okoli and Enekwechi, 2013). For Nigeria to become a sustainable society and enjoy sustainable economic growth, it needs to take full advantage of her six geopolitical regions human and economic resources and enterprises, and conform to the elements of interdependence, citizenship/stewardship, needs and rights of all ethnic groups; respect the diversity and pursue positive quality of life for sustainable change of the nation. This may not be achievable if major regions like the southeast remain insecure and underdeveloped.

CONCLUSION

Insecurity is a major challenge to Nigeria’s economic development because of its negative effects and implications on different ramifications, including her efforts towards sustainable national development. The southeast insecurity challenges which has lingered for many years without concrete measures to curtail it or even address its causal issues is a regional problem that has national implications with untold adverse effects on Nigeria’s quest for economic growth and stability. The southeast is one region that is of immense economic value with human and material resources and enterprise that have, and can continue to be a significant player and contributor in national economic sphere. The insecurity crises in the southeast leaves the area unconducive and hostile for socio-economic activities and strangles business, commercial and productivity ventures thereby limiting the regions capacity to continue to play its roles and contributions to national economic growth. The paper notes that insecurity in the southeast undermines its improved economic productivity and growth and by extension the national drive towards sustainable economic development which is now a global benchmark for development with the 2030 deadline. Nigeria as one of the least developed countries is in dire need of all her natural endowments including her regional assets and resources to work effectively towards this laudable benchmark.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some strategies and measures for improved southeast security and sustainable economic development in Nigeria:

- The federal and southeast states government should rejig the security architecture in the region by undertaken to policies and actions that can bring about effective reforms in the operations and management of law enforcement agencies including the Nigerian Army, Nigeria police, Air force, navy, etc. there should demilitarize the region as quickly as possible and ensure that these government forces carry out their duty with care and respect for fundamental human rights and within the limits of their rules of engagement and constitution of Nigeria.
- Concrete efforts should be made by governments (federal and states) to address the remote causes of the separationist agitations by IPOB and endeavor to resolve the issue of marginalization of the southeast region and other regions in Nigeria as whole.
- Delivery of good governance embedded in rule of law should be the priority of the governments at the federal and state levels. The provision of infrastructure, amenities and enabling environment for economic productivity is prerequisite for sustainable economic development in the southeast region and Nigeria.
- Perpetrators of criminal activities such as kidnapping, violent attacks, armed robbery, arson and other forms of conflicts that make the southeast region unconducive and hostile for socio-economic activities must be apprehended and made to face the law to serve as deterrent to others who may want to indulge in such unlawful acts.
- There is urgent need to put an end to the more than two year old sit-at-home order and its related issues. The federal government should liaise with the southeast states governments to see that the order is withdrawn so that business and other socio-economic and productive ventures are restored to their former status, that will continue to engender economic growth of the region and aid national development in the country.

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