

The Politics of Insecurity and Fuel Subsidy Removal: The Implications for Nigeria's Development

Marvellous Otega Johnson.
Political Science Department
Delta State University, Abraka-Nigeria

Abstract

This article explores Nigeria's complex politics surrounding the removal of fuel subsidies and insecurity, with a focus on the significant implications these issues may have on the nation's development trajectory. Nigeria faces a complex and multifaceted challenges to its development as a result of the ongoing insecurity that is fueled by insurgency, organized crime, and ethno-religious conflicts. This challenges are compounded by the contentious issue of the removal of fuel subsidies. In order to objectively synthesize and analyze recent and past events pertaining to insecurity and the removal of fuel subsidies, as well as to forecast their implications for Nigeria's development, the historical research design was used in this article. The article's conclusions indicates among other things, that Nigeria's development goals are seriously hampered by the politics of insecurity and the elimination of fuel subsidies. In the absence of coordinated efforts to address governance shortcomings, foster social cohesion, and implement fair economic reforms, the nation runs the risk of continuing cycles of instability and underdevelopment. In accordance with the conclusions, the article recommends among other things that the Nigerian government should allot funds/resources to improve security forces' ability and efficacy in thwarting insurgencies, acts of terrorism, and intergroup violence. In order to better respond to these new threats, this therefore entails enhancing intelligence gathering, supplying security personnel with more advanced weaponry, and training them. It also entails diversifying the economy to lessen reliance on oil income by encouraging non-oil industries like manufacturing, services, and agriculture. To promote economic growth, create jobs, and lower poverty, invest in entrepreneurship initiatives, vocational training, and infrastructure development.

Keywords: Politics; Insecurity; Fuel Subsidy Removal; Development; Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria's political environment is impacted greatly by the intertwined problems of fuel subsidy removal and insecurity, which have a substantial impact on the country's development trajectory. The complex dynamics surrounding these problems and their effects on Nigeria's development goals are explored in depth in this article. According to Anyadike, & Eghosa, (2017), Nigeria's politics of insecurity are defined by intricate dynamics influenced by political, social, and historical elements. This landscape is defined by a number of important factors, including ethno-religious tensions, resource allocation, insurgent management, corruption and governance failures, external factors, and political manipulations. According to Nwankwo (2013), Nigeria's political elites occasionally use security crises for their own political gain, mobilizing support or diverting attention from shortcomings in governance by presenting stories of ethnic or religious identity. This manipulation exacerbates social division and thwarts initiatives to promote harmony and reconciliation within the country.

Comprehensive strategies that tackle the underlying causes, fortify institutions, encourage inclusive development, and support good governance are needed to address the politics of insecurity in Nigeria. Achieving long-term peace and stability in Nigeria requires improving conflict resolution procedures, fostering socioeconomic opportunities, and fostering trust between communities and security forces (Akindele, 2011). According to Nwankwo (2013), militant groups like Boko Haram in the Northeast and militancy in the Niger Delta region oppose government authority and use violence to further their goals. Political factors often impact the government's response to these insurgencies, leading to inconsistent results and ongoing instability. Obi, (2010) asserts that ineffective governance and corruption within security institutions impede attempts to effectively combat insecurity. Public confidence in government security forces is being undermined by a cycle of violence and impunity that is fueled by weak institutions, a lack of accountability, and impunity.

According to Uzochukwu, (2014), the politics surrounding the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria is a complicated and divisive topic that is influenced by a number of variables, including public opinion and perception, elite interests and rent-seeking, economic considerations, external pressure, political legitimacy and

stability, and the interaction between corruption and governance. According to Ukeje, (2012), government decisions influenced by fiscal pressures, international financial obligations, and economic factors are frequently involved in the removal of fuel subsidies. When putting such policies into practice, political leaders have to navigate the public opinion, interest groups, and electoral dynamics. Ukeje, (2012) posited that the public (Nigerians) frequently opposes the removal of fuel subsidies because they are worried about rising fuel costs and the possibility of inflationary pressures, which is the current state of affairs for the first time in the history of the Nigerian economy. Opposition parties, labor unions, and civil society organizations regularly organize protests and strikes to oppose the removal of subsidies, applying pressure to the government to reevaluate its choices that led to such decision.

According to Salisu and Adediran (2016), Nigeria's fuel subsidy regime has been marked by elite capture of subsidies intended for the general public, corruption, and rent-seeking behavior. Powerful interest groups that are part of the political and economic elite frequently stand to gain from the status quo and oppose moves to cut subsidies that would limit their access to resources and privileges. Falana, (2019) argues that as part of larger economic stabilization and structural adjustment programs, international financial institutions and donor agencies also support reforms to fuel subsidies. Nigeria's decision-making about the removal of subsidies has been greatly influenced by its adherence to global financial standards and accords. It is very clear from the above that managing the politics of fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria necessitates giving careful thought to institutional capabilities, public opinion, economic realities, and international obligations. Convergence and risk mitigation related to subsidy removal initiatives require effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and transparent policymaking processes.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is plagued by ongoing insecurity, which takes the form of various violent conflicts, such as banditry, terrorism, ethno-religious conflicts, insurgencies, and communal disputes. According to Ukoha & Amadi, (2014), the country's development trajectory is hampered by the government's incapacity to adequately handle these security threats, which compromises political governance, economic stability, and social cohesion. Onu, (2016) asserts that the elimination of fuel subsidies brings about serious social and economic difficulties. Although the elimination of subsidies is intended to increase fiscal sustainability, economic efficiency, and transparency, its actual implementation frequently raises fuel prices, puts pressure on inflation, and public discontent. The elimination of fuel subsidies in the absence of sufficient social safety nets aggravates the socioeconomic challenges encountered by marginalized communities, impeding inclusive development initiatives in Nigeria. The relationship between fuel subsidy removal and insecurity, according to Iwayemi & Oluwatosin, (2015), emphasizes how Nigeria's socioeconomic and political problems are intertwined. The Nigerian government's inability to tackle these issues comprehensively increases susceptibilities, prolongs conflict cycles, and jeopardizes the nation's chances of reaching its full developmental potential.

Nigeria's development must respond to the complex effects of insecurity and the elimination of fuel subsidies through all-encompassing strategies that place a high priority on social protection, inclusive governance, economic diversification, and peace building. Through the implementation of equitable economic policies, the promotion of transparent and accountable governance, and the resolution of underlying causes of insecurity, Nigeria can cultivate resilience, prosperity, and sustainable development for its entire population. The problem of this article is therefore the implications that the removal of fuel subsidies and the politicization of insecurity have on Nigeria's development.

Objective of the Study

This article aims to analyze the politics of insecurity and fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria, elucidating their implications for the country's development. By examining the interconnectedness of socio-economic, political, and security factors, the research seeks to offer insights into potential pathways for mitigating these challenges.

Literature Review

The body of knowledge regarding the politics of fuel subsidy removal and insecurity in Nigeria offers important insights into the nuances of these interconnected issues and how they affect the nation's development. From organized crime and communal violence to ethno-religious conflicts and insurgencies, scholars have examined a variety of aspects of insecurity. The following references are examined here in the context of the foregoing.

The Concept of Politics

Politics is the collection of activities related to group decision-making or other types of power dynamics between people, like the allocation of resources or social standing (Ikelegbe, 2004). Politics in Nigeria refers to the systems, procedures, and interactions that govern the use of authority, the making of decisions, and the distribution of resources among the people and the state. Nigeria's political environment is distinguished by a number of factors. Nigeria functions under a federal system of government, which consists of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches at the federal, state, and local levels, according to Nnoli (2008). Elected officials, political parties, and government institutions all share political power and each has a specific function to play in the process of governing.

Nigeria's political environment shapes development agendas and policy priorities. Conflicting interests, power struggles, and decisions about how to allocate resources shape government interventions in important areas like infrastructure, healthcare, education, and economic development, Diamond, & Leonardo, (2005). In general, Nigerian politics are a reflection of the dynamic interaction of conflicting interests, power dynamics, and socioeconomic factors that influence the nation's development trajectory, governance procedures, and policy outcomes such as the removal of subsidies. Comprehending the intricacies of Nigerian politics is imperative in order to tackle issues of governance, advance democratic governance, and cultivate inclusive development.

Insecurity in Nigeria

According to Agbelusi(2022) defines vulner ability as the state of being exposed to danger or threat; lack of protection brought on by failing security institutions and in adequate governance. To Agbelusi, the problem of in security in Nigeria has grown to be a serious concern for all well-meaning citizens, the majority of whom still wonder how the nation got to this horrible place where nobody is safe. To make matters worse, the issue is getting worse rather than getting better and is currently completely out of control, irrespective of the by the Nigerian military forces that the war against insurgency has been won. According to Nwankwo (2013), in security is a persistent issue in Nigeria that endangers the welfare of its people. The complexity of in security in Nigeria has been emphasized by some academics, who point to important contributing elements like the Boko Haram insurgency, farmer-herder disputes, and communal violence. The crisis has continued because the security regime's governance structures have not been able to address the underlying issues and provide strong security measures to make results oriented the unproductiveness of the Nigerian security architecture.

According to Fawole (2010), there is an increase in cybercrime, armed robberies, kidnappings, domestic crimes, extrajudicial killings, herder-farmer conflicts, ritual killings, and banditry in the south west of Nigeria, ritual killings, commercial crime, secessionist agitation, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, attacks by unidentified gunmen, and banditry are all common in the south east and environmental agitation, kidnapping, and militancy continue to pose threats to the south-south. According to Okolie-Osemene(2013), the Islamic State in West Africa Province and the Boko Haram insurgency have been the main causes of a humanitarian crisis that has affected the north east for more than ten years. In the mean time, banditry, ethno religious murders, and illegal mining are rampant in the northwest. This means that political positions in Nigeria have become more sensitive to the issue of in security, which has resulted in thousands of fatalities as well as significant property damage and loss. Insurgency, terrorism, and inter communal conflicts, in particular, disrupt economic activity and make it difficult for businesses to run effectively, which lowers investment and productivity. In areas affected by insecurity, manufacturing, tourism, and agriculture may suffer from a fear of violence and instability. These are just a few of the negative effects of in security in Nigeria, according to World Bank Group (2020).

According to International Crisis Group, (2021), infrastructure, including power plants, bridges, and roads, is frequently destroyed as a result of insecurity. This under mines the basis for economic growth and obstructs attempts to upgrade infrastructure, which is essential for long-term expansion. The United Nations Development Programme, (2020) claims that disruptions in health care and education caused by insecurity have an impact on the development of human capital. Safety concerns could prevent kids from going to school, and hospitals could become inaccessible, this lowers the possibility of innovation and productivity gains while also having an effect on the caliber of the workforce. Nigeria needs comprehensive strategies that combine security measures with economic development initiatives to address these issues, according to the United Nations Development Programme, (2020), these strategies should prioritize infrastructure rehabilitation and expansion to support economic activities, strengthen security institutions to effectively combat threats and restore stability, implement policies to improve the business environment and attract investment, and prioritize education and health care to improve human capital and build a skilled workforce.

Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria

First off, fuel subsidies in Nigeria have always been intended to help consumers by maintaining artificially low prices for petroleum products, particularly gasoline (petrol) and diesel. To mitigate the impact of elevated global oil prices on domestic consumers, the government provides fuel subsidies. Olaniyi & Babajide (2013) assert that the government bears a substantial financial burden when it comes to fuel subsidization because it necessitates large budgetary allocations. This restricts the amount of money the government can spend on vital fields like social welfare, healthcare, education, and infrastructure. The elimination of fuel subsidies is frequently viewed as a step toward enhancing fiscal sustainability and lowering government deficits, as stated by the (International Monetary Fund, 2019). By doing away with subsidies, the government can shift resources to areas that should be prioritized and lessen its dependency on borrowing or deficit financing.

According to Adeyemi & Adetutu, (2013) posits that the elimination of fuel subsidies may result in temporary price increases for goods and services due to rising transportation costs and increased production expenses for businesses. As is evident in Nigeria today, this typically contributes to inflationary pressures in the economy, which affect consumers' purchasing power and standard of living. It is important to remember that the elimination of fuel subsidies in Nigeria is a complicated and hotly contested topic with big ramifications for the nation's economy, public finances, and social welfare.

According to Ozili & Obiora, (2023), low-income households and vulnerable populations that mainly depend on inexpensive fuel for transportation, cooking, and electricity generation are usually disproportionately impacted by the removal of fuel subsidies. Households may face further financial hardship as a result of rising fuel prices, which could also result in higher utility bills, higher prices for goods, and higher transportation costs. In actuality, the Nigerian economy is exactly in this position right now. Governments frequently enact complementary policy reforms, such as targeted cash transfer programs, investments in public transportation infrastructure, and initiatives to promote renewable energy sources, to lessen the negative effects of the removal of fuel subsidies, Bala, (2023). Although, the Nigerian government has in contemporary times launched different social safety net programs to help mitigate adverse effects of fuel subsidy removal on Nigerians but the implementation of these programs is not people's oriented, it is only benefited by a few powerful political class who uses their political power to divert such funds into private personal account instead of transferring it to the masses.

According to the analysis above, eliminating fuel subsidies in Nigeria can improve the country's fiscal sustainability and market efficiency over the long run, but doing so will have short-term social and economic repercussions that must be carefully considered. Complementary policy measures that safeguard vulnerable populations and promote economic growth must also be put in place.

Development in Nigeria Amid Insecurity and Fuel subsidy removal

According to Adeyemi & Adetutu, (2013), many substantial obstacles emerges against the development of Nigeria when there is insecurity and fuel subsidies are eliminated. The term "insecurity" in this context refers to a variety of threats to stability and development, including banditry, insurgency, conflict between ethnic and religious groups, and violence within communities. Removed fuel subsidies may also result in higher costs for consumers, affecting their purchasing power and possibly igniting social unrest in the short term. However, in the long run, the government can invest in other areas like infrastructure, healthcare, and education by freeing up funds that were previously used to subsidize fuel. Additionally, the removal of fuel subsidies may make the environment more appealing to both domestic and foreign investors. Despite these obstacles, Nigeria needs all-encompassing strategies to promote development. These could consist of the following:

1. **Security Enhancements:** Setting security reforms as a top priority in order to stop insurgencies, arm security guards with more advanced weaponry, improve law enforcement, and support regional peace building initiatives.
2. **Diversification of Economy:** Diversifying the economy to include industries like manufacturing, technology, and agriculture will help to reduce reliance on oil revenue while also generating jobs and lessening the economy's susceptibility to changes in oil prices.
3. **Infrastructure Development:** Enhancing transportation, power supply, and telecommunications through infrastructure projects is essential for fostering economic growth and drawing in direct foreign and domestic investment.

4. **Social Investment:** Putting in place social programs that promote inclusivity, ease social tensions, empower marginalized communities, and increase access to healthcare and education.
5. **Transparent Governance:** Encouraging accountability, openness, and sound governance principles to prevent corruption, build public confidence, and guarantee efficient use of funds for development projects.
6. **Energy Sector Reform:** Putting reforms in place in the energy sector to boost investment in renewable energy sources for sustainable development, lessen reliance on fuel subsidies, and promote efficiency.
7. **Regional Collaboration:** Bolstering global alliances and regional cooperation to combat security risks, advance trade, and encourage economic cooperation for shared gain. To address Nigeria's development challenges amid insecurity and economic transitions, these strategies require political will, effective implementation, and ongoing evaluation.

Implications of Insecurity and Fuel Subsidy Removal on Development in Nigeria

The obliteration of fuel subsidies and insecurity have a wide range of interconnected effects on Nigeria's development, influencing many facets of the nation's socioeconomic and political environment. Some of these effects include the following:

1. **Economic Impact:** Eliminating fuel subsidies may result in higher fuel prices, which would then raise the cost of transportation, food, and business operating expenses. This might lead to increased production costs, diminished consumer purchasing power, and inflationary pressures, all of which would hinder investment and economic growth. On the other hand, ongoing insecurity erodes investor confidence, hinders economic activity, and discourages foreign direct investment. It impairs agricultural output, shatters supply chains, and restricts trade and commerce, causing underdevelopment and economic stagnation in the impacted areas. These elucidates the current state of the Nigerian economy.
2. **Social Implications:** The elimination of fuel subsidies disproportionately impacts households with lower incomes, making poverty and income inequality worse. Social unrest, protests, and strikes could result from people's inability to keep up with growing living expenses. Humanitarian crises, fear, and displacement are bred by insecurity, which causes internal displacement, fatalities, and psychological trauma among impacted populations. It hinders community resilience, shatters social cohesiveness, and intensifies tensions between different ethnic and religious groups, all of which impede social development and stability.
3. **Political Ramifications:** The removal of fuel subsidies frequently encounters political resistance and public outcry, undermining the legitimacy and authority of the government. It may result in calls for government accountability and transparency in resource management, as well as public mistrust and political instability. Governance is weakened, state institutions are weakened, and public confidence in the government's ability to provide security and essential services is eroded by insecurity. It threatens democratic governance and national unity by fostering radicalization, extremism, and political unrest.
4. **Developmental Challenges:** In order to combat insecurity, comprehensive security sector reforms, dispute resolution procedures, and community engagement tactics are needed to bring about peace, encourage reconciliation, and support sustainable development. In order to create societies that are resilient and cohesive, it is necessary to address the underlying causes of conflict, advance social justice, and resolve grievances. From the foregoing, it is clear that comprehensive strategies integrating economic, social, political, and developmental considerations are needed to address the effects of insecurity and the elimination of fuel subsidies on development in Nigeria. Proactive action is required to address the root causes of insecurity and socioeconomic inequality while fostering stability, resilience, and inclusive growth. Theoretically, the article utilised a theoretical framework rooted in political economy to investigate the relationship between insecurity and the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria. Utilizing theories of resource allocation, elite competition, and rent-seeking behavior, the analysis aims to disentangle the power dynamics that underlie policy decisions and their consequences for development results

Research Methods

The research methodology used for this article was the historical research design. By documenting and understanding historical events on the implications that the politics surrounding insecurity and the removal of fuel subsidies have on the development of Nigeria as a Nation, historical design helps the researcher better understand past events in relation to the present and make predictions about how past and current events might impact the future. The principal objective of a historical research design, as employed in this article, is to

collect, verify, and aggregate historical data to generate facts that either support or refute a theory concerning the article's problem.

In addition, journal articles, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, and the internet were used as secondary data sources for this article. Relevant content from these sources was assessed in connection to the study's issue. In order to examine and report analytically on the politics of insecurity and the removal of fuel subsidies, as well as their implications for Nigeria's development, the article used a historical descriptive method of data analysis to analyze the obtained historical data

Conclusion

The article concludes that Nigeria's development aspirations are severely retarded by the politics adjoining insecurity and fuel subsidy removal, based on an analysis of these issues and their implications for Nigeria's development. If the nation does not make a concentrated effort to rectify deficiencies in governance, foster social harmony, and implement fair economic reforms, it could continue to experience cycles of instability and underdevelopment. In Nigeria presently, stability is highly threatened and advancement is impeded by insurgent activities, religious disputes, and ethnic tensions, among other causes. It eventually hinders development efforts by undermining confidence in government institutions, upsetting economic activities, and discouraging both domestic and foreign direct investment. The article also concludes by noting that the elimination of fuel subsidies is a very divisive issue that frequently ignites demonstrations and civil unrest. On a long-term basis, the removal of fuel subsidies may reduce budgetary constraints and open the door to more focused social spending, but there is a certain chance that it will worsen socio-economic disparities and raise living expenses for Nigeria's most disadvantaged citizens.

Recommendations

Nigeria's intertwined problems of insecurity and fuel subsidy elimination call for a multipronged response to savage the unpleasant situation. The article hereby makes the following recommendations in light of its conclusion: 1. **Investment in Security Infrastructure:** The Nigerian government ought to set aside funds to improve security forces' ability to fight terrorism, insurgency, and intercommunal violence. To better respond to new threats, this entails enhancing intelligence gathering, educating, and arming security staff with more advanced, contemporary weaponry.

2. **Diversify the Economy:** Diversify the economy and encourage non-oil industries like manufacturing, services, and agriculture to lessen reliance on oil revenue. To promote economic growth, create jobs, and lower poverty, invest in entrepreneurship initiatives, vocational training, and infrastructure development.

3. **Strengthen Governance and Rule of Law:** To guarantee accountability and foster trust in institutions, strengthen governance frameworks and advance the rule of law. This entails battling corruption, encouraging openness in public affairs, and fortifying legal systems to protect fundamental rights and deliver prompt, impartial justice.

4. **Implement Subsidy Reforms Responsibly:** Remove fuel subsidies gradually while putting in place targeted social safety nets to lessen the impact on disadvantaged groups. In order to increase access to essential services and improve human development outcomes, allocate savings from the elimination of subsidies to vital industries like healthcare, education, and social welfare initiatives.

5. **Strengthen Regional and International Cooperation:** Address threats to transnational security, such as terrorism, drug and arms trafficking, and smuggling, by working together with regional and international partners. In order to advance peace and stability in the Nigerian State, take part in regional security frameworks and use diplomatic channels.

6. **Promote Dialogue and Conflict Resolution:** To address underlying grievances and advance social cohesion, assist ethnic and religious groups in dialogue and reconciliation processes. Involve religious institutions, civil society organizations, and community leaders in peacebuilding projects that promote tolerance and understanding amongst people.

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