

Ex-Militants as Traditional Rulers/Corporate Heads: Implication on Nigeria National Security

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Abstract

The assimilation of former militants into leadership roles as traditional rulers or corporate leaders in Nigeria presents significant challenges to national security and governance. This article explored these concerns through two case studies: His Royal Highness Ateke Tom, an ex-militant who became the Okochiri monarch, and Dokubo Asari who transitioned into a business leadership role with the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF). The primary objective of this study was to assess their effectiveness in contributing to regional stability, economic development, and governance while addressing issues of legitimacy, reconciliation, and ethical governance. Utilizing a comparative analysis, the study examined the dual roles of these ex-militants in post-conflict leadership and their impact on the Niger Delta region. The research was grounded in conflict resolution and governance theories, providing a theoretical framework to understand the complex dynamics of their leadership roles. The findings revealed that while integrating ex-militants into leadership can foster economic growth and stability, it also raises concerns about the legitimacy of their authority and the long-term sustainability of peace in the region. The study recommended harnessing the potential of ex-militants in leadership positions by promoting inclusive governance, enhancing community participation, and ensuring that their roles do not undermine national security. By retracing their paths from militancy to leadership, this research highlights the need for careful management of such transitions to achieve positive outcomes in post-conflict regions.

Keywords: Militant, Conflict Resolution, Leadership, and Economic Consequences, National Security, Governance.

Introduction

The process by which ex-militants become traditional rulers and CEOs in Nigeria is a large and complex problem reflecting on the country's security, political system, and socio-economic growth. As one of the nations with high cultural and ethnic diversities, Nigeria has experienced some difficulties in the aspect of militancy with particular reference to the region of Niger Delta. For some time now, as a result of insurgency, the Nigerian government has had to put in measures in an attempt to contain the situation, one of which was the amnesty programme that started in 2009. This programme was specifically to reform and assimilate the already discharged militants into society with an opportunity for them to have a decent and stable income (Ikelegbe, 2010).

The elevation of ex-militants to the roles of traditional authorities and leaders of major corporations is one of the relatively more recent trends on this frontier. The underlying reality of this situation paves the way to the following crucial questions as to its impact on national security and governance. Nigerian traditional rulers enjoy a lot of authority within their realms, being advocates of custom and rulers of the regions as well. Their responsibilities are part of conflict solving, social organization and enhancement of the community. Also, the heads of the corporations have significant authority over the economic activities of the chosen country, including the economic policies, investments, and job provisions (Akinwale, 2018). The integration of ex-militants into these roles can be seen as a double-edged sword. On one hand, it offers a pathway for these individuals to transit from

violent activities to constructive societal roles, potentially reducing violence and fostering stability. On the other hand, it poses risks if the ex-militants are perceived as lacking legitimacy or if their leadership exacerbates existing tensions within their communities. The success of such transitions depends on various factors, including the individuals' ability to garner respect and trust from their communities and their capacity to effectively lead and manage their new responsibilities (Obi, 2009).

National security in Nigeria is intricately linked to the stability of its regions and the effectiveness of its governance structures. The inclusion of ex-militants in traditional and corporate roles could influence national security dynamics in several ways. Firstly, it might enhance security by providing former combatants with legitimate and respected positions in society, thereby reducing their incentive to revert to militancy. Secondly, these individuals may bring unique insights and strategies to address local security challenges, given their firsthand experience with conflict and violence (Aghedo, 2012).

Nevertheless, there are issues when it comes to the absorption of former militants into leadership roles. Legal questions dominating the concerns include legitimacy and acceptance. Chiefs and corporate heads should possess integrity, have knowledge and uphold the best interest of the society. As a result, it is not out of place for the ex-militants to be met with suspicion or even hostility from the people of the area who distrust the rhetoric of the militants' change of heart. However, there are also concerns that a power struggle to occur, and factionalism might also occur especially in this regard, when it is feared that the ex-militants will politico-fuel or externally impose leadership (Nwogu, 2020).

The economic consequences of this trend are also rather evident. After being employed in corporations, the ex-militants as corporate heads, in one way or the other, can contribute to the economic growth of their respective states through investment, job provision and Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) provision. The corporate stakeholders' participation can help fill the gaps between the local communities and the multinationals in the corporate world hence promoting equity. However, there are always inherent dangers of corruption, embezzlement of funds and other acts of mismanagement especially if the ex-militants have no adequate experience in the conduct of proper corporate governance (Ibaba, 2017).

At the same time, one cannot underestimate the social roles and influence of ex-militants occupying leadership positions. The representatives of the traditional communities – chiefs as well as the leaders of the corporate business are seen as authorities and opinion-makers in their societies. What they do can influence the trends in moral and ethical characteristics of individuals in society, thus bringing society to a more harmonious one with less conflict. On the other hand, if their leadership is characterized by bias, employment of relations or continued practice of vices, the social compact may be eroded and the existing cleavages deepened (Ukiwo, 2011).

Taking these points into account, it becomes possible to consider that there is a need to analyse the basic policies and frameworks of the purpose and transformation of the ex-militants into traditional and corporate employees. In this respect, the Nigerian government's stance on this matter has huge consequences for national security and socio-economic development. These policies should seek to reintegrate ex-militants into society, while at the same time, ensuring that their move to leadership positions is free, fair and competitive, it must be by the overall expectations of the nation's stability.

Besides, the involvement of civil society and communities in maintaining peace and security in society also comes in at this point. The role of the communities and their support is necessary to recognise the discharged ex-militants and ensure that they can actually perform the expected functions. To enhance the credibility of the appointments, some of the leaders must be selected and evaluated through local stakeholders' involvement. Also, continuous assessment of their overall performance will enable the identification of problems and challenges and subsequently, foster a proper leadership impact on national security and development (Ikelegbe & Umukoro, 2016).

The ability of ex-militants to get appointed into traditional and corporate leadership in Nigeria is a phenomenon that can be discussed within the framework of numerous factors and has many adverse

implications for the state's security, political system, and socio-economic development. Although the focus on the quality and stability of products as well as economic growth can indeed be considered as having a positive impact, the new trend that emerges carries several serious questions that refer to legitimacy, acceptance and balanced governance. The benefits as well as the risk factors of this phenomenon need to be highlighted as being closely connected, to avoid unfavourable outcomes, it is crucial to have everyone interested in the process participate in it fully and effectively. It is therefore important for Nigeria's future research and policy planning to design effective frameworks that would ensure the professional reintegration of the ex-militants into these roles to benefit the security and economy of Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This paper's analysis of ex-militants as traditional rulers and corporate heads in Nigeria involves considerations of conflict theories on conflict resolution, governance, and security studies. Conflict resolution theories shed light on how the reintroduction of former fighters into society can bring about stability in the societies. The literature review also supports Lederach's conflict transformation theory that change of heart from violent means of eliminating perceived enemies to leadership roles translates into societal transformation and prevention of conflict escalation due to perceived injustice (Lederach, 2003). The concept of governance, especially in the context of post-conflict reconstruction, stresses the significance of inclusive political systems for sustaining stability and peace (Paris & Sisk, 2009). There is literature in security studies that focuses on the part played by non-traditional security actors such as former fighters in either enhancing or threatening the nation's security (Barnett, 2006). These theoretical viewpoints taken together provide the basis for the examination of the consequences of ex-militants in leadership in the context of Nigeria's national security.

Previous Studies

Literature regarding their reintegration, particularly post-conflict reintegration of the ex-militants mainly defines reintegration in terms of the ability of the reintegration of the former combatants in the government or other community activities. For instance, research carried out on the Niger Delta has focused on integrating former militants into the governance structures as a way of denouncing insurgency and promoting economic progress (Obi 2010). A study by Idemudia (2009) on conflict management and Corporate Social Responsibility in the Niger Delta CRA shows how oil companies in conflict-prone areas have used ex-militants in managing conflicts and hence improving their relationship with the communities. These papers suggest that the processes of incorporating ex-militants back into civilian society can produce some constructive results if handled correctly, including the lowering of the rate of violence and increased levels of economic development at the local level within the companies in which the subjects have been hired. Nevertheless, there is less literature on the effects of ex-militants as traditional rulers and corporate bosses, which creates a knowledge gap regarding the general consequences of such positions for a country's stability and development.

Integration and Legitimacy

Based on the presented findings, we conclude that it is possible to influence the legitimacy and efficiency of traditional and corporate leadership by integrating ex-militants into the relevant structures. According to Weber (1978), the traditional form of legitimacy entails the recognition of authority by people as rightful due to custom or heredity. It is incumbent on ex-militants turned traditional rulers to bring change and win the acceptance of the communities in the regions where they operate. Under this, legitimacy has been established as a key factor important for traditional rulers in the management of conflicts to sustain order in society (Akinola, 2009).

Likewise in the corporate world, former militants require the same recognition of their competency and leadership skills to control organizations and stabilise the economy. That is why gaining legitimacy does not only entail the formal recognition of their new roles but also the ability to

prove that they are capable of bringing positive impacts to their constituencies or stakeholders. The inability to gain legitimacy hampers their power and authority besides worsening tension.

Impact on National Security

This paper appreciates the implication of the fact that many ex-militants occupy leadership positions for national security in Nigeria. On the one hand, it can be useful for inclusiveness, to create a stake in peace and order among the former combatants. In separate conclusions by Collier et al. (2003), economic incentives and political rights are key components that help avoid conflict. When absorbed into traditional and corporate America, the ex-militants are offered constructive ways through which they can address socio-political and or economic institutions therefore, can mutely disengage them from the push factors that compel them to engage in violent activities. On the other hand, it may lead to militarisation of local governance and corporate practices and consolidation of former militant power and resources resulting in subversion of state authority and increased incidents of corruption and impunity. This exacerbates the relative dualism in the processes, which can both stabilise and destabilise nations, therefore requiring proper linking and oversight to efficiently influence these changes for the betterment of a nation's security.

Economic Implications

The influence of ex-militants in the economic life of the region and the country is three-fold concerning both positive and negative implications. For instance, the integration of the ex-militants into the oil-bearing Niger Delta region has been a success and a failure at the same time. While some militants have used available opportunities to participate in the advancement of the development and minimize sabotage of oil installation, others have remained loyal to their exploitation of the system for self-enrichment with no regard for improving the socioeconomic condition of others (Watts, 2004).

This paper reveals that corporate sector initiatives aimed at integrating ex-militants can positively impact corporate social initiatives or CSR, positively impacting the development of communities and the relations between the corporations and the communities. Yet, it can also open possibilities of returning to patronization and maintaining the existing structures of economic inequality. These roles therefore have potential economic steerage dependent on the governance structures and accountability instruments that would ensure that the contribution of the ex-militants is readily in tune with development and security agendas.

Social Implications

Considering the ex-militants as traditional rulers and corporate heads, social consequences have also been of immense concern. Their role can often impact the workings of the community, people's integration and people's concept of justice and order. His track is usually viewed as the keeper of culture, ethnic norms, and rules as well as a solver of disputes. To facilitate this trust and promote reconciliation between the former militants and the other members of the society, the ex-militants in such positions are charged with several tasks that entail dealing with social structures as well as historical memory (Okeke, 2014). In the corporate sector, problems of ex-militants leadership affect the social aspect of corporate culture and employee relations in the business environment. Champions of positive social change are hinged on the capacity of the ex-militants in the country to manage conflicts and address the grievances of the community members, as well as push for the inclusive development of the nation. On the other hand, if people do not meet their social obligations, the opposite consequences may occur, including greater feelings of isolation, hostility, and strife. By investigating these social relations, it is, therefore, possible to comprehend the essence of the social relations and be in a position to tap on the positives of having ex-militants lead in key areas of the society as well as minimize the negatives that may lead to complete social disruption.

Gaps in Literature

This literature review has revealed certain gaps that can be filled and highlighted by further studies. While previous studies have offered valuable insights into the process of post-conflict reintegration of ex-militants and their transition to legitimate business activities, they lack specific data on ex-militants' activities as traditional rulers and heads of large companies. Although there are numerous kinds of literature available regarding the reintegration of former combatants in a post-war context, very limited literature is available about the prospects and issues that come with the vested traditional leadership positions by former combatants. Nigerian traditional rulers possess considerable socio-political power and their efficiency determines the extent of the local administration and conflict patterns (Osaghae, 2011).

Likewise, the role of ex-militants in corporate leadership, particularly in the oil and gas sector, remains under-researched. The potential for these individuals to use their backgrounds to stabilize or destabilize regions is not well understood and requires further research. Addressing these gaps is critical to developing comprehensive strategies to manage the integration of ex-militants into leadership roles and to ensure their contribution to national security and development.

Methodology

This study uses a secondary data analysis approach to examine the implications of ex-militants serving as traditional rulers or heads of corporations on Nigeria's national security. Secondary data analysis involves the use of existing data collected by previous researchers, organizations or institutions. This method is particularly advantageous for this study due to the availability of extensive historical and contemporary data on the topic, as well as the ability to analyze such data without the resource constraints associated with primary data collection.

Data Sources and Data Collection

Data for this study came from various academic journals, government reports, think tank publications, and trusted news sites. Key sources include peer-reviewed articles that discuss the integration of ex-militants into traditional and corporate roles (e.g. Ikelegbe, 2013; Aghedo, 2014), government documents detailing ex-militants amnesty and rehabilitation policies (e.g. Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation, 2020) and reports from international organizations such as the International Crisis Group (ICG, 2015). In addition, news articles and opinion pieces from established Nigerian and international media provided up-to-date perspectives and case studies on the topic.

Data Analysis

Secondary data analysis involved a thematic approach aimed at identifying patterns and themes related to the integration of ex-militants and their impact on national security. Content analysis was used to systematically examine the texts for recurring themes such as legitimacy, governance, economic impact and social dynamics (Krippendorff, 2018). This method enabled the extraction of relevant information and insights from various sources, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Ethical Considerations

The use of secondary data inherently addresses several ethical issues associated with primary data collection, such as informed consent and risk to participants. However, ethical considerations in secondary data analysis revolve around the accurate representation and appropriate use of data. In this study, all secondary sources of data have been properly cited to acknowledge the original authors and to avoid plagiarism. In addition, care was taken to ensure that the data used were credible and relevant, thereby maintaining the integrity of the research findings.

Limitations

Although secondary data analysis provides a number of advantages, it also brings certain limitations. One significant limitation is the possibility that the data will be out of date or not completely relevant to the current context. Additionally, the study's reliance on pre-existing data means it is limited by the scope and quality of the original data collection efforts. To mitigate these limitations, this study cross-referenced multiple sources and prioritized the most recent and relevant data available.

The use of secondary data in this study offers a viable and effective means to explore the complex issue of ex-militants transitioning into traditional and corporate leadership roles and its implications for national security in Nigeria. By systematically analysing existing data, this study aims to provide a detailed understanding of the topic and contribute to the wider discourse on governance and security in post-conflict societies.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: The Ex-combatant as a Traditional Ruler

In the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the transition of ex-militants into traditional leadership roles has been a significant phenomenon affecting local governance and community dynamics. One prominent example is the case of His Royal Highness Ateke Tom, a former militant commander turned Amayanabo (traditional ruler) of Okochiri in Rivers State. Ateke Tom rose to prominence during militant activities in the early 2000s and later accepted the government's amnesty program in 2009, which facilitated his transition to a traditional leadership position (Iyanda & Yakubu, 2020).

Of course, such power transition: including Ateke Tom in particular, is a multifaceted process which involved different aspects such as his authority within the local community, his ability to 'bargain' with the governmental authorities, and his followers who recognised him as their leader in the context of the fight against the 'betrayal' of the local people. He is a leader who tries to combine the customs of the traditional society with the principles of the modern government to solve community conflicts and develop the socio-economical activities. The case shows how ex-militants can be very useful in strengthening the democratic processes and governance structures at the base level but there are problems faced by the former regarding their legal authority and genuine incorporation in the system (Onuoha, 2014).

Case Study 2: Ex-Militant as a Head of a Corporation

In the corporate world, another case is that of Dokubo Asari, the leader of the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) from militancy to businessman and corporate executive. Asari's transmutation entailed using his power and connections to create a company that provides services related to the oil and gas sectors, security contracting, and various community-based projects in the Niger Delta area (Ojakorotu & Amadi, 2017).

Asari's business establishments exemplify the available business prospects for the ex-militants who transform from sub-heroes to business executives. Local youths are given opportunities to work with his companies and in this way promote economic growth in the region, thus reducing chances of insecurity due to high unemployment and agitation among ex-militant groups as noted by Obi (2018). However, the inclusion of ex-militants into corporate leadership also brings ethical issues related to their reliability, corporate governance practices and compliance, most especially in highly regulated industries like oil and gas as pointed out by Omoweh (2015).

Comparative Analysis

In comparing these two, one sees how common, and at the same time different, the roads taken and the outcomes for ex-militants as traditional rulers vis-a-vis corporate leaders are. While both Ateke Tom and Dokubo Asari rose to prominence as warriors against what they considered as injustice and marginalisation of their people, both men differed in the way and goals they aspired to achieve. While Ateke Tom's style of rulership is traditional, centring on supporting the people's togetherness, solving

conflicts according to cultural norms, and fostering the people’s stability and coherence, Dokubo Asari’s leadership is more corporate, aspiring for the economic enrichment of the subjects, and the responsible usage of resources, particularly oil.

Despite their different roles, both leaders face legitimacy issues as their past associations with militancy continue to influence perceptions and trust among stakeholders (Ojakorotu & Amadi, 2017). The adoption of ex-militants in leadership roles underscores broader societal issues of reconciliation, and justice and the need for inclusive governance frameworks that accommodate diverse perspectives and histories (Onuoha, 2011).

Table 1 shows the comparative analysis of both case studies

Case Study	Ex-Militant Role	Transition	Influence of Leadership Style
1	Ateke Tom	Traditional Ruler	Militant Commander Blend of Tradition and Modern Governance Local Stability, Community Development
2	Dokubo Asari	Militant Founder to Head of Company	Economic Empowerment, Entrepreneurship Employment Creation, Economic Development

The case studies of Ateke Tom and Dokubo Asari illustrate the complex dynamics that occur when ex-militants assume leadership roles in traditional and corporate settings in Nigeria. These examples highlight the potential of ex-militants to contribute positively to community development and economic stability but also highlight significant issues related to legitimacy, governance and ethical behaviour.

The transformation of ex-militants into traditional rulers or heads of corporations in Nigeria presents both opportunities and challenges for national security, governance and socio-economic development. While these leaders can potentially contribute to conflict resolution, economic empowerment, and community stability, their acceptance and effectiveness largely depend on their ability to navigate the complexities of post-conflict reconciliation, governance frameworks, and public perceptions.

Findings and Discussion

Integrating Ex-militants into Leadership Roles

The integration of ex-militants into the roles of traditional rulers or heads of corporations in Nigeria is a complex process with significant implications for governance, stability and security. This section examines how these transitions affect the legitimacy and effectiveness of former militants in leadership positions.

Ex-militants often bring with them deep-rooted community ties and influence that can be used to promote peace and development. For example, the appointment of Ateke Tom Amanyanabo of Okochiri exemplifies efforts to integrate influential figures into formal governance structures, potentially stabilising regions historically affected by militancy (Ikelegbe, 2013). However, the dual identity of ex-militants as both ex-combatants and current leaders can create problems regarding their acceptance and legitimacy within communities. This duality underscores the delicate balance required to effectively integrate ex-militants into leadership roles while addressing community concerns about their past actions (Ibaba, 2011).

Security Implications of Former Militants in Leadership

The presence of ex-militants in traditional or corporate leadership roles significantly affects the dynamics of national security in Nigeria. On the one hand, their integration can contribute to peacebuilding efforts by addressing underlying grievances and integrating former adversaries into

governance structures. This approach is in line with international disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) strategies aimed at preventing the resurgence of violence (Oluwaniyi, 2011).

Conversely, the transition of ex-militants to leadership positions can also pose security risks if not managed effectively. Competition between former militant leaders for control of resources such as oil revenues can lead to intra-Community conflicts and undermine stability. In addition, the potential for these individuals to use their positions for personal gain or maintain patronage networks highlights the importance of robust oversight and accountability mechanisms (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012).

Economic Contributions and Challenges

Former combatants becoming employed in the business world may have an impact on economic development in areas such as the NDVP because resource exploitation is considered significant in those areas. Being natives, they can easily conduct several operations in their country and escalate the business, therefore attracting investments as well as enhancing the flow of stability in their country (Ibaba & Ikelegbe, 2010).

Nevertheless, the potential benefits of these persons from ex-militant groups on the country's economy in leadership capacities are not without some strings attached. Inadequate management of resources and corporate practices is therefore an issue of worry especially, in the hands of ex-militants lacking adequate and efficient know-how. Furthermore, there is the issue of name-list fraud in employment practice as well as instances of embezzlement of funds meant for the developmental projects for the ex-militants' communities which makes this convoluted issue even harder to resolve (Aghedo, 2013).

Relationship between Social Structures and Reconciliation Initiatives

The social factors when ex-militants take up leadership positions are very important for social reconstruction of societies affected by conflict and war. Although their participation signifies a timeline for that society on the path to rebuilding the shattered relations, it only sharpens the divides and solidifies the whole society's perceptions of impunity if it does not address the prior injustices (Ibaba, 2011).

Former combatants can be a source of inspiration and useful to peers' pressure in ensuring that the undertaken projects will have a positive impact on the constituents. Nevertheless, there are limitations which include exclusivity and discriminating of the opposition voice, which call for a workable governance model that is accountable and transparent as argued by Ikelegbe (2013).

All in all, the accommodation of ex-militants in the traditional administration or corporate organisations in Nigeria has advantages as well as disadvantages about the provisions of effective governance, security, and socio-economic development. That is why their introduction can both facilitate the peacebuilding process and create the basis for economic recovery, on the one hand, and entail threats associated with legitimacy deficits, accountability crises, and social integration, on the other. To enhance the effectiveness of this transition, there is a need to develop a set of broad strategies that would address the social aspects and focus on community involvement, enhancement of the communities' capacities, and creation of sound legal frameworks for monitoring. If Nigeria learns to address these challenges, then the country stands to benefit a lot from the reformation of ex-militant groups and restoring reconciliation in the country.

It is believed that resource exploitation is impacted and may be influenced by former combatants who are now taking up employable positions in the business world; in areas such as the NDVP, this could have an effect. Since they are natives, they can undertake various operations in their country and also take the business higher, hence leading to investment and boosting stability in their country (Ibaja & Ikelegbe, 2010).

However, there are always positive implications for such persons, retrieved from ex-militant groups, in leadership roles within the context of the country's economy. Thus, inefficiency and lack of proper management of resources and corporate practices can always be of worry especially, to

organizations owned and managed by such ex-militants lacking adequate and efficient know-how. Additionally, there is a concern about name-list fraud in the employment practice and cases of embezzlement of funds intended for the developmental projects for the ex-militants communities complicate this tangled issue even more (Aghedo, 2013).

The Origin of Social Structures in Relation to Reconciliation Efforts

The social aspect oriented towards ex-militants holding leadership positions is very essential in the reconstruction of societies that bear the effects of social conflicts and wars. Even though the fact of their participation sets the timeline of this society in the process of rebuilding the destroyed relationships, it increases and reinforces the perception of impunity of the whole society, as long as the previous wrongs committed do not follow (Ibaba, 2011).

Knowing that they have implemented many successful projects during their previous employment, ex-combatants can inspire with their stories and provide useful peer pressure to ensure that the projects currently being developed are useful to the constituents. However, there are disadvantages which are the exclusivity and discrimination of the opposition voice, but there is a need for a workable model of governance that is accountable and transparent as Ikelegbe (2013) postulates.

Governance Reforms

One of the main policy implications is governance reforms to ensure transparent and accountable processes for the selection and appointment of traditional rulers and corporate heads who are ex-militants. Transparency is critical to building public trust and legitimacy in these leadership transitions. As Smith (2018) points out, transparent governance practices can mitigate perceptions of nepotism or favouritism, which are common concerns when ex-militants occupy positions of influence (Smith, 2018).

Principles of Corporate Governance

Incorporating ex-militants into corporate governance requires specific policies that ensure their effective participation and contribution to the organization's goals while respecting ethical standards and corporate governance principles (World Bank, 2019). Policies should include skills development and capacity building mechanisms tailored to the needs of ex-militants transitioning into corporate leadership roles (World Bank, 2019). Training programs in business ethics, financial management and leadership skills can equip former militants with the competencies needed to succeed in their new roles (World Bank, 2019).

In addition, the introduction of diversity and inclusion policies within company boards can increase the representation of marginalized groups, including ex-militants, thereby promoting inclusive decision-making processes (Williams, 2019). By fostering diversity, companies can benefit from diverse perspectives and experiences that contribute to innovative solutions and sustainable business practices (Williams, 2019). These policies not only support the professional development of ex-militants, but also contribute to corporate resilience and social responsibility.

Community Engagement Strategy

Effective community engagement strategies are essential to mitigate potential resistance or scepticism to ex-militants taking leadership roles. Involving local communities in the selection and appointment processes of traditional rulers and company chiefs can strengthen trust and ownership of these decisions (Smith, 2018). Community consultation, as advocated by Smith (2018), allows for the inclusion of diverse perspectives and ensures that meetings reflect the needs and aspirations of the community (Smith, 2018).

In addition, investments in community development projects and socio-economic initiatives can empower conflict-affected communities and facilitate the reintegration of ex-militants as constructive members of society (IFAD, 2021). By addressing underlying socio-economic problems,

policymakers can reduce the causes of conflict and support sustainable peacebuilding efforts (IFAD, 2021). Collaboration with local NGOs and civil society organizations can increase the effectiveness of these initiatives by leveraging their expertise and local networks (UNDP, 2020).

The political implications of the integration of ex-militants into the traditional roles of rulers and corporate leaders in Nigeria underscore the importance of holistic approaches that include governance reforms, security measures, corporate governance policies and community engagement strategies. By comprehensively addressing these policy dimensions, policymakers can promote inclusive governance, enhance security, strengthen corporate accountability, and strengthen conflict-affected communities. These efforts are necessary for the attainment of sustainable peace and development in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The emergence of ex-militants assuming the roles of traditional rulers and corporate heads in Nigeria is a multifaceted phenomenon with significant implications for national security and socio-economic stability. This study shed light on both the opportunities and challenges associated with this transition. On the one hand, the integration of ex-militants into leadership positions offers potential benefits such as improved conflict resolution capabilities, economic development through corporate leadership, and the potential for reconciliation within historically conflict-affected communities. These roles can also provide pathways for ex-combatants to reintegrate into society, contributing positively to peacebuilding efforts.

However, the integration of ex-militants into traditional and corporate roles also raises legitimate concerns. Issues of legitimacy, effectiveness of governance and public trust are key factors. The credibility of ex-militants as leaders depends on their ability to uphold ethical standards, demonstrate inclusive governance practices and effectively manage resources for the benefit of the wider society. Additionally, the presence of ex-militants in positions of influence can pose challenges to established governance structures and, if not carefully managed, can potentially undermine institutional stability.

Another critical aspect to consider is the impact on national security. While ex-militants turned leaders can contribute to local stability and conflict resolution, their past associations and the power dynamics they bring to these roles can complicate security dynamics. It is imperative that policies and strategies are designed to mitigate the risks associated with these transitions and ensure that national security interests are promoted while maximizing the potential benefits of their leadership contributions.

Moving forward, effective governance and security policies must be developed to support the sustainable integration of ex-militants into leadership roles. This requires transparent and accountable governance practices, robust security measures to manage risks and ongoing engagement with conflict-affected communities. In addition, capacity-building initiatives should focus on equipping ex-militants with the skills necessary to effectively navigate their new roles, fostering leadership that promotes inclusive development and mitigating potential triggers of conflict.

The transformation of ex-militants into traditional rulers and corporate bosses represents a complex but potentially transformative process for Nigeria. By addressing the challenges and seizing the opportunities these transitions offer, Nigerian society can move towards greater stability, prosperity and reconciliation. Continued research, adaptive policies, and community engagement will be critical to navigating this evolving environment and realizing the full potential of former militant leadership in advancing national security and sustainable development goals.

Recommendation

1. Policy Recommendations:

1. Governance Policies:

Government and Legislative Bodies: Develop and implement policies that facilitate the integration of ex-militants into traditional governance structures. These policies should mandate transparency, accountability, and effective governance practices. The National Assembly should enact laws that establish clear criteria and procedures for the selection and appointment of ex-militants to leadership roles.

National and State Governments: Establish regulatory bodies to monitor and evaluate the performance of ex-militants in leadership positions, ensuring compliance with governance standards and preventing the abuse of power.

2. Safeguards:

Security Agencies (e.g., Nigerian Police Force, DSS): Implement monitoring systems to assess the activities of ex-militants in leadership roles. These agencies should provide regular reports to the government on potential security risks, enabling timely interventions.

Federal Government: Set up support mechanisms, such as counselling and mentorship programs, to help ex-militants transition smoothly into their new roles while minimizing risks to national security.

3. Corporate Governance:

Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and Regulatory Authorities: Enforce corporate governance standards in companies led by ex-militants. This includes regular audits, transparency in financial dealings, and adherence to ethical business practices.

Private Sector Organizations: Collaborate with regulatory bodies to provide training programs for ex-militant leaders on corporate governance, ethics, and sustainable development.

Community Involvement:

1. Community Engagement Programs:

Local Governments and Traditional Councils: Launch community engagement initiatives that involve ex-militants in reconciliation efforts, community development projects, and peace-building activities. These programs should foster dialogue between ex-militants and community members to build trust and cooperation.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): Support initiatives that empower local communities to actively participate in decision-making processes involving ex-militants. CSOs should facilitate workshops and forums where community voices are heard and considered in governance matters.

Capacity Building:

Leadership and Conflict Resolution Training:

Federal and State Governments: Develop and fund capacity-building programs for ex-militants who assume leadership roles, focusing on leadership skills, conflict resolution, and ethical business practices. These programs should be delivered in partnership with educational institutions and international organizations.

Private Sector and NGOs: Establish partnerships with government agencies to provide training and mentoring opportunities for ex-militants. These organizations should offer resources and expertise to help ex-militants succeed in their new roles, ensuring their contributions to society are positive and sustainable.

4. Research and Monitoring

Call for continued research to monitor the long-term impact of ex-militants in leadership positions on national security, governance and socio-economic development.

Recommend regular assessments and evaluations to adapt policies and strategies based on evolving circumstances and lessons learned.

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