

Insecurity: A Threat to Human Wellbeing and National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract—This study examined insecurity as the critical issue bordering the hearts of millions of Nigerians today, because all efforts by security agencies to combat the spate of unrest, like kidnapping for ransom, bombing, and assassination of innocent people, seem to yield no positive result. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design that was guided by three research questions. The respondents for the study comprised two hundred (200) knowledgeable people/youth selected from the Iseyin Federal constituency area of Oke-Ogun, Oyo state. The questionnaire titled Insecurity as a Major Threat to Human Wellbeing and National Development in Nigeria was the instrument used for the study. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages, were used to analyze the data collected. The study revealed that porous borders, unemployment, corruption, bad governance, and poverty are some of the factors responsible for insecurity in Nigeria. Poor standard of living, displacement of people, dislocation of family and communal life, and disruption of economic activities are among the impacts of insecurity on Nigerians' social life and national development. It is recommended that the government should invest in job creation, restructure the security architecture of the country, and ensure social security programmes are pursued and systematically implemented towards meeting basic needs of the populace.

Keywords: Insecurity, Human existence, and National development

I. INTRODUCTION

The issue of insecurity has become a persistently worrisome one in Nigeria to the extent that fears have gripped almost all her inhabitants, including the governments. No place is apparently safe to live in, as all efforts of the various security agencies to suppress this menace are yielding no encouraging result. The insecurity challenges have assumed terrible dimensions, forcing the country's political and economic administrators and indeed the entire nation to regret the loss of their sovereignty, the devastation of economic activities, and the absence of peace and safety in most parts of the country. It is obvious to say that there is hardly a country globally without one security challenge or another, just as it is hard to find a country that can completely eradicate all threats to her security, but the present state of threat and fear Nigerians are currently passing through is very alarming. Alabi (1997) defines threat as "anything that can undermine the security of the nation, or anything that constitutes danger to her survival as a corporate entity, as well as undermining the prospects of the harmonious relationship of the various communities that make up the nation, or the peaceful co-existence of her people. It was specifically provisioned in the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended, that the security and welfare of the Nigerian citizens shall be the primary function of government. That is, all three tiers of government are expected to guarantee and provide security of lives and property of their respective populace. For any meaningful development to be achieved and sustained in any nation, security is surely the foundation that must be implanted and adequately managed. In the absence of adequate security, such a society will be on the brink of mayhem all the time.

Unfortunately, Nigerian governments have failed to provide a secure and safe environment for lives, properties, and the conduct of business and economic activities in recent times. It has also been observed that insecurity is ranked first among all the challenges facing the country today, and this is a major setback to human well-being and national development. There hasn't been any day that cases of killing innocent people by bandits, Fulani herders/farmers clashes, and kidnapping for ransom will not be heard in all the geopolitical zones of the country. For example, there has been an incident of farmers being chased on their farmlands by bandits, attacking villages and kidnapping them for ransom, and burglarizing commercial shops to steal foodstuffs in the northeast and northwest of the country since 2019 to date.

On January 30th, 2024, two monarchs in Ekiti state, southwest Nigeria, were gruesomely murdered on their way from a security meeting at a neighboring town. On the following day, January 31st, 2024, five primary school pupils and four teachers of Apostolic Faith Nursery/Primary School in Emure-Ekiti were abducted by kidnapers and were never released until a whole

ransom was paid. Another incident of insecurity challenge was also recorded on February 1st, 2024, at Koro-Ekiti, Kwara State, where kidnappers invaded the palace, killed the traditional ruler, and abducted his wife to an unknown destination. With the persistent security challenges that have spread to all the nooks and crannies of the country versus the inability of the government's security agencies to guarantee safety and security in Nigeria, questions that border everyone today are, "Can there be safety and security in the country?" How long is it possible to ensure the safety of people and property? It is no more news that many Nigerians have relocated to the diaspora in order to avert security threats and have peace of mind. This situation has the harmful consequence of providing a signal to the international community that Nigeria is not a safe and secure environment and, as such, not ideal for investment and economic activity.

The paper takes a critical look at the concept of insecurity as a major challenge facing Nigerians' welfare and national development. It goes to identify the causes and impacts of insecurity on the well-being of the populace and the national development. It concludes by making recommendations to the challenges posed by these security threats and how Nigeria could be best posited.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Insecurity in Nigeria has reached an alarming and unbearable level for all her citizenry as the rate of crimes and other social vices continues to soar on a daily basis. Despite all governments' efforts to combat this menace through its yearly huge budget to security since 2018, the level of insecurity in the country is still on the increase, as all security measures taken so far are yet to yield the desired positive result. The rising insecurity situation has nicknamed the country as a "danger zone" among the international community. A confirmation of this is shown in the latest ranking by the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2023), where Nigeria scored 2.71 to clinch 144th position out of 163 countries on the peace ladder.

The deteriorating security situation in the country has posed serious social and economic problems, which include abject poverty among rural and urban populations, a high rate of persistent inflation, a high rate of unemployment, low industrial output, volatility of exchange rate, dilapidated physical and socio-infrastructures, and increasing internal and external debt, brain drain, to mention a few.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the causes of insecurity in Nigeria?
2. What are the impacts of insecurity on human well-being and national development in Nigeria?
3. What are the ways out to the insecurity challenges in Nigeria?

IV. A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A variety of scholars across the globe have discussed diverse opinions on the concept of insecurity. According to Beland (2005), insecurity is the absence of emotional stress and protection from crime, which indicates that a person is in danger and unable to reach their full potential, including being fearless. Insecurity is also a state that results from governments' failure to provide effective safeguards against hostile individuals, influences, and activities that could endanger people's lives, information, and property. Simply put, insecurity occurs when members of a society are unable to carry out their regular activities due to threats to and detrimental disruptions of their lives and property. Achumba et al. (2013) define insecurity from two perspectives. First of all, danger is the state of being vulnerable to harm or injury, whereas insecurity is the state of being exposed to risk or the threat of danger. Second, insecurity is the condition of being at risk or experiencing anxiety, which is a nebulous, disagreeable feeling that is felt in preparation for some bad luck.

Insecurity is a general term that refers to a state of being subjected to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, harassment, etc., in all aspects. As opined by Ajodo, Adebajoko, and Ugwuoke (2014), insecurity can be conceived as threats to the state, which often accounted for the race for arms and nuclear weapons to defend the state. According to the definition given in this paper, insecurity is a violation of peace and security, resulting from historical, religious, ethno regional, civic, social, economic, and political causes that fuel ongoing conflicts and cause wanton destruction of property and human life.

National development could be best understood from the development point of view. Development is the process through which a nation's social, economic, political, and cultural facets evolve, advance, and improve. Economic growth, welfare and human development, modernization, dependency eradication, conversional transformation, and capacity building are all considered developmental principles, according to Martinussen (1997). It should, however, be noted that development in any society needs everyone's contribution to fuel its growth. It is an incontestable fact that Nigeria, as a developing nation, needs the collective collaboration of her citizens to achieve meaningful development because development is a process that creates growth, brings in progress, and brings about positive change.

National development, according to Elugbe (1998), means the growth of the nation in the form of unity, education, economic well-being, and mass participation in government. Inyanda and Adama (2018) defined national development as the ability of the nation to provide a conducive atmosphere for the realization of individual potentials, the existence of a buoyant economy, and the accessibility of social infrastructure for the general public. Therefore, national development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people by providing social amenities like adequate security, portable water, quality education, good health care services, and a comfortable transportation system, among others.

Above all, national development in the context of this study refers to the progressive changes and transformations of the economic, social, political, demographic, scientific, ecological, and technological life in a country.

V. CAUSES OF INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

V.I. UNEMPLOYMENT

Nigeria is currently experiencing a high level of unemployment, especially among the youths, with the maximum rate of 33.3% in Q4 2023, according to a report by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2024). This situation makes the youths find solace in the devil's workshop to commit crimes by engaging in illegal activities such as kidnapping, robbery, child abduction, banditry, and other social vices. Unemployment has a severe negative implication on national development and also poses serious threats to security challenges in Nigeria.

V.II. POVERTY

According to Adagba et al. (2012), poverty is one of the major causes of insecurity, social vices, and violent crimes in Nigeria. This is so because of the failure of successive administrations to address challenges of unemployment and inequitable distribution of wealth among Nigeria's nationalities, which create a wider gap between the rich and the less privileged in the society. For example, the working class is seriously lamenting poor remuneration in view of the high inflation rate, while retired public civil servants are equally complaining of ill-prepared pension schemes and lack of welfare plans. This scenario has made many Nigerians living below the poverty line and thereby frustrated. This hardship culminates in vices, particularly crimes in the form of armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and militancy.

V.III. TERRORISM

(Achumba et al. 2013) Opined that terrorism is regarded as the most fundamental source of insecurity in Nigeria today, which is traceable to religious fanaticism and intolerance, particularly in the Islam-dominated northern states of Nigeria. Though, it is a global phenomenon that is ravaging the whole world. Terrorism is defined as the use of international violence, destruction, or death and intimidation against target groups to achieve religious, political, or ideological aims (OECD, 2014). Terrorism in Nigeria could be traced back to the activities of the notorious Islamic sect called Mataisine during Alhaji Shehu Shagari's civilian regime of the second republic in 1983. This religious extremist group reared its head during Olusegun Obasanjo's civilian regime and Goodluck Jonathan, metamorphosing into Boko Haram insurgents based in the northern regions of Nigeria that have claimed thousands of lives and displaced millions since 2009.

V.IV. SECESSIONIST AGITATIONS

This occurs due to injustice, lopsidedness in the distribution of natural resources, and perceived marginalization of some minority group in the country by the federal government through exclusivist policies. This led to the emergence of some secessionist agitation groups in Nigeria, which include the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), the Niger Delta Liberation Front, and the Biafra Zionist Movement from the southeast, and Oduduwa Republic agitators from the southwest. In a bid to avoid all the injustices listed above, these agitators unleashed fear and violence against government security forces with the sophisticated weapons at their disposal, harassed innocent civilians, and employed hate speech through media to proliferate their secessionist agenda. For example, IPOB is still observing a "sit-at-

home order” for people living in the South-East states like Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Imo, and Ebonyi, where violators of this order are attacked and killed. However, the proscription of these groups by the federal government has not stopped the defiant members of the groups from carrying on their inhumane operations. This has negative implications for human existence and national development.

V.V. POROUS BORDERS

The porous nature of Nigeria's borders has aided the free flow of illegal migrants and goods from other countries such as Cameroon, the Republic of Niger, Chad, and the Republic of Benin, who are responsible for some of the criminal acts. This has also led to the menace of fake and illicit drugs entering the country, under which young people become drug addicts to perpetrate dreadful crimes. In addition, porous borders account for the unchecked inflow of dangerous and light weapons, which are being used by bandits, kidnappers, dreadful politicians, armed robbers, and Fulani herdsmen for nefarious activities.

VI. FULANI HERDERS/FARMERS CLASHES

This problem emanates from ethnic/tribal and political crises. The influx of Boko Haram and Fulani fighters expelled from Central African Republic, Niger Republic, Mauritania, Mali, Senegal, and North Africa in 2015 to rescue power from President Goodluck Jonathan by all means for Muhammadu Buhari, who is a Fulani tribe in the general elections, has contributed deeply to the state of insecurity in the country. The rejection of grazing reserves known as RUGA by President Muhammadu Buhari in every state of Nigeria in favour of his tribes has resulted in clashes between farmers and herders due to condemnation of the open grazing system by all the Nigerian farmers. The crisis has indeed taken on a dangerous dimension with the either subtle or brazen use of ethno-religious sentiments and has spread to all the geopolitical zones of the country.

VII. GOOD GOVERNANCE

Oluwarotimi (2012) asserts that the solution to Nigeria's insecurity problem lies in effective government. She claims that improving governance standards or fostering a culture of good governance where the government is answerable to the people is the only way to win the war against insecurity. According to her, good governance and security engagement are inextricably linked. Numerous other people have also connected the governance system with security. The general view is that peace and security are determined by good governance. However, as Oluwa (2012) has pointed out, good governance is a function of effective, visionary, transparent, trustworthy, and credible political leadership whose driving force is an improvement in the general well-being of the citizens through effectively well-coordinated, implemented economic policies and human developmental programmes. The underlying principle of good governance is the focus on people as the ultimate objective of governance.

VIII. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The respondents for this study consisted of two hundred and fifty people, 150 males and 1000 females, randomly selected from four local government areas (Iseyin, Kajola, Itesiwaju, and Iwajowa), which make up the Iseyin federal constituency in Oke-Ogun. A twenty (20) item questionnaire designed by the researcher titled Insecurity as a Major Threat to Human Existence and National Development in Nigeria was used to collect data for this study. It was divided into two sections. Section A dealt with the biodata of the respondents. Items pertaining to Nigerian insecurity were included in Section B. The questionnaire was raised in a four-point Likert-type structure, namely Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The instrument was validated by two experts from the Department of Social Science and Humanities Education, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to calculate the reliability coefficient, which was 0.84. The instruments were co-administered by the researcher and three colleagues from the School of General Studies Education. The descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to answer the research question.

IX. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What are the causes of insecurity in Nigeria?

Table 1: Analysis of Factors Accountable for Insecurity in Nigeria.

| S/N | Items | Positive Response (%) | Negative Response (%) |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. | High rate of youth unemployment leading to idleness | 130 (65%) | 70 (35%) |
| 2. | Abject poverty due to inequitable distribution of nation's wealth. | 120 (60%) | 80 (40%) |
| 3. | Religious fanaticism, intolerance and intimidation against target groups to achieve religious or political aims | 115 (57.5%) | 85 (42.5%) |
| 4. | Rising cases of secessionist agitations due to injustice, lopsidedness in the distribution of natural resources and marginalization | 138 (69%) | 72 (31%) |
| 5. | Porous borders that permit free flow of illegal migrants, unchecked inflow of dangerous and light weapons | 152 (76%) | 48 (34%) |
| 6. | Increasing cases of Fulani/Farmers clashes | 125 (62.5%) | 75 (37.5%) |
| 7. | Weak security system such as inadequate funding of security agencies, modern equipment in weaponry and training. | 164 (82%) | 36 (18%) |

From table 1, items 1-7 had 65%, 60.3%, 57.50%, 69.0%, 76%, 62%, and 82% representing positive responses, while 35%, 40%, 42.5%, 31%, 34%, 48%, and 37.5% and 18% are for negative responses, respectively. This implies that a high rate of unemployment, abject poverty, religious fanaticism, rising cases of secessionist agitations, porous borders, Fulani/farmer clashes, and a weak security system are some of the factors responsible for security challenges in Nigeria. This result is in line with the view of Ejeviome (2019) that the factors that breed insecurity in Nigeria directly or indirectly affect human well-being and also retard national development strides.

Research Question Two: What are the impacts of insecurity on human existence and national development in Nigeria?

Table 2: Analysis of the impacts of insecurity on human existence and national development in Nigeria?

| S/N | Items | Positive Response (%) | Negative Response (%) |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 8. | Insecurity drives away both local and foreign investors. | 166 (83%) | 34 (17%) |
| 9 | Dislocation and disruption of people from their family fold and community life. | 155 (77.5%) | 45 (22.5%) |
| 10. | Deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity. | 122 (61.5%) | 78 (38.5%) |
| 11. | Insecurity leads to loss of lives and valuable properties. | 186 (93%) | 14 (7%) |
| 12. | Insecurity results to economic hardship thus affecting people's welfare. | 176 | 34 |

| | | | |
|-----|--|--------------|-------------|
| | | (88%) | (12%) |
| 13. | Dehumanization of women, children, and men especially in areas where rape, child abuse and neglect are used as instruments of war. | 148 (74%) | 52 (26%) |
| 14. | Disruption of economic activities during violent crimes. | 136 (68%) | 64(32%) |

From table 2, items 8-14 had 83%, 77.57%, 61.5%, 93%, 88%, 74%, and 68% as positive responses, while 17%, 22.5%, 38.5%, 7%, 12%, and 26% were negative. 32% are negative responses, respectively. This established that the driving away of investors, dislocation and disruption of people, deepening hunger, loss of lives and properties, economic hardship, and dehumanization of people are some of the impacts of insecurity on human existence and national development of Nigeria. These findings hold the views of Waiter and Urim (2012), who reported that insecurity challenges have assumed formidable dimensions in Nigeria, forcing the economy and investments into an unbearable situation and also threatening Nigeria's unity and corporate existence.

Research Question Three: What are the ways out of the insecurity challenges in Nigeria?

Table 3: Analysis of the ways out of insecurity challenges in Nigeria

| S/N | Items | Positive Response (%) | Negative Response (%) |
|-----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 15. | Reduce poverty through social security programmes and generation of massive employment. | 164 (82%) | 36 (18%) |
| 16. | Granting amnesty to the culprits of violence crimes. | 95 (46%) | 108 (54%) |
| 17. | Implementation of youth employment programmes targeting reduction in employment. | 190 (95%) | 10 (5%) |
| 18. | Restructuring of the country to show true federalism. | 128 (64%) | 72 (36%) |
| 19. | Raising good governance accountable to the populace. | 178 (89%) | 22 (11%) |
| 20. | Partnership between the federal and state government in the area of security architecture with needed logistics for optional performance. | 142 (71%) | 58 (29%) |

From table 3, items 15-20 had 82%, 95%, 64%, 89%, and 71% representing positive responses, while 18%, 46%, 5%, 36%, and 11% represented negative responses, respectively. The findings show that poverty reduction programmes, implementation of youth employment programmes, restructuring, good governance, and partnership between federal and state governments on security architecture are some of the ways out of insecurity challenges in Nigeria. This finding is in line with Oluwa (2012), who pointed out that peace and security are determined by good governance, which is a function of effective, visionary, transparent, trustworthy, and credible political leadership whose driving force is an improvement in the collective well-being of the citizens through well-conceived, effectively implemented economic policies and human development programmes.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

The presence of insecurity in Nigeria constitutes a threat to lives and properties, disrupts business activities, and hinders national development, among other things. Instead of insecurity decreasing, it keeps on assuming a dangerous dimension, thereby

threatening the corporate existence of the country as a sovereign state. This paper therefore recommends the following as a way forward to various security problems.

1. In order to provide enough jobs for the nation's citizens, the public and private sectors must work together. This would significantly increase the likelihood that many young people will commit crimes by providing them with worthwhile activity to occupy their idle hands.
2. To guarantee that the public may easily and affordably meet their fundamental needs, governments at all levels should make sure that rising poverty indices are addressed and that practical social security programs are sought and methodically implemented.
3. The federal government must take the initiative to address security threats and issues by using cutting-edge technology, training, and innovative techniques for obtaining and sharing intelligence. This will significantly help curb the nation's ongoing terrorism, robbery, kidnapping, bombs, and other vices committed by thugs and criminals.
4. Through roundtable discussions with various tribes that are demanding fair allocation of natural resources and perceived marginalization, the central government should come up with practical answers.
5. It is necessary to address the problem of ongoing conflicts between Fulani herders and farmers in the nation as a result of the destruction of farmlands and agricultural products burned out of open grazing.
6. To address the issue of porous borders, the federal government and concerned states should collaborate in the area of security agencies with the necessary logistics for effective performance.
7. Good governance that entails proper management of public resources in a manner that promotes the rule of law and realization of civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, where peoples' welfare is the utmost priority by the public institutions, must be put in place at all times.

XI. CONCLUSION

The present state of insecurity in Nigeria, as discussed above, calls for urgent attention so as to avoid the imminent collapse of the economy. Although security issues have always been and will always remain an issue in any country, the elimination of security threats to human well-being and national development should be the number one blueprint of the Nigerian government. Nevertheless, security matters should not be left in the hands of security agencies alone; hence, concerted efforts of all Nigerians are required to win the war against this menace.

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