

SECURITY AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The thrust of this paper is to examine and situate the dynamics of insecurity in Nigeria from a historical point of view and relate the same to contemporary development in the nation's polity. To many critics, the nation's colonial epoch has continued to shape and define its direction, more so that some of the internal contradictions namely, conflicts, have largely been attributed to the nature and character of imperialism in all its contents. Unarguably, the study has underscored several historical events where the Nigerian state is believed to have evolved, and these incidences have helped to shape the present socio-economic and political predicaments in the country. This paper has found that Nigeria has nose-dived into a more dangerous insecurity cliff orchestrated by many factors such as terrorism, herders-crop farmers crisis, political violence, ritual killings, and of late, kidnapping, among others. Using the institutional fragility theory as a basis for evaluation, the study has pointed out that Africa, namely, Nigerian society is prone to conflicts due to the nature of its internal contradictions and shock. This work is an exploration of existing works of experts and intelligentsias in the broader field of security studies. The data collection method is, therefore, archival, the purpose of which is to address research questions in the study. The paper came up with recommendations for mitigating the increasing spate of insecurity in Nigeria to place the nation and its people on the right path to national cohesion and socio-economic development and sustenance in the 21st century and beyond.

Keywords: Security, insecurity, nationhood, socio-economic development.

Introduction

One of the commonly used concepts that have gained currency in the world is security. Thus, individuals, governments, heads of governments, security experts, community groups and/or community leaders, market women and sundry persons now discuss security. The concern for the existence of security in every facet of society has risen, and hence, widespread. Ever since the invasion and demolition of the American World Trade Centre by terrorists on September 11, 2001, the emphasis on world powers has shifted from domestic security interests to those of the wider world. To be sure, security is now "everybody's business." The awareness and consciousness of being security conscious are spreading rapidly and in a more dramatic manner. It appears that when one is sleeping or dreaming, it is all about security!

To say the least, in today's world, and especially in the Third World context, and specifically in the Nigerian case study, security has eluded us as a people. From historical facts, several security breaches have been witnessed; from local tribal wars to the fight against colonial conquest; a fight that ensued, for example, between the British colonisers and their opposing subjects. The case of the incursion of the Lagos Colony by British overlords and the annexation of the Lagos Empire around 1861, remains fresh in our memory.

Unarguably, it can be said that the events that occurred during the pre-independence days have helped to shape the contemporary epoch. The spate of violence orchestrated by the aggressive posturing of the colonisers has left indelible marks in the minds and hearts of the generality of Africans and their people. This unfortunate scenario has snowballed into the spiraling of insecurity which is currently being witnessed all over the place in our national lives.

From the extant works of Tsuwa, Ikyase and Nwagbo (2018), Nigeria appears to have graduated to a level of sophistication in terms of insecurity. In recent times, the nation has witnessed increasing rates of terrorism, insurgency, communal conflicts, rape, herders-farmers clashes, and very recently, kidnapping. The latter has taken a new dimension where several school children have been whisked away in droves around states like Yobe, Borno, Katsina and Niger states, respectively. Some of these security breaches occur outside regional agitations that have been with us. For example, notable regional contradictions such as the Niger Delta problems occasioned by the 'Delta Avengers', the IPOB groups in the Eastern part of the country and several belligerent movements, namely #EndSars protests, are commonplace.

The enormity of violence and insecurity brought about by these boisterous groups and sections of the Nigerian state have had devastating socio-economic and political implications on the nation's landscape in no small measure.

The fundamental question here is: What has been, and have indeed, continued to be the pre-disposing factors that continue to lead to insecurity in our nation? Who are the drivers of these violent insecurity situations? What have the government and other stakeholders been doing to mitigate the rising insecurity in the country? These questions are very key to the overall understanding of the nation's security challenges and many other security variants.

Conceptual Issues

Security and insecurity are concepts that, though they appear contradictory, are mutually reinforcing. This means insecurity exists so that avenues can be created for security to be obtained and realised. In the words of Akin (2008), security can be used to mean those strategies put in place by institutions or groups of persons to forestall imminent injuries to the next person or groups of people. Security

therefore, can be used as measures that safeguard and protect against any form of hostilities targeted at inflicting pains on one's opponent. On the other hand, insecurity finds expression in how certain actions or inactions of persons or groups can lead to some level of danger, fear, hazards, uncertainty and even death. In either of the two extremes, it can be said that security is adjudged to be much more fashionable than insecurity. The latter has grave consequences that can destabilise the nation and the nature of devastation can be gruesome.

Theoretical Issues Many theoretical postulations have been used by scholars to explain and predict social events and phenomena. They include but are not limited to, structural-functionalist approach theories of developmental state,; conflict theories, system thinking and many others. These theories have in one way or another other failed to address critical socio-economic and political questions bedeviling societies around the world.

For the purpose of this paper, institutional fragility theory will be adopted to explain the spate of insecurity in Nigeria. From the classic works of Janavitz, Jemibewon and many other Eurocentric scholars, most African societies (Nigeria inclusive) operate a relatively fragile political system. The uncertainties and contradictions surrounding these systems ranging from weak political structure, inequality, leadership and/or good corporate governance gaps and many other factors congeal to suffocate the democratic system.

This is why Slater (2012) claims that some of these societies with these kinds of problem have over time become susceptible to the crisis, one way or the other. Slater opined that many African societies suffer internal shocks and conflicts due largely to the inherent challenges in the system within which such societies operate. A case in point is a Nigerian system where all kinds of accumulated problems have given rise to incessant conflicts and things have fallen apart, while the centre can no longer hold!

Why Insecurity Occurs in Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria cuts across a broad spectrum of the nation's landscape. It has manifested in form of political violence, thuggery, arson, character assassination, ethnicity, name-calling, hate speech, and many other dimensions. What has happened in Nigeria since the attainment of independence in 1960 is quite evident. For example, the tension and acrimony that greeted the nation's First and Second Republics and the subsequent collapse of these Republics arose from the twin problems of political violence, repression and ethnic colorations.

Gundu (2021) lamented that the nation's northern geo-political zone is highly underdeveloped. The consequences show up in the menace of destitution, where minors and kids who are supposed to be in school are busy begging for alms or food on the streets. The multiplier effect of this is that these children can hardly

understand what it takes to be morally upright. The reason is because they are already exposed to difficulties and wasteful lives on the streets. Some of them scarcely employ safe hygiene practices, neither do they even bother about having a proper bath. Many of these minors smoke, steal and easily break into homes to remove objects just to go and dispose of them and survive! The issue here is that when these categories of people grow into adults, they would have been ready tools in the hands of mischief makers to cause havoc.

To Gundu (2021), the infiltration of cross-border herders has contributed to the nation's security challenge. Recent experiences have proven that bandits from neighbouring countries such as Niger Republic, Mali and many other sub-regional entities have found their way into the country. The most affected states in the country in terms of attacks are states like Katsina and Zamfara. In these states, large herds of cattle have been reported rustled or stolen by the marauding 'herdsmen' parading themselves as bandits. However, it appears from recent experiences that states in Southwest Nigeria such as Ondo, Oyo, Ekiti and many others are not left out in the attacks. This entails that the bandits are everywhere and have been primarily responsible for occasional instability, especially in and around rural communities.

Human Rights Radio, Abuja, in one of its interviews, Friday 19th, 2021 argues that most children and/or adolescents who are actively involved in kidnapping today had no love or parental care shown to them when they were growing up (HRR, 2021). The fact here is that as human beings, one cannot give what he or she does not have. It therefore goes to explain why most kidnapped victims have been mercilessly beaten, molested, raped or even killed by their abductors in various places across the country. From reports elicited from kidnap victims, a vast number of kidnappers touting and brandishing AK47 rifles or cutlasses are teens who are probably in their mid-20s or less in terms of age. Again, some of them speak strange languages, which shows they are likely abandoned children or uneducated or both.

Lack of opportunities is a critical factor that can breed insecurity. The method of education we practise in Nigeria places more emphasis on paper qualifications than skills acquisition. This is what distinguishes between theory and practice. For those with the paper, it only makes sense when one acquires higher academic qualifications without knowing exactly what additional economic values he or she can add up to make life more meaningful. Here, the industry is thrown to the dogs, while ineptitude is celebrated. To most young people, going to school is just for fun. Again, educational delivery system in Nigeria is devoid of enabling environment where school leavers can work, earn income and cater for their needs (Ayo, 2019). The absence of this kind of privilege leaves the average youth blank, and thus, amenable to criminality. Anifowose (2006) argued that:

When you have a modernizing leadership in a country whose interest is to rapidly expand the number of educated persons within the teeming population. The expansionist drive, as it were, without associated and corresponding increase in the level of economic opportunities is the most conducive environment for political unrest to thrive (emphasis added) (2006, p.290).

The scenario painted above about lack of adequate opportunities for the youths speaks volume. This fact confirms what Makarfi (2007) asserted when he lamented that it can be a huge tragedy for a nation like Nigeria and elsewhere, to expend colossal sums of money for the purposes of educating the youths. What follows closely is the unfortunate situation where some of these youths end up unemployed.

Aside from youth unemployment as potential cause of insecurity, poverty, strife, contestation, rising inflation, poor morality and poor parenting; truancy, corruption, misinformation, unguarded utterances by politicians and power elites, among others, are viable sources of insecurity in the Nigerian society.

Question is: How do we resolve these challenges? How do we as a people come together as one indivisible and unified force to tackle insecurity in Nigeria?

First, we must resolve collectively and as individual members of society to do what is right. In Nigeria, the leadership must lead by example. A situation where politicians malign one another because of ideological differences sends very strong signals and weak moral lessons to the younger generation. In the recent past, we have seen where politicians, especially those at the opposing sides of the political divide, unleash 'terror' on the incumbent with brash and increasingly harsh words. This tells the level of animosity being bottled up by a section of the society against another. The hate disposition has caused untold resentments on the society in no small measure.

The Nigerian state and other well-meaning individuals in the society should endeavour to as a matter of corporate social responsibility assist in the education of destitute children in the country. Rather than allow these children to wander about and be used or manipulated for criminal purposes, they should be adequately catered for and trained in meaningful entrepreneurial skills acquisition for purposes of self-wealth creation. This way, the level of redundancy can be minimised, and insecurity, effectively tackled.

The herdsmen saga which has continued to fester across the nation is a bad deal. The Nigerian government should first embark on inter-regional collaboration between and amongst neighbouring countries bordering the nation. Experience has revealed that some of the 'international herdsmen' or 'hunters' as the case may be, are illegal migrants who have infiltrated the country from other African countries. Effective collaboration here means that the entire gamut of the nation's vis-à-vis African security architecture should be overhauled. Surveillance equipment such

as CCTV cameras and drones should be installed at all borders and communities where illegal migration takes place. This should also be followed by strict monitoring and evaluation to ensure that there are no compromises.

Again, there should be a dedicated school syllabus and template upon which moralities and code of conduct are dispensed and taught. It is easier to nurture teenagers from a young age and instill in them all the requisite moral etiquettes than when they grow up as adults. The Nigerian state will know relative peace when everyone understands and exhibits good behaviour devoid of contrary misdeeds. Religious institutions should again be massively involved in this exercise. The lessons passed down to the congregation by theocrats who themselves live and practise what they preach will go a long way in correcting the ills we experience on a daily basis.

Lastly, government and other well-meaning Nigerians can create an enabling environment for the younger generation. Some of these opportunities can come in form of scholarships for students of all races and creeds, irrespective of one's ethnic affinity or religious convictions. When this is done, the potential of Nigerian youths that have lied fallow over the years can be vigorously activated. The human resource of the youth themselves is a sure way to revitalising the nation's ailing economy and some of the precarious economic conditions the country has experienced during the corona virus (Covid 19) pandemic and beyond.

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