

## Security Challenges and National Development in Nigeria

Biola Muhibat Osungboye<sup>1\*</sup> & Atu Okechuckwu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup> Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago, Iwoye, Nigeria

Corresponding Author: [biola.osungboye@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng](mailto:biola.osungboye@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng)

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### Abstract

*The 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) emphatically states that “security and welfare of the people shall be the primary objective of government”. In other words, the government as part of its constitutional responsibilities is expected to ensure peace and stability to facilitate national development. However, the situation on the ground in Nigeria has proved otherwise, and this is invariably inducing discontent that is challenging the national security and impeding its development that is also evident through prior literature. For this reason, the study analyses factors that trigger insecurity in Nigeria, as well as, identifies the implications of insecurity on the country. The study relies on the researcher’s observation of the security situation in the country and secondary data. The study identified an unsafe environment for human and economic investments, and low priority to the health care of the citizens. Furthermore, security challenges impacted the political development of the country; questioning the legitimacy of government and threatening the unity and corporate existence of the country, it has also increased security spending and security votes; and denting the image of the country. Thus, the study concluded that for Nigeria to witness national development, a relatively peaceful environment must be created where the safety of human lives, their properties, and national resources are guaranteed.*

**Keywords:** Governance; Security; National Development; Legitimacy; Leadership

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### INTRODUCTION

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Nigeria, no doubt is one of the blessed countries within the African continent. Apart from the blessing in terms of human resources, the country is equally endowed with numerous natural resources. With human and abundant natural resources, the country is expected to have tremendously developed (Ebeh, 2015), and to have transformed and ranked favourably among the revered developed countries of the world. Despite the blessings, the country is still categorized among the developing countries of the world and facing a serious crisis of development.

The 1999 Nigerian Constitution (as amended) emphatically states that “security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”. Similarly, It is the constitutional responsibilities of government to ensure peace and stability that will facilitate development, vis – a –vis improving citizens living conditions, creation of jobs opportunities and reduction of all forms of poverty among others. Failure on the part of the government to do these did bring up discontentment, unrest, agitation, and violent conflicts that further deter national development. The current reality in the country is that the government has not been able to discharge its constitutional duties as expected,

which is invariably inducing displeasure, the aftermath of which is a high level of insecurity in the country (Oshio, 2009).

Intrinsically, insecurity has been identified as one of the major restricting factors to development, and ever since the returning of the country to democratic governance in 1999, the country has been facing one form of security challenge or the other. Thus, the degeneration of insecurity in the country has become a major issue of concern to the citizenry, and the government of Nigeria due to the destructive dimensions the issue is taken. From 1999 till date, the country has witnessed and continues to witness different threats to its security. Thus, insecurity has become “a hydra-headed monster which security agents in Nigeria appear incapable of handling” (Adegbami, 2013, p.8). Insecurity in Nigeria is manifesting in multidimensional ways comprising - the Boko Haram insurgent, banditry activities, secessionist agitations among others. Other heinous crimes challenging the security of the country include – the bombing of target places and populations, incessant killings of citizens by the hired assassin, the ritualists, and others, armed robbery kidnapping/hostage taking, destruction of government, and people's properties, creation of fear, among others. These nefarious activities have continued unabated, tormenting the people and threatening the country's unity and corporate existence. It is to this extent that the study analyses the factors that trigger insecurity in Nigeria, and identifies the implications of insecurity on the country. This is with a view to determining the link between security challenges and national development.

## **RESEARCH AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that trigger insecurity in Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of insecurity on the country?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyse the factors that trigger insecurity in Nigeria.
2. Identify the implications of insecurity on the country .

## METHODOLOGY

The study relies on the researcher's observation of the security situation in the country and secondary sources of information gathered from textbooks, journal, government official documents and newspapers.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Security as a concept does not have a stable or consensual meaning, and according to Boemcken & Schetter, security; to a certain extent, marks the “perimeters of a highly contested terrain” (Boemcken & Schetter, 2016, para 1). Brauch (2011) sees security as being a political value that has no independent meaning, but which relates to an individual or societal value system. Most of the works on security studies have defined security as the capacity of a state to defend itself from external aggressors and threats by using all the necessary means available, to care for the socio-economic well-being of its citizenry (Okwori, 1995; Tedheke, 1998; Absolute Astronomy, 2011). To Wolfers (1962), the concept of security has two sides. For him, it can be seen from an objective point of view, where security measures the absence of threats to acquire values. And from a subjective perspective, which implies the absence of fear that such values will be attacked. Therefore, security from the two sides refers to an absence of dangers, vis-a-vis, no threats, no challenges, and no vulnerabilities and risks. Lawrence & Nye (1975) see security as the absence of serious threats to the basic values that people consider important to their survival (1975). In essence, security to them is a state of minimal threats to the stability of the state. That is, the state is not under imminent danger or trouble from within and without.

Williams (2008), views security from the socio-political angle. According to him, security encompasses the ability to pursue cherished political and social ambitions. This implies that security is socio-political, without which there can be no political stability, and hence, social activities will be in disorder. Palme (1992) is of the opinion that a connection exists between security and survival. Thus, to be secured means that basic conditions for human survival must be available. Nwagboso (2012) states that security is associated with the lessening of threats to the survival of individuals or groups. As such, security has to do with having freedom from unpleasant situations vis-a-vis danger, harm, or anxiety. Although security is not the absence of threats, it is the

ability to tackle those threats on time from escalating. It involves all methods of protection available to secure persons and their properties from attack.

To Onifade, Imhonopi & Urim (2013), security has to do with instituting ways of protecting the lives of the people and their properties from aggressors. Security is about creating a conducive and convenient environment and atmosphere where people can move around within a given natural space or without being intimidated or threatened. Zabadi (2011) emphasizes the indispensability of security to mankind. For him, unless one is secured, especially in the physical aspect, every other thing remains meaningless and worthless. Thus, security to the average man on the street implies protection from danger and risk.

According to Omede (2012), security has to do with the ability of a state to deal with any threat to its core. In dealing with the threat to its core, the state is expected to be dynamic in its approaches. While corroborating Omede, Nwolise (2006) avers that securing a country is an all-inclusive affair. According to him, security is an all-inclusive way of safeguarding the country's territories by the security agencies, by protecting human lives, their properties, as well as guaranteeing the sovereignty of the state. All-inclusive methods of securing the state must be applied to secure the citizens and the country from external attacks. Beyond this, citizens must also be secured from unemployment, poverty, hunger, starvation, environmental degradation and pollution, and social injustices. In essence, security involves every step taken at creating and maintaining a conducive atmosphere for people, so that they can go about with their normal daily activities without threat. Put differently, security covers all approaches put forward to safeguard human and material resources within the state from aggressions or violent destruction.

On the other hand, security challenges can be seen as “actions or events that put at risk the material or identity basis upon which individuals, societies, states and perhaps even the planet have come to expect or rely” (Herd, Puhl, & Costigan, 2013, para. 2). Therefore, a challenge or threat to security means whatever can cause a negative alteration, or disruption, to the general welfare and peaceful living of individuals or society. Security of lives and properties are needed for any country to thrive. And any country lacking security is at risk of threats, and vulnerable to attack. In essence, all forms of threats or challenges to security must always be circumvented for the betterment of the people and the development of the country.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the frustration and aggressive theory as its theoretical framework. The theory, otherwise known as the frustration–aggression hypothesis, was initially proposed by John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939 and later developed by Neal Miller in 1941, while Leonard Berkowitz further developed the theory in 1969. Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) were of the view that "the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (p. 1). Frustration often leads to diverse reactions and responses, one of which is; aggression (Miller, Sears, Mowrer, Doob, & Dollard, 1941). Frustration precedes aggression, which could provoke negative emotions. Beyond this, frustration could provoke violent reactions (Berkowitz, 1988).

The security degeneration in Nigeria could be viewed, from the perspective of the frustration–aggressive theory's lens. Nigeria is no doubt, a blessed country in terms of human and abundant natural resources. With these natural resources, especially crude oil, Nigeria has no business in being among the third world, contrarily, the country is not only among the third world but also reputable to have been declared in 2018 as the “poverty capital of the world” (Brookings 2018). Similarly, Nigeria slipped into an economic recession in 2016 and 2020 (The World Bank, 2021). All these testify to the fact that all was not well with the economic situation of Nigeria, so also, is its political situation, vis-à-vis its governance and administrative system.

As a result of poor governance, the unemployment rate keeps on increasing, poverty escalates, and there is inequality and social injustice. The unpalatable situation made people to be frustrated, and the frustrated people became aggressive. In their aggressiveness resorted to self–help by involving in crimes as economic activities. Then the Nigerian environment became unsafe for human and economic activities. Unabated criminal activities brought security degeneration. And the country became unattractive to foreigners and foreign investors. The challenges have, therefore, continued to halt national development, while people continued to lose their lives as the security agents seems incapable to handle the situation.

## **Insecurity and Triggering Factors in Nigeria**

Various factors are triggering insecurity in the country, and for this study, eight of such factors will be discussed. They are as follows:

### *Poor Leadership*

Poor leadership has been one of the reasons for security challenges in Nigeria. The country for long has been electing incompetent leaders and sectional leaders who pursue only self-interests and cannot render effective service to the country. According to the former Chairman of the Independent National Electoral Commission, Professor Attahiru Jega, the security and economic challenges hampering the country, is a result of bad leaders who have a narrow vision to develop the country. In Jega's words:

We have so-called leaders who are selfish, who are not selfless, greedy, who have a narrow vision in terms of how this country can develop not to talk about the region where they come from. They really lack the intellectual capacity to be classified as leaders (Jega, in Sardauna, 2021, para. 9).

Many of these leaders came to the limelight by accident, and so, were unprepared in the act of administration and governance. They have no idea or vision for development except for their selfish agenda. The oppressive behaviour of some of these leaders did ignite reactions from the people which constitute a challenge to national security.

### *Inequalities*

It is established that there is a link between inequality and insecurity. Inequality with regards to Nigeria is in two forms – vertical and horizontal. Vertical inequality occurs when the overall living conditions of individuals are not at the same level, while horizontal inequality connotes discrimination against individuals based on different considerations (Adedeji & Oluwalogbon, 2020). Disparities and discriminations, as well as unfair treatment meted against a section of people in Nigeria, have been one of the major reasons for insecurity in Nigeria. Inequality and unfairness have always been objected to by the people. People's awareness that they are being marginalized and schemed out of some benefits as citizens of the country has continued to trigger insecurity. Section of the people who are not favoured by the government development

policies, sharing of political offices and resources, especially the youths, have continued to express their anger about the pervasive state of inequality. This always brings about disaffection and resentment which result to protest, violent crises that bring about insecurity in the country.

### *Corruption*

"Corruption is widely recognized as a global threat to peace and security" (Transparency International 2014). This problem has continued to limit the efforts of many countries, especially developing ones at developing peaceful and sustainable societies. Transparency International further states thus:

Corruption undermines the efficiency of security forces, damages populations' conception of the legitimacy of central authorities, and feeds a sense of disillusionment, which threatens the social contract, and ultimately the rule of law. In some situations, corruption can also facilitate the expansion of non-state and extremist groups (Transparency International, 2021, para. 2).

Countries, where corruption is entrenched, will continue to experience weak development of the state authorities and institutions, and thereby, such countries will be at the mercy of insurgents' operations. In the state where corruption thrives, the masses always feel the impact most, as it leaves them disempowered, unable to seek justice in courts, and powerless to hold politicians to account. When this happens, the seeds of conflict are sown, violence ensued and people easily confront the state, thereby, threatening the security of the state (Transparency International, 2014).

### *Unemployment*

Unemployment has been one of the most serious obstacles confronting Nigeria just like many other countries across the world. The continued mounting level of unemployment in the country is contributing to security challenges across the country. The current situation in the country is that a large number of youths are unable to secure deserving jobs. The fact that successive administrations in Nigeria have continued to fail in addressing the challenge properly made the problem of unemployment to be

mounting. Thus, the unemployed youths have continued to deep their hands into various activities that are threatening the nation's security system a case of the devil finds work for idle hands. In essence, "the high rate of unemployment in the country is directly responsible for the increasing security challenges in Nigeria" (Adesina, 2013). The problem if not checked on time will continue to torment Nigeria's security system.

### *Poverty*

A higher incidence of poverty has been identified as a major factor responsible for the security challenges the country is facing currently (Yakubu, 2020). Although Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural/mineral resources, poverty is daily ravaging its people. Poverty no doubt has contributed greatly to the level of crime being perpetrated in Nigeria (Adegbami & Uche, 2016). Several cases of poverty-induced crimes and criminal activities are being reported daily in the media and have continued to threaten the nation's security. Poverty has hindered many Nigerians from living a quality of life. Poverty in Nigeria has increased considerably, that is why the country is being referred to as the "poverty capital of the world" (Brookings 2018). A poor man is no doubt an angry man, he becomes a problem to society when society fails to allow him to utilize his potential. Instead of being productive, he becomes destructive. In essence, poverty to a large extent has been the root cause of insecurity in Nigeria (Ugo, Okwu, & Ugo 2019).

### *Ethnicity and Tribalism*

Ethnicity and tribalism have always been a powerful force in the governance and administrative system of Nigeria. Nigeria is made up of people from divergent socio-cultural backgrounds. The British imperialist not minding the different backgrounds, cultures, traditions, languages, and religions of the people just welded them together without considering the future implications. Thus, the central basis for Nigeria's existence is built on ethnicity and tribalism. And so, ethnicity and tribalism have become the basis for sharing the political positions and economic wealth of the nation, and this is breeding rivalries and conflicts persistently among the people (Nweke & Okoronkwo, 2014).

The persistent rivalries among ethnic groups especially for political and economic considerations are having counter-productive effects on the peaceful cohabiting of these different ethnic groups, as well as on national security. The ambitions of some ethnic entrepreneurs are also having destabilization effects on the



country. Their activities have been resulting in the loss of people's lives and their properties; displacement of the population; undesirable image crisis; democratic instability, and underdevelopment; all of which brought about national insecurity (Olaniyan & Omotola, 2015).

### *Religious Crises*

Religion has continued to play a central role in the social and political activities of man right through history. Nigeria a culturally diverse country has various religious groups and sects which are categorized under Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religion. These categorized religious groups have from time to time tried to outwit themselves, they are strong about their different beliefs, and thus, ardently act and exercise such belief carefreely. The exercise of such belief from time to time has spawned religious crises, brought about disunity and posed security threats, and impeded the country's development (Itabiyi, Kayode-Adededeji, Omole & Ekanem, 2019). The recurrent incidents of religious crises in the country over the years have claimed thousands of lives and have properties worth millions of naira destroyed. Similarly, religious crises have continued to impact political stability, socio-economic development, security, and the peaceful co-existence of the people in the country.

### *Porous Borders*

Porous borders surrounding Nigeria have been one major factor that has continued to add to the spate of insecurity in Nigeria. The borders of the country are so porous that several individuals have continued to move in and out unchecked and untracked. While border security is very essential and necessary for the protection of lives and properties within the territory of the country, Nigeria's government and its security agencies had not given the matter serious attention, and so, Nigeria's land borders have become a free entry and exit points for all manner of illicit activities (Adewoyin, 2019). As a result of the porous borders coupled with a weak security system, small arms and light weapons proliferation were enhanced. This has helped those with grievances against the country, and the criminal groups to have access to the weapons which they used in provoking crises that have been challenging the security of the country.

## Security Challenges: Implications for National Development

Security is indispensable for an individual, as well as a country to thrive, and without an effective security system, individuals and the country cannot make appreciable growth and development. To this extent, this section is devoted to discussing some of the implications of security challenges on Nigeria's development.

One of the implications of security challenges on Nigeria is in the area of businesses and investments. Insecurity makes investment unattractive to business investors. Problems emanating from insecurity have continued to have a destructive effect on businesses and investments. This can be explained from two angles. First, insecurity is giving the international community a wrong notion and signal about Nigeria. It portrays the country as a no-go area and not safe for economic investments. Thereby, insecurity has been discouraging and preventing foreign investors from transacting and investing in any sector of Nigeria's economy. From the second angle, insecurity has on many occasions halted business activities and operations, especially during periods of violence. It has also caused the relocation of businesses and investments from parts of the country into other relatively secured areas and countries. In addition, insecurity in the country has caused the outright closure of many businesses specifically in the areas where a threat to insecurity has become a daily occurrence (Okonkwo, Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anagbogu, 2015). This has continued to have effects on the national economic development and has been manifesting in the areas of increase in the unemployment and poverty rate in the country.

Insecurity in Nigeria has continued to threaten Nigeria's unity and corporate existence. It is not an exaggeration that Nigeria has been sitting on an illusion called unity right from the colonial era to the present day. It is not secreted too that the country is only struggling to put the disparate ethnic groups together. Series of conflicts among different groups and sections in Nigeria has been affecting its national unity. Some national programmes, for example, the National Youths Service Corps that ordinarily supposed to serve as unifying factors on some occasions have provoked disunity as a result of insecurity. Some youths have met their untimely death while travelling to some parts of the country to serve their fathers' land. The innocent youths in the course of their travelling have unluckily run to unsecured areas and communities that are prone to crises and criminal activities and lost their dear lives in the areas. Whenever people lose their lives in this manner, it further generates disunity among different groups in the country, threatening the peaceful co-existence of the different ethnic components of the country.

While corroborating the aforementioned, the Nigeria Information and Culture Minister of Nigeria, Alhaji Lai Mohammed states that insecurity and its manifestations pose a threat not only to the unity of the country but also to its continued existence as one entity. According to Mohammed:

The general state of insecurity, as reflected in incidences of farmers/herders' clashes, Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, ethnoreligious clashes and intolerance, cultism, drug addiction, and kidnapping for ransom are now triggering rising calls for secession. Perhaps the correct starting point towards addressing these myriads of problems is the building of an "elite consensus" on the security, unity, indissolubility, and peaceful existence of Nigeria (Mohammed, in Kaduna, 2021, para. 6-7).

Another far-reaching implication of security challenges in Nigeria is the number of fatalities yearly recorded from various challenges to security in Nigeria. For instance, in 2021 alone, not less than 8,372 people lost their lives to security challenges. According to statistical analysis, the larger share of these deaths was recorded in the Northern parts of the country.

A breakdown of these fatalities according to the geopolitical regions shows that the North West suffered the highest with 3051 deaths, followed by the North-East with 1895 casualties, North-Central 1684 victims, South-East 853, South-South 448, and South-West 441 (Beacon, cited in Sahara Reporters, 2022, para. 4).

The above statistical data comprises violent occurrences linked to political, economic, and social grievances mainly targeted at the state or other affiliated groups. On the other hand, the state at times engages in violence to counter or respond to citizens' reaction to its policies and programmes that is directly or indirectly affecting the citizenry (The Council on Foreign Relations, 2022). The challenge will persist until the government at all levels of administration in Nigeria take a bold step to tackle some of the inducing factors to security challenges in the country.

Security challenges have also been hurting the health of Nigerian citizens, for instance, the health of the citizens has become a low priority for Nigeria's government, most especially, in the crisis-ridden area. The United Nations Children's Fund in July 2016 for instance announced its withdrawal of humanitarian workers to Borno State victims of insurgent activities, as a result of the threat to the life of health workers sent to the area. The aftermath of the withdrawal of the humanitarian workers from Borno resulted in the suffering of more than 2 million victims of crisis who are in extreme need of humanitarian support (Burki, 2016). In addition to this was not fewer than 244,000 children subjected to severe malnutrition, with about 49,000 at risk of dying if humanitarian supports are not restored to the affected areas. Similarly, as a result of insurgents' activities, not less than 72% and 60% of health centres in Yobe and Borno respectively have been destroyed, and this has resulted in poor health outcomes for the citizens of the states. Generally, this has contributed to why the life expectancy of Nigerians is put at 53 and 56 years for males and females respectively which is among the lowest in the world (Alloh & Regmi, 2017).

Security challenges in the country also impacted the political development of the country. This is so because, insecurity in Nigeria has created an atmosphere of fear, despair, instability, uncertainty, volatility, and criminality. In many parts of the country, criminals have created spaces for themselves, thereby, there are ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. And as such, due to various security challenges, opportunities have been created for individuals and groups to unleash harm on different parts of the country. The lawlessness resulting from the challenge to security in Nigeria has continued to aid such odious activities as - insurgencies, terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, assassination, secessionist agitations, militancy among other forms of security challenges. Therefore, the security challenges have been taking their toll on national life, especially political development such that if the problems are not solved on time, it may truncate the country's budding democracy (Okokhere, 2020).

Security challenges in Nigeria have equally led to the wastage of resources in the form of security spending and security votes. Nigeria is reported to have spent about ₦6trn on security without a commensurate result in the last 10 years (Ibemere, 2020). In June 2021 also, it was disclosed by the Minister of Finance, Zainab Ahmed that the Federal Government of Nigeria was to borrow a sum of N722.53 billion (\$1.76 billion) from domestic capital markets to fortify the country's security system (Jimoh, Okwe, Abuh, Daka, & Afolabi, 2021). The resources which supposed to be used in putting in place infrastructural facilities are being diverted to fund the security system, how then can the country be developed?.

All-in-all, there exists a symbiotic relationship between national security and national development. There is a great interplay between national security and national development. Security of lives and properties has been found to play a significant role in the development of society. That is, security remains a major determinant of the development of any society. Put differently, without security, there is bound to be underdevelopment manifesting in the area of citizens living in abject poverty, high unemployment rate, lack or low functional industries, low local and foreign investment, corruption, diversion of public funds, youth restiveness, religious and social violence, low or poor tourist attraction among others. Any country that lacks these will have the problem of growth and development. This is because relative peace is needed in order to achieve meaningful development.

When the economy is not developed it will generate a mix of domestic social and political tension. This is because, citizens will ordinarily expect the government to provide a conducive political environment for socio-economic security, which include access to gainful employment, access to healthcare and shelter, among others, the non-fulfillment of these economic securities trigger discontentment and social upheaval which in turn will challenge political legitimacy of the government of the day, and hinder the national development. That the country is overwhelmed with social chaos, poverty, among others, is a sign that the country is not toeing the development path. It is in line with this that Oshio states that, “it is meaningless to talk of development in the absence of national security. In other words, insecurity in a nation is a threat to development” (Oshio, 2009, pp. 1-2).

## CONCLUSION

Security indisputably is a precondition for national development. Security involves peace and tranquillity, happiness, and safety from being harmed, and as such, all security challenges are also development challenges. Thus, security challenges in Nigeria have made businesses and investments unattractive. The insecurity situation is sending a wrong signal about Nigeria to the international community and portraying the country as a no-go area and unsafe for economic investments. The challenge to Nigeria's security has also led to the destruction of people's properties, rendered them homeless, and brought about an increase in the number of Internally Displaced Population.

Security challenges have also been having adverse effects on the health of Nigerian citizens, it has also led to the withdrawal of humanitarian workers from the crises areas, and those that need humanitarian assistance has continued to suffer untold hardship, while many health facilities have been destroyed by the insurgents. This has resulted in poor health outcomes for the citizens of the country. Security challenges also impacted the political development of the country, it has put to question the legitimacy of government for its failure to create an atmosphere free from insecurity and its manifestations. The challenge has continued to threaten the unity and corporate existence of the country, and beyond this, it has and has continued to claim people's lives.

Thus, the study concluded that for Nigeria to witness national development, a relatively peaceful environment must be created where protection of human lives, their properties, and national resources are guaranteed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommend that government should address issues that is creating tension and generating aggression, especially issues of unemployment, inequality, social injustice and poverty among others. This will go a long way in suppressing security challenges in the country.

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